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SUMMER CAMPS
GET OUTDOORS



STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

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Rural Outdoors

Dear Principals, Trustees, Teachers, Parents and Students:

I hope the monsoon has blessed you all with its showers in plenty. This cyclical event every year reminds us once gain of giving. Everything that is sacred for life is given or available free. Air, monsoon water, sun light etc. All that has human intervention is chargeable. That is somehow polluting if it is in the wrong hands. The monsoon also beckons the young and old alike to the outdoors.

I hope all the school administrators are not cooping the restless soul within closed indoor rooms and the children all crestfallen watching the monsoon go by. Open the doors, ask the children to get a spare set of clothes and let them out of the school. Better still come outdoors with Trailblazers for monsoon birding, trekking or nature trails and see the nature unfold, renew life and regenerate.

Last month I was in a taluka called Junnar, I had gone to survey some land to build a leopard park for the Government of Maharashtra over 500 hectares. It is a rugged spot nearly 150 km from Mumbai. This was a remarkable taluka with rich farmers, mainly onion and sugarcane growers. Using the best Israeli technology for agriculture, and almost all the farmers

staying in huge bungalows with the latest BMW, Mercedes Benz or Audi stationary adjoining the homes. It was a sight to behold. Junnar is also the birth place of Shivaji Maharaj at the Shivneri fort. It has a high density of Leopards. It also has one of the sacred sites of Lord Ganesha, amongst the eight prominent sites in Maharashtra. Lenyadari is one of them adjoining the Buddhist caves. The Government of Maharashtra, Tourism Ministry has declared Junnar - the Rural tourism Taluka of Maharashtra state. It has asked all schools to take at least one school trip there. Rural ecotourism is being promoted as an alternative source of income.

I urge all of you to join the Government and Trailblazers to promote and experience something really cool. Combined with Trailblazers' eclectic team of outdoor educators the trip can be very meaningful. Like Junnar, Dahanu a coastal Taluka too is being promoted as a destination for rural tourism.

Trailblazers continues to focus on teachers as one of its core constituency and through its Foundation will conduct a series of teacher training workshop on "Water - the Gift of Life & Plastics - a Boon or Scourge" sponsored by Dow Chemical International. A series

of three workshops will be done at Lote near Dapoli for teachers in the Ratnagiri, Raigad and Sindhudurg districts. We firmly believe the change we seek will come from the outstanding community of educators least recognized but put in a whole lot of committed work year after year. Truly unsung heroes and heroines.

Schools do need to address another important element for their outdoors learning programmes and it is safety when in the school trips - it is the type of instructors accompanying you, are they mere escorts or knowledge provider, are they certified in first aid, and child protection policy - as we in Trailblazers have. Check the travel documentation of the company you partner with, verify their antecedents. It will be crucial to ensure you don't lose sleep because the school was inefficient in cross checking. I wish all of you in this new academic year to have a fulfilling and a safe year.

Ranjan Biswas Editor ecotrail@trailblazersindia.com



On the Brink ...

The Nilgiri Tahr (Nilgiritragus hylocrius) is an endemic mountain goat found at an elevation of 1200-1600 meters in Nilgiri Hills in Southern region of Western Ghats. Out of the two Tahr species found in India - Himalayan and Nilgiri - the Nilgiri Tahr is listed as Endangered Species in IUCN Red List and is listed as Schedule I species of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972, the highest protection possible for a terrestrial species in India.

Nilgiri Tahr is also known by other names like Nilgiri Ibex. In Tamil, Nilgiri Tahr is known as 'Varayadu', 'Varrai' meaning 'rocky outcrops' and 'Adu' meaning 'goat'.



Image courtesy: Saurabh Sawant

Thus they are the wild goats that live on the rocky escarpment of Nilgiris. Estimated total population is no more than 1,800-2,000 individuals in the wild. Eravikulam National Park and the Grass Hills of Anamalai are the only locations which still inhabit wild Tahr goats in natural setting.

They inhabit in open grassland habitat found in Nilgiri mountain range. At such high elevations, the forests open into grasslands interspersed with pockets of stunted forests, locally known as *sholas*. These grassland habitats are surrounded by dense forests at the lower elevations.

Even though the Tahr are protected under Indian wildlife protection act, the law enforcement is quite poor resulting in poaching and hunting of mountain goat for meat and horns trade. Apart from this habitat loss is another major threat which resulted in population decline across Nilgiris.



Triticum turgidum. Image credit: Stan Shebs / CC BY-SA 3.0.

