

June 2014

ECOTRAIL



For free private circulation only Not for sale

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- TEACHER TRAINING 2
- THE BENGAL FLORICAN 2
- EXPERIENTIAL ENRICHMENT 3
- UNIQUE ECOTONES 3
- SPECIAL CAMP FOR PEDIATRIC BURN SURVIVORS 4
- NEWS AND EVENTS 4

FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENT

Water, the elixir of Life. For how long?

The month of June is a very significant one for awareness and education of a critical subject – The Environment. 5th June is celebrated worldwide as the World Environment day, launched by United Nations Environment Program, while World Ocean’s day is celebrated on the 8th of this month and the United Nations’ World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed worldwide on June 17.

The oceans make up for 71% of the planet Earth. What is even more astonishing is how little we know about this vast ecosystem. The largest water body has the longest mountain range cutting across 3/4th of the globe, has some of the tallest mountains, and we just discovered that an amazing world of flora and fauna exists where there is no sunlight and the pressure is crushing. Just imagine at the deepest point of the Marina trench the pressure is the equivalent of being buried under 50 Jumbo Jets!

The earlier belief that the sun and its light was essential for all life forms and that there is little to marginal life at ocean depths below 300 meters, is now being seriously questioned. As new technology is helping us descend further into the ocean, we are seeing an amazing array of natural beauty we never knew existed. It

is said we know more about our satellite moon and the planet Mars than we know of the oceans on Earth.

The oceans are also in grave danger, from the influence of man. It is being overfished,



acidified and used as a sump to dump our waste. Little do we realize that the source of most of the oxygen available to us is in our seas and oceans. It is the source of cheap protein for humans worldwide and is also absorbing the carbon dioxide that is being generated indiscriminately by man. Let us together make humans

aware that oceans are man’s best friend. Let’s save our seas and shores.

We suggest that all academic institutions this year celebrate, learn, teach and make aware our gen-next by nominating the

academic year 2014/15 as the “Year of Oceans”.



.....
“ The sea, once it casts its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever.”
—Jacques Cousteau

Welcome

Dear Reader,

Ecotrail is back after a prolonged siesta. The reason is the deluge of mail from principals, students and parents, so thank you. In its new avatar, Ecotrail will be available online and in print, it will be in colour and will welcome your articles and reach schools nationwide. We are happy to launch this issue and the Trailblazers Foundation, jointly on the occasion of World Environment Day 5th June

Trailblazers Foundation is supported by Trailblazers Adventure Travel Pvt Ltd a pioneer in outbound education since 1994. Trailblazers has facilitated schools across India and abroad rewiring school trips into something more meaningful, making them safe and ensuring students and teachers alike come back with renewed vigour to seek knowledge and make the planet earth safe for generations to come.

I look forward to your inputs and seek your participation in various events and wish you, your faculty, and students a successful academic year ahead. Do read more about the first ever burns camp in India and about one of the most inspiring and much awarded CSR projects undertaken by Trailblazers addressing teachers.



Ranjan Biswas
Editor

On the Brink....

The Bengal florican (*Houbaropsis bengalensis*) is a critically endangered bustard species found in two disjunct populations, one in the Indian subcontinent and the other in South East Asia. The former occurs from Uttar Pradesh through the terai of Nepal, to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh and to Bangladesh. It has declined dramatically and only survives in small, highly fragmented populations

The size of a large duck it is the only member of the genus *Houbaropsis*. Its population is estimated to be fewer than 1,000, perhaps as few as 500 adult birds only.

The most significant threat to this bird is the loss and alteration of its grassland habitat. Grasslands throughout its range are threatened by conversion to agriculture, overgrazing, heavy flooding, and inappropriate cutting and burning. Poaching continues to be a problem in Southeast Asia

In India, it is protected under Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

PHOTO COURTESY: MARTIN HALE
www.martinhalewildlifephot.com



THE LEARNING CURVE

Bringing innovation to education

Life is a journey of continuous transformation and innovation. The traditional chalk and board method of teaching is no longer sufficiently stimulating for young, impressionable minds. A teacher's constant endeavor should therefore be to introduce novel teaching methods that encourage the student to think outside the box. By being innovative in conveying a learning concept, the teacher is able to enhance the learning experience of the student.

