



Dear Friends,

Welcome to this edition of the E-newsletter of A Rocha, India.



The last few months have been eventful beginning with the estimation of the elephant population in Bannerghatta National Park and ending with visit by several groups to the A Rocha Field Study Centre at Taralu where they took part in our environment education program.

Some important events that took place are described for you. Your continued support to our work is much appreciated

*Vijay D. Anand Ph.D.,
National Director*

ASIAN ELEPHANT CONSERVATION PROGRAM AT THE BANNERGHATTA NATIONAL PARK

Elephant population estimation

Population estimation is one basic but important research activity which lays the foundation for any research, monitoring and conservation strategy for a species. The *south india Synchronised Elephant Census* was held in the month of May across the elephant divisions of the southern states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. A Rocha India was the research partner at the Bannerghatta National Park. The A Rocha team participated in all the consultations that were held preceding the estimation and were involved in the recruitment and training of volunteers and staff. A Rocha volunteers numbering around 50 participated in the three day exercise. This is the second elephant census A Rocha has been involved in the last six years of working at the Bannerghatta National Park (BNP).



Landscape and elephant barrier assessment



Incidents of crop raiding by elephants in the villages around BNP occurs more between November and January but in the month of June two people died during an elephant raid in Anekal Range of the Park. A Rocha team undertook a field survey to identify the reasons for this unusual behavior by a small herd of elephants. What also followed was a survey to assess the status of the elephant in this area. The information was useful in the management of this particular herd

Research Students



One of our oldest volunteer and team member *Nishant M. S* moved on to join the *National Centre for Biological Sciences* to gain a Masters Degree in Wildlife Biology only to return to join the A Rocha team to work on his dissertation at BNP. His thesis on elephant behaviour was successfully submitted and defended during the month of July. We congratulate *Nishant* for this success! Another research student *Suresh Govind*, who is pursuing his doctoral studies under the guidance of *Dr. E. A. Jason* from the *Kerala*

Forest Research Institute, visited our project site to learn firsthand about the A Rocha research activities at BNP. His stay at the A Rocha field study centre and the discussions he had with *Gopalakrishna* was very useful.

A ROCHA LEADERS MEET 2010 IN FRANCE



It has been three years since A Rocha leaders from around the world last gathered together, so it was a joyful celebration when they met in June with the International Team and Trustees for a week. Expertise was shared through an array of workshops: the French on involving farmers in habitat restoration; the Canadians on community gardening; the Lebanese on building an environmental education website; the Kenyans on forest protection; the UK team on involving churches in creation care, the Ghanaians on

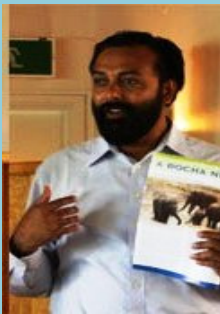
enabling communities to protect natural resources while also benefiting from them, and much more.



The Forum was held at the new A Rocha France centre in the hills above Nice, which not only kept down the costs, but enabled everyone to enjoy the flower-filled meadows and fragrant, herb-rich stony hills. The delegates also enjoyed meeting some of the entrepreneurs who are beginning to bring life back to the previously neglected Courmettes Estate. India was represented by Board Chair Rev. Prem Mitra, Dr. Vijay D. Anand and Senior Researcher Gopalakrishna S. P

Rev. Prem Mitra at the Swedish Church in Pitea

On the sidelines of the conference in France Rev. Prem Mitra accepted an invitation by the *Swedish church in Pitea* to speak to its members on the work of A Rocha in India. Prem spoke on why the churches need to care for the environment. He spoke about how A Rocha is practically engaged in conservation work across the world. He also spoke about the work in India on elephant-man conflict mitigation. Read more about this meeting at the official website of *Svenska Kyrkan* (www.svenskakyrkan.se/default.aspx?di=444656)



ENVIRONMENT SUNDAY CELEBRATION AT THE RICHMOND TOWN METHODIST CHURCH



A special environment Sunday service was organised for the first time among the Methodist churches in Bangalore at the *Richmond Town Methodist Church (RTMC)*, Bangalore. The RTMC is one of the well known churches in Bangalore and is known for its exemplary ministry rendered to the society. A Rocha India National Director Dr. Vijay Anand who is serving as Secretary of the Church Board, along with the A Rocha team and Pastors of the church organized this service. With

the help of a church member Praveen Deepak an Information board on the birds of the church campus was prepared and released during the meeting. Dr. Anand also had the opportunity to share some of the key environmental issues that needed attention. As part of the service tree saplings

were planted and grand old trees in the premises were labeled. A Rocha wishes to thank Rev. N. H. Jayawanth and Rev. Jonathan Bangera and other friends for their encouragement and support.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS WORKSHOP FOR CHURCH LEADERS

In their continuing effort to sensitise church leaders towards environmental concerns, the *CSI Karnataka Central, Northern and Southern Dioceses* organised a *Regional Conference* during May in the city of Dharwad. The conference was inaugurated by *Bishop Rt. Rev. J. Prabhakar Rao*. The program was organised for the office bearers of the churches within the diocese.



More than 50 delegates from different parts of Karnataka state attended this event. A Rocha team was invited to attend this conference and Rev. Prem Mitra who attended, spoke on the role of Christians in caring for the earth.

EARTH DAY CELEBRATIONS 2010

This year's celebration was organised along with *St. Andrews Church*, under the leadership of *Rev. Prem Mitra* for children at the church premises. Children numbering around 100 participated in the event. It was a fantastic program with lots of singing, music and it was also a time of learning and teaching for every one present. The children enacted skits which taught the value of trees in the environment.



NEWS FROM FIELD STUDY CENTRE

Our vision is to educate people on human-elephant conflict and to that effect more than 3000 people have attended our one day conservation education program organized at the A Rocha Field Study Centre, since its inception three years ago.

Prakurtha Green School

In the month of July we were very happy to welcome students from *Prakurtha Green School*, Bangalore who were taken for a field visit to the National Park and were later led in a group discussion on conservation.



Visitors from Gloucester, UK



Our second group of overseas visitors for this year came from the *Diocese of Gloucester* during the month of August. The group consisting primarily of students led by Officers from the Diocese, visited the A Rocha project site to learn firsthand about research and practical conservation work. The A Rocha team organised a field visit to the park and educated the group on the various mechanisms used in the mitigation of the conflict. They also had a time of fellowship at the A Rocha Field Study Centre

Workshop on environmental action in Churches



A one day field visit and workshop was organised for *CSI Synod Womens Fellowship Office Beares* at the A Rocha Field Study Centre. 50 delegates representing the Diocese across the four states of southern India attended this event. The group was led by *Rev. Nirmala Vasanthakumar*, President of the CSI Synod Womens Fellowship. The delegates were taken to the national park for an exposure visit during which a brief lecture was made on the environmental concerns being faced by the society. Later the participants attended the work shop organised at the Field Study Centre; the delegates

were challenged about the practical interventions that the church could make in response to the environmental crisis. The delegates arrived at practical solutions and action strategies to be taken at the church level.

THANK YOU!

We want to thank our volunteers **Ms. Bhanu Sridharan, Ms. Geraldine Fernandez, Mr. Nityanand, Ms. Lois Kotian and Ms. Riea** for giving their time and helping us in many ways which made our programs successful.

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A Rocha India is a non-profit organisation relying purely on grants and private donations for its work. Any financial support will be gratefully received. *Donations to A Rocha India are exempt u/s Sec 80G of the Income Tax Act 1961.*



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