Wild Wild Wheat

Wheat is one of the founder crops that likely drove the Neolithic transition to agrarian societies in the Fertile Crescent more than 10,000 years ago. Its domestication caused a shift in traits, which mostly relate to seed dormancy, spike morphology, and grain development. For example while the spikes of wild wheat shatter at maturity, all domesticated wheat spikes remain intact, which enables easier harvest. The research is published in the journal Science. "From a biological and historical viewpoint, we have created a 'time tunnel' we can use to examine wheat from before the origins of agriculture," Dr. Distelfeld said. To reconstruct the 14 chromosomes of Triticum turgidum, Dr. Distelfeld and co-authors used 3D genetic sequencing data and software. "The wheat genome is much more complex than most of the

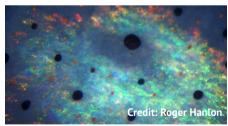
other crops and has a genome three times the size of a human genome," said co-author Dr. Gil Ronen, CEO of NRGene Ltd, Israel.

"Wheat accounts for almost 20% of the calories humans consume worldwide, so a strong focus on improving the yield and quality of wheat is essential for our future food supply. Our comparison to modern wheat has enabled us to identify the precise genes that allowed domestication – the transition from wheat grown in the wild to modern day varieties," Dr. Distelfeld said. "While the seeds of wild wheat readily fall off the plant and scatter, a change in two genes meant that in domesticated wheat, the seeds remained attached to the stalk: it is this trait that enabled humans to harvest wheat."

MBIs & DNA

In any stressful event our sympathetic nervous system is triggered increasing the production of nuclear factor kappa B (NF-kB) which in turn produces cytokines at cellular levels which is only good for short lived inflammatory reaction but if persistent leads to higher risk of cancer, accelerated aging and psychiatric disorders like depression. According to the lead investigator, Ivana Buric, people who practise mind body interactions (MBIs) such as meditation, yoga and Tai Chi daily have decreased production of NF-kB and cytokines leading to a reversal of this pattern. The benefits of MBIs begin at molecular level by changing the way our genes are expressed. Put simply, the MBIs cause the brain to steer our DNA processes along a path which improves our wellbeing. The research is published in the journal Frontiers in Immunology.

E-Comouflage



US Navy, project scientists and engineers from US universities are taking lessons from the masters of disguise viz Cuttlefish, squids, flounder and mantis shrimp to develop biologically inspired camouflaging electronic devices. These sea species have opsins - light sensing skin proteins and chromatophores - stretchy sacs of red, yellow or black which create patterns that change as needed to help blend into its surroundings. Scientists are hoping to mimic this phenomenon to make buildings, cars and clothes that change color with changes in light and season.

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10 Good Reasons To Learn a Musical Instrument It's Not Too Late!

If you are short of reasons on why you should learn a musical instrument, here are some. It is never too late to pick up the guitar, oboe, bongo drums, harmonica, glockenspiel or what have you and learn how to play it! Did you know that playing an instrument can actually change the architecture of your brain? That might sound like some made-up futuristic Matrix mumbo jumbo but it has been scientifically proven and that is not even the tip of the "benefits of playing musical instruments" iceberg.

1. Improves Performance On Cognitive Tasks

People with music training often outperform non-musical people on cognitive tasks. You can teach an old dog new tricks: In people over the age of 65, after 4 or 5 months of playing a musical instrument for an hour a week there were strong changes in the brain—the parts that control hearing, memory and the part that controls the hands, among others all become more active.

2. Increases the Capacity of Your Memory

Adults and children can both benefit from learning to play an instrument because it helps the mind to be alert and remain active eventually helping to sharpen the memory. This makes learning a foreign language easier and makes you more perceptive to interpreting the emotions of others. This is due to the fact that learning an instrument requires you to learn about tones and scores which increases your ability to store audio information. Therefore it becomes easier to pick up other languages and have a better verbal memory in your own language.

3. Refines your Time Management and Organizational Skills

In order to learn an instrument successfully you have to learn how to be organized and manage your time wisely. To progress quicker, a musician will learn how to use their time efficiently and plan different challenges to work on. When you see yourself continuously improving, you will be motivated and ready to take on those new challenges.

4. Enhances Your Coordination

If you learn how to play an instrument, the parts of your brain that control motor skills actually grow and become more active. By reading musical notes on a page, your brain must convert that note into specific motor patterns while also controlling breathing and rhythm as well. Also for most instruments, you have to be able to have your fingers and/or limbs each performing different tasks simultaneously. Therefore playing music requires a lot of hand-eye coordination.