Making an effort to ignite interest and curiosity in a subject not only makes lessons more effective, it turns the teacher into someone the student looks up to as well as has fun with, irrespective of the subject, whether science, math, history geography etc. This is obviously easier said than done, and raises some important questions about the structure in place and


ideas and different perspectives.

There are a multitude of training programs available for the teacher who wants to be a step forward in their profession. Dow – Multiply the Message is one such workshop which facilitates this innovation. In its 6th year now, "Multiply the Message" has touched upon thousands of teachers and future teachers from Government schools, private schools, international schools, state board schools emphasizing on innovative teaching methods and environmental science. The workshop provokes the Teachers to experiment something new in their teaching methodology by showcasing examples of innovation. The project's main objective is to draw on teachers as Multipliers of Message and thus reach out to maximum number of target audience - the students. In 2014, Dow – Multiply the



whether it is able to facilitate the growth of the teacher along with the students. Introspection and a sense of awareness are essential in addition to a passion for teaching in order to make a difference in the life of a child who is exposed to a gamut of modern gadgets and technology.

Some of the required skills in the realms of creativity and innovation can be acquired through training, upgrading subject knowledge and its current relevance, networking within the education fraternity and sharing of ideas. Use of technology, experiential learning, music, games are just some of the media of communication which will intrigue and spark interest in a child. The possibilities are immense provided the mind is open. They say minds are like parachutes – they work best when open. So open your mind to new thoughts, new

Message initiative was nominated for the prestigious Boston College Film Festival. The purpose of the Film Festival is to demonstrate compelling examples of how a company can look beyond its own walls to make a difference in the world. Dow Multiply the Message was selected as one of the top 10 best Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative in the Boston Film Festival. This fully sponsored workshop is open to all teachers, B.Ed students who want to make that difference in their teaching skills. As Robert Frost said in 'The road Not Taken,' - Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by and that has made all the difference. So walk the path of creativity. 

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiFX233IMNA>

A beautiful Vine snake enthralls students.....



"I hear, I know. I see, I remember. I do, I understand." –Confucius

Life requires us to do, more than it requires us to know, in order to function. Using nature and the outdoors as learning tools, offers opportunities to explore, learn and understand nature. It is a voyage of discovery where children not only explore the natural world, but also themselves and their potential. It is the interactions with others and the environment that shape experiences.

There is a strong case to be made for adopting an experiential approach to learning. It provides a counterbalance to the academic immersion of a demanding school program. Outdoor experiential learning strengthens class room teaching and enhances the depth of learning. It lends a hand to meet the requirement of the curriculum as well as caters to the physical and intellectual growth of the child.

Experiential learning is not discovery learning, where students are let loose to discover things for themselves based on their natural curiosity. Rather, learning by doing involves a careful design of activities that allows students to have meaningful, relevant learning experiences, sometimes life changing, that they will be able to use in the future.

UNIQUE SALINE DESERT-CUM-SEASONAL WETLAND
Little Rann

The Little Rann of Kutch, literally a desert, is flat, featureless and brown. This vast expanse of dry, cracking mud with clumps of bushes are a geographic and ecological wonder. Thousands of square miles of baked mud may not inspire images of conventional splendor, but here you can let your imagination fill the gaps: between the clear air, the glittering night sky and the infinite space. Echoing calls of the Common Crane and the gallops of the handsome Asiatic wild ass unravel the many secrets of this arid desert.

This remarkable ecotone is the only one of its kind in the entire world. A part of the Thar Desert, this vast barren land encrusted with salts, transforms into a spectacular coastal wetland after the rain. It is rich in biodiversity, a biological hotspot and is an ecologically important area for wildlife and many local and migratory water birds. It is also the last stronghold of some very important species like the Asiatic wild ass, desert cat, white-footed desert fox, the Macqueen's Bustard, the Syke's Nightjar and many more.



WORLD'S LARGEST MANGROVE ECOSYSTEM
Sundarbans

The first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word Sunderbans, is Amitav Ghosh's "Hungry Tide" and the story of Piyali looking for endangered dolphins in the swamps.

Sunderbans National Park forms the core area of the Sunderban Tiger Reserve and received recognition as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1987.

