

Le Meridien Hotel, Krishnammal College & School, Nilgiri Biosphere Nature Park and Zoo Outreach Organisation partner and celebrate World Environment Day (WED) 2011

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For the first time, India is the global host for World Environment Day (WED) 2011 which has been themed "Forest: Nature at your Service". On that day, United Nations Environment Programme UNEP aims to stimulate worldwide awareness of the environment and encourages political attention and action. WED is a day for people from all walks of life to come together to learn how a cleaner, greener and brighter outlook for themselves and future generations can be achieved.

To celebrate this day, Nilgiri Biosphere Nature Park, (NPNB), Anaikatti coordinating with of Zoo Outreach Organisation organized a programme at their park with Le Meridien Hotel for their staff. Le Meridien, an eco-friendly hotel in the city took this initiative to raise awareness amongst their staff as well as students. About 60 Hotel Staff with their General Manager, Mr. Sanjay Gupta and 50 PSGR Krishnammal College and school students with three teachers enthusiastically participated in the programme. The hotel sponsored student's entry fees at the park, provided a very nice t-shirt to all the students, purchased 50 saplings to plant at the park with the students and food and snacks for the students.

The hotel staff and students were welcomed by the park staff who briefly related the history and major characters of the park. It was established in 1986 and has been actively supported and promoted by well known industrialists and philanthropists of Coimbatore. Successful restoration work has been done on barren land in the park premises. Over 25000 trees of 430 species, 85 of them native to Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve area, have been planted since the inception of the Park. This ecological restoration attracts over 100 species of birds, 20 species of reptiles, 22 species of amphibians, 18 species of mammals, and a number of invertebrates. The participants were taken inside the park to plant saplings. The students and hotel staff planted 50 saplings in different areas of the park. This experience created a memorable experience and created a feeling that they are part of the conservation mission to save forests. After that they were taken inside the park in groups



Le Meridien staff planting sapling at NBNR site



Students with the signature campaign cloth

with each group being handled by the NBNP & ZOO staff. They walked through the park following the Nature Trail (about 1.2 km). The Nature trail covers amphibian pond, biodiversity hut, invertebrates hut, reptile and bird hut and medicinal plant hut and also thorn forest zone, evergreen zone, fish pond, herbal garden, pollinator garden, xerophytes plants garden, mist chamber and shade areas. At all points

of interest on the nature trail NBNP and ZOO hosts explained the plants and animals to their satisfaction and understanding.

The participants very much liked this nature trail and their overall comment about the park was that it is fabulous

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A student going through the ABC's of WED brochure

to visit and see conservation of nature being done. Some of the senior staff of the hotel were provided with ZOO's WED kits and they liked it very much. They left the park with great memories.

Afternoon Programme

In the afternoon, the PSGR Krishnammal College and school students were brought back to the college and we conducted an education programme using ZOO's World Environment Day special kits. The same 60 students, in which 37 were school students studying 10th Std and 13 college students studying 1st year degree and all are belong to the Eco-club of the institution. There were three teachers. We have to appreciate the students and teachers attended this long programme on a school holiday.

In the first part of the afternoon programme, the students were briefed about the WED history, such as when it

was started and where, why they selected India as the global host for this year's WED celebration. Further they were told about the Forest Survey of India and its statistics on Indian forested area, including the percentage of forest cover in Tamil Nadu and other states of India. The importance of forests was conveyed to participants in an explanation. They learned that the forest cover is one third of land mass and it plays a vital role in the battle against climate change, releasing oxygen into the atmosphere while storing carbon dioxide. Approximately 1.6 billion people directly depend upon forests for their survival. More than 50% cities in the world obtain water from the forest water catchment areas. The forests are home to more than half of the terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects. At the same time, global deforestation continues at alarming rate and every year 13 million forests are destroyed. Participants were encouraged to do whatever they can do to save the forests.

A brief note about Nilgiri Biosphere Nature Park was communicated highlighting the noble cause of saving plants. WED special kits developed by ZOO and sponsored by several donors around the world were distributed. Participants went through the posters including an A.B. C. brochure and packet folder cum sticker, etc. They were very happy to see the materials. Then Resource Persons took the group through the materials to insure understanding. The front side of the poster featured a colourful logo of WED 2011 and the selection of India wildlife appeared on it as well. Students identified the animals, two of which they saw in the morning at NBNP site, e.g., tiger centipede and leopard gecko. They were given time to read the information on the poster to understand what services forests provide to all living organisms. They went through the WED A.B.C.S brochure also and this created an opportunity for a game. We selected some letters and if participant name started with the letter, she was asked to stand up and read that particular point. They quickly learned the few simple steps that would easily green their daily routine and make good eco behavior into a habit! Green is forest friendly!. Both students and teachers told us that they really enjoyed the tree planting, NBNP visit and this education awareness programme.

We like to thank Madam Mrs. Nandini Rengaswamy who helped in organizing these two events even on the holiday and schools are reopening only on 15 June 2011 after the summer vocation. The programme was conducted and coordinated by Mr. B. Rathinasabapathy, Project Coordinator, R.Muthusamy, Murugesan, Ram Sundar, Sampath Kumar, Ponnusamy of NBNP, R. Marimuthu, Dr. B. A. Daniel and Brawin Kumar of ZOO and teachers Mrs. Amuthavalli, Mrs. S. Nagamani and Mrs. S. Thenmozhihelvi.