5. Betters Your Mathematical Ability

In order to read music you have to count notes and rhythms, which improves your math skills. Learning music theory includes many mathematical aspects so it is not surprising that it can help you understand things like fractions more effectively. So if you are still in school, does that mean you need to pick up a quitar instead of a calculator?

6. Fosters Your Self-Expression

The more advanced you become on an instrument, you will begin to be able to play what you want and however you want. Since music is an art form, you can easily play a piece and use it as an outlet for your emotions. Playing an instrument of your own will not only help you relax but can help build confidence and give you a sense of achievement. How cool is it to discover a talent you thought you never had? Music can also provide a sense of independence and individuality, which in turn contributes to one's own self-discovery and sense of identity.

7. Provides Health Benefits

The health benefits of music are so many that it might turn out to be better than jogging. Playing music acts as a form of therapy, having calming effects on the mind and body. In particular, music has been found to reduce blood-pressure levels and even burning many a calories.



8. Teaches You Discipline, Responsibility and Perseverance

Learning to play an instrument takes time and effort, which results in your learning patience and perseverance. To get a musical phrase or entire song down with as few mistakes as possible takes great focus and repetition since most people will not be able to play a piece of music perfectly the first time. In fact, the majority of musicians have to work difficult sections of music multiple times in a row before they can play it correctly. Since it is such a challenge, this teaches you self-discipline and the importance of maintaining a steady practice schedule.

9. Relieves Stress

Playing any instrument can actually help release the endorphins in your body, which will also result in reduced levels of stress.

10. It's Just Fun

Even after learning the simplest three chords, you have the ability to write your own song. Bob Dylan has written several well-known songs using only a few chords and there is nothing like playing a song you just learned or wrote for a friend or playing it with friends. You do not have to be Beethoven or Mozart, you just have to have a desire to learn!

(**Source:** 93XRT Chicago 93XRT.com http://wxrt.cbslocal.com/2013/11/05/10-good-reasons-to-learn-a-musical-instrument-its-not-too-late

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TRAILBLAZERS SUMMER CAMPS





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camp Footloose

Summer vacation and summer camps are inseparable words. With one, other follows! Parents are always on lookout for a camp that fosters friendship, personal development and inclusivity through games, recreation arts and music.

Trailblazers designed a camp to cover activities that would enhance observational, artistic and motor skills; environmental awareness and team building spirit among the children. Children participated in all the activities art, craft, dance and culinary sessions. They created candles, masks and pots. They explored the outdoors and learned about various trees and birds. In line with Trailblazers' philosophy of Safety First, a fire drill was carried out. Campers showcased their talents and presented songs, dances and stories. To encourage the children and to remember this wonderful time together, Trailblazers presented the campers with mementos - the highly coveted Trailblazers T-shirts, which they wore on the last day of the



designed for them which kept them busy, engaged and active. Their days started with energizers followed by meditation. The youngsters got chance to play traditional games that their parents used to play. This did not stop them from playing their favorite sport - Soccer. Children were at their creative best with

camp. En route on their way back home, they enjoyed pizza lunch.

The camp objective of bonding, team building, personal development and recreation by various pedagogies was achieved. As all good things come to an end, this camp too ended with youngsters making new friends and acquiring new skills.







With the summer comes the thrill of summer camps. Trailblazers organized Camp Pathfinder to capture the bliss of summer in the best possible way. The three day camp was organized for the children between the age group of 13 to 18 years at Karjat.

The Trailblazers team picked up 84 enthusiastic kids and set off to Karjat. Enroute breakfast was a delight to the kids. Once we reached the destination, the children were given an orientation



session followed by buffet lunch. Later the kids were taken to nearby Buddhist Caves. The children trekked up the mountain and returned back by late evening and retreated to their cozy tents for a good night's sleep.

The second day set off with the children being grouped into teams. The different teams then played many fun relay games like lemon and spoon, sack race etc. Other teams indulged

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in adventure activities like zip lining, rappelling, spider web and so on. Later in the evening the kids geared up for a wonderful talent night followed by an energetic DJ session. Also, the birthday babies had their birthday cakes cut during this session.

The morning of the last day of the camp began with a bird-watching trail around the river-side. After breakfast, the kids showed up in their Trailblazers t-shirts for a vibrant group photo. The children



then treated themselves to a movie. The camp came to a closure with the children scribbling down their thoughts to imprint their memories on the graffiti. Awards and gifts were given out to the best teams.