The Sundarbans mangrove forest, one of the largest such forests in the world (140,000 ha), lies on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal. The site is intersected by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands of salt-tolerant mangrove forests, and presents an excellent example of ongoing ecological processes. The area is known for its wide range of fauna, including 260 bird species, the Bengal tiger and other threatened species such as the estuarine crocodile and the Indian python. It is also noted for its conservation of the Ridley Sea Turtle.

This rich ecosystem is a source of livelihood for locals through fishing, collection of honey and timber.

However it now faces the serious challenges for its existence. The Javan rhino, wild buffalo, hog deer, and



barking deer are already extinct from the area. Salinity is rising. Other threats to biodiversity come from the growing human population, pollution, and a rise in sea level.



A journey through these mangroves reveals a world far removed from the bustling cities, providing an entirely different perspective on life. It teaches you that nothing is permanent, much like the ever-shifting islets.



SPECIAL CAMP FOR PEDIATRIC BURN SURVIVORS

Camp Karma

Sunday, 10th May 2014 saw the premiere of two movies about 20 wonderful children, and their transformational experience during a camp conducted by Trailblazers, in association with the Department of Plastic Surgery at the K.E.M Hospital, Mumbai. Parents, doctors, volunteers and children, all watched with rapt attention as "Silent Screams" & "Camp Diaries" were screened to the public for the very first time.

It was May 2013, and Dr. Vinita Puri, Head of Plastic Surgery Dept. at K.E.M, was looking for an organization to conduct a special camp for pediatric burn survivors. After a quick meeting with Trailblazers, a strong

objective of aiding the psycho-social rehabilitation of child burn survivors, was the first of its kind in India. About 25 children who were being treated at K.E.M were approached to participate. The parents were extremely skeptical and needed extensive counselling and persuasion to let their children out of their sight. Despite some initial apprehension, the children and parents were convinced this experience would be something vastly different from their every-day lives.

The activities were designed to boost self-esteem and improve self-image through team games, adventure activities, star-gazing, 3D mobile planetarium shows, and opportunities to showcase their dancing and culinary talents, while making sure everyone, including the doctors, had the time of their




partnership was forged between them along with Burn Advocates, New York, who have been organizing similar camps in the United States for many years. Camp Karma, with the

lives. All the children, aged 7 to 15 participated enthusiastically and brought an energy level that even the adults had a tough time keeping up with! There was also time for



reflection and motivation, where the children were invited to speak their hearts about their perspective on life and how it had changed over the course of this camp. Their poignant tales of optimism and courage remain example for all.

It was a fun filled learning and bonding camp for the children and doctors alike. The last day saw some difficult goodbyes and fond farewells being bid, as the fun time was drawing to a close and the children were packing up to go home with heavy hearts and heavier bags, laden with gifts and souvenirs. The children went back with renewed confidence to take on the world, ambitions to reach for the sky and a huge smile.

Camp Karma seemed to have achieved its goal. 

Earth Hour 2014 Celebration



SWITCHING OFF FOR THE PLANET: Lights were switched off for 15 minutes from 8.30pm in Phase-3 of Spencer Plaza Chennai to observe the Earth Hour 2014 on April 29th. At many other places in the city, it was observed for the entire hour. The worldwide movement organised by WWF aimed at raising awareness about renewable energy solutions to reduce the impact on the environment. **WWF-India, along with Trailblazers, Youth Exnora International and Sathyabama University, also organised a cultural event for the crowd from 6pm to 9.30pm.**

Editor : Ranjan Biswas
Associate Editor : Mala Biswas
Reporters : Anindya Mani, Aditya Biswas, Kiran Islania, Meena Nair, Rashmi Sharma, Sachin Sata
Photo credits : Aditya Biswas, Donald Mukherjee, Martin Hale, Meena Nair, Sachin Sata

This newsletter is published by:
Trailblazers Adventure Travel Pvt Ltd
Edenwoods, Bay House, Ground A, Off Pokhran Road No. 2, Thane (W) 400 610 Maharashtra India
Mail us on ecotrail@trailblazersindia.com for subscribing to a email copy, feedback, contributions, comments and permission for reproduction, in any form, of the content. ©2014 – All rights reserved.
Download softcopy from www.trailblazersindia.com

