

Wildlife Day -- Celebrations during 1955

from Proceedings of the IVth Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Indian Board for Wildlife held at Sasan Gir, 18-20 January

On page 90 of the Proceedings of the IVth Meeting of Executive Committee of the IBWL reported "The 1st All India Wildlife Day celebrated on 7 July 1955 has publicised the cause of wildlife. Lectures and meetings were organised throughout the country wherein the importance of wildlife was explained to the people."

The government apparently circulated a communication to the states and universities requesting a report of their celebrations, of their suggestions for the future and for a time of celebrations in future. Pages 67 - 84 of the Proceedings carries reports from a good number of states and a few universities.. Many of the reports are similar to what we do for Wildlife Week today and a number of their "future suggestions" are being used even now. This report makes for interesting and sometimes amusing and instructive reading, particularly on the eve of India's 50th Wildlife Week. It seemed appropriate to share with our readers along with our standing offer of educational materials for Wildlife Week. The reports are state wise, of course using the names of the states as they were 50 years ago. It may be interesting to consider to what extent Wildlife Week has achieved the potential promised in this first attempt.

You will note in reading that under "Time of Celebration in future" that most states suggested Vanamahotsava Week as the most appropriate period for Wildlife Week. In the end it seems as if the Board in its wisdom decided on 1st week in October ... page 47 reads " ... would (it) not be preferable to arrange for the observance sometime during Deepavali week. The mirth and festivity associated with the Deevali season may help to focus more attention on the observance of the Day if the latter is fixed at about that time (after due publicity)."

I. State Governments

1. Andhra

Celebrations during 1955

- (i) The celebrations in Andhra was unique. Heads of two states participated in the celebrations. The function at the State Capital was inaugurated by the Governor of Madras while the Governor of Andhra presided. The Chief Minister spoke on the occasion
- (ii) Meetings in the districts held explaining the necessity of wildlife preservation.

Mode of Celebration in Future

- (i) Issue of special series of postage-stamps depicting the various species of wildlife.
- (ii) Admission of the public to National Parks, sanctuaries, zoos, etc. free of charge
- (iii) Placards depicting diminishing species and explaining the importance of preserving them.

Time of celebrations in future

May be celebrated on the last day of Vanamahotsava Week.

2. Assam

1955

- (i) Public meetings organised through out the state.
- (ii) Forest Minister and officers of the State Government spoke at soe of these meetings stressing the necessity of preserving wildlife.

Mode in Future

nil remarks

Time in Future

July is not convenient because of heavy rains and inaccessibility of sanctuaries. January desirable.

3. Bihar

1955

- (i) Public meeting organised at Ranchi under the

Chairmanship of the Chief Minister, Dr. S.K. Sinha

(ii) Exhibition of the file "Trade Horn"

(iii) Articles in the Daily Newspapers.

Mode in Future

nil remarks

Time in future

- (i) Last week of December in order the focus the attention of the shooting parties out in the jungles on the need for preservation of wildlife.
- (ii) The forests also are accessible during that month.

4. Bombay

1955

- (i) Appeal by the state forest minister to preserve wildlife printed in regional languages and distributed through out the state.
- (ii) Radio talk by the State Forest Minister.
- (iii) Posters on wildlife.
- (iv) Film shows.
- (v) Public Meetings
- (vi) Instructions by the G.O.C. Southern command to all the troops to observe the day by not hunting any wild animal or bird on that day.
- (vii) Appeal to license holders not to shoot on that day.
- (viii) Children's visit to the zoos.
- (ix) Articles in the press.
- (x) Monetary collections.

Mode in Future

(i) Appeal by the state chief Minister to be distributed throughout the state.

(ii) Visit of the State Chief Minister, accompanied by important personalities, other officials and the State Wildlife Preservation Officer, to the zoological Gardens and Museums.

- (iii) Wide distribution of defacing stamps throughout the state.
- (iv) Cinema-slides on wildlife protection, in all Picture-Houses.
- (v) Species