Camp Pathfinder Chennai

Summer camps are the best way one can beat the summer heat and humidity. Trailblazers hosted a summer camp on the coast of Pallava beach. Students of different grades and suburbs participated in this summer camp. Various team activities were hosted during the camp which focused on key skills like personality development, team building, leadership and effective communication.

On arrival at the resort, the students were welcomed with traditional drink

A junior master chef challenge was hosted where teams were provided with a platter of different cut vegetables, cheese and Indian traditional spices. Junior chef teams were to select from this given ingredients and cook it along with noodles. The session ended with junior chefs presenting their special recipes in attractive garnishes to judges and team. Apart from these team activities, fun games were also played during the camp. On the last day of the camp, a heritage walk was conducted.



of tender coconut water and handmade shell necklace. A brief orientation session was conducted after lunch. An art and craft session was conducted to bring out the artist from within. Children learned emblem designing, papier mache and origami. Children enjoyed these art and craft sessions. In the evening they walked on Pallava beach enjoyed the cool summer breeze.

Children enjoyed and appreciated the architecture and history of these archaeological sites. The learning inputs, travel arrangements, accommodation and various activities by the Trailblazers team were appreciated by all. Overall the camp was a successful outbound programme.



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Cooperative Grandeur

Trailblazers took a group of Economics subject students to explore the milk, sugar and textile cooperatives as a part of their project on cooperative units and white revolution. Trailblazers and cooperative experts explained the concept of cooperatives to students. They were awestruck at the size of the operations and the fact that processes were streamlined to make them sustainable. For e.g. Bagasse generated from sugar industry was used for generate electricity for the sugar processing plant and the molasses were used to produce alcohol in the nearby distillery. Students understood that cooperatives are boon to farmers and it leads to inclusive growth. This raises the standard of living, leads to infrastructure development and establishes good training and educational institutes in the region. After the cooperatives, they visited a chappal unit, a speciality and geographic indicator of the city. Students observed the art of chappal making and understood the economics of it. The traditional chappal making is a dying art as new generation is not keen on pursuing this as a career or business because of dearth of government and infrastructural support. It was time for another traditional industry of the region - Gurhal or jaggery making unit. Visit was received well by one and all. Students were eager to see how the sugarcane juice is boiled in huge vessels and processed to its final product - jaggery. They gulped down a glass or two of fresh sugarcane juice and gave some exercise to their mandibles by peeling and eating sugarcane. They sought blessings of Goddess Mahalaxmi before boarding the train for their journey back home. The journey ended with sweet memories.













1. At Textile cooperative unit 2 & 5 At Milk cooperative unit 3. At Jaggery processing unit. 4. Garment manufacturing unit. 6. Kolhapuri chappal processing unit

Financial Splendor

Mumbai - the financial capital and maximum city - welcomed the students. They visited the numismatic museum and learned about the concept of money. They saw a documentary followed by various sections of museum viz. coin section, paper currency section and know your currency section. After the informative visit, it was a time to relish the Mumbai delicacy - Pay Bhaii. Next they visited BSE where they interacted with experts. Information on capital market, functions of BSE and scope on financial markets along with its history was shared with students. Visit to the convention hall - the old ring - brought alive the imagination of traders shouting to sell or buy shares. After the capital markets, it was time for Mumbai's famous flea market - The Fashion Street. Students exercised their negotiating skills and negotiated hard to buy goods in the flea market. Commodity markets were next in line. Students visited one of the largest wholesale markets of fruits, vegetables, spices and grains. There they interacted with the traders. After the essential commodities, it was time to learn about an exclusive commodity - Diamond. They visited the largest trading hub of diamonds in the world. Experts addressed them on the quality and trading of this glittering commodity. After all the economics and business, it was time for fun. Students celebrated birthdays of all the campers in advance by cutting a cake and showcasing their talents in the evening! They further explored the world of commodities at Cotton Exchange. They learned about the cotton standards and online trade. They visited the modern cotton testing lab and an old trading hall. All in all student utilized this golden opportunity to meet the industry experts and get exposure to various sectors like capital and commodities market.















1. At Bombay Stock Exchange. 2-3 Trailblazers Managing Director, Mr. Ranjan Biswas interacting with students 4 Understanding the technicalities of trading of white gold -cotton 5. At diamond trading center 6. Interacting with traders at APMC. 7 Adieus

TRAILBLAZERS FOUNDATION IN ACTION

World Environment Day Celebrations!













A Nature Appreciation programme was organized by Trailblazers Adventure Travel Pvt Ltd and Trailblazers Foundation as a part of World Environment Day celebrations in Eden Woods. On the day of the trail enthusiastic edenwoodians - old and young woke up to greet and know more about the other edenwoodians - the green and feathery members of the society. Trailblazers experts shared interesting information on the national and state flowers, trees, birds and animal to the curious folks. Various birds were spotted during the trail viz coppersmith barbet, blue rock pigeon, oriental magpie, greater coucal and rosering parakeets. Difference between parakeets and parrots was explained by Trailblazers experts. Trees seen the during trail were Banyan, Mango, Mahua, Bauhinia, Peltoforum and Ficus. Importance and uses of these tree were shared with the participants. They were enthralled by the interesting information on calls, nesting habits and migration of birds. Intriguing and interesting facts on why like why flamingos are pink and how pollination occurs in figs were shared. The trail participants also did a small exercise of observing the morphological characters of plants viz leaf shape, leaf attachment, leaf arrangement, form etc. They learned that these morphological characters play an important part in identifying plants. The trail ignited curiosity in the minds of young explorers and it was heartening to see children observing plants and spotting birds on their own. At the end of the trail, participants saw an award winning documentary on birds.





NATIONAL SYMBOLS OF INDIA

National Bird: Indian Peacock National Tree: Banyan Tree National Flower: Lotus National Fruit: Mango

National Animal: Royal Bengal Tiger National Aquatic Animal: River

Dolphin

Peace Grove

As per the Indian traditions, we sought blessings of Mother Earth, Ganesha and



blessings of Mother Earth, Ganesha and Gauri Pooja for proper growth of saplings.

Mayor of Badlapur city Mr. Waman Mhatre

Clockwise: 1. Mr. Vaman Mhatre, Mayor Badlapur City inaugurating tree plantation site at Pranav Construction Systems Pvt Ltd; Mr. Ranjan Biswas Trustee Trailblazers

Foundation, Mr. Sushil Sahani Managing Director of Pranav Construction Systems Pvt Ltd. 2. Mr. Sahani and Mr. Biswas 3,4,5 Tree plantation

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STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

Connecting Worlds!

Trailblazers organized a camp for a Swiss Exchange Programme. The group consisted of Swiss students hosted by their Indian buddies. The camp comprised of giving the Swiss students an experience of Mumbai. Students visited the historic Gateway of India and learned about the Indo-saracenic architecture - a beautiful blend of Hindu Jain and Mughal Architecture. After the visit to this beautiful historical monument, it was time to indulge in some hands on activity at the museum. They created beautiful block printing designs on a piece of linen. The students trotted around the museum for quite a while surveying the various historical artifacts and relics. Soon after the museum visit, the students had an insight into the life of the Father of the Nation- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi at his erstwhile Mumbai residence. Visit to a temple was an eye opener into the culture and traditions of India. The

students learned of the mythological significances of the Hindu goddesses and traditions like removing one's footwear before entering a temple, offering lotus flower and fruits etc. The students also enjoyed drive along the Marine Drive. No visit to Mumbai is complete without a visit to Sanjay Gandhi National Park. They trekked up to the Kanheri caves and experienced the magic of meditation in one of the caves. The students marveled at how the caves reverberated with the Om chantings, spreading around a peaceful calm. After a grand lunch, they took a Bollywood tour which helped them understand the nitty-gritty of a film shoot, the set and other technical aspects. They learned that Bollywood is one of the biggest film industries of the world. The aim of the camp was achieved giving the Swiss students a glimpse into Mumbai's rich history, culture and wildlife.



Days to remember

- 11 July-World Population Day
- 15 July-World Youth Skills Day
- 18 July-Nelson Mandela International Day
- 29 July-International Tiger Day
- 30 July-International Day of Friendship
- 9 Aug-International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- 12 Aug- International Youth Day & World Elephant Day
- 19 Aug-World Humanitarian Day

UNEP Awards Trailblazers



India's first World Heritage City

The Walled City of Ahmedabad, founded by Sultan Ahmed Shah in the 15th century, has been declared India's first World Heritage City. The World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO made this announcement in Poland's Krakow. On the eastern banks of Sabarmati river Ahmedabad presents a rich architectural heritage from the sultanate period, notably the Bhadra citadel, the walls and gates of the Fort city and numerous mosques and tombs, including important Hindu and Jain temples of later periods.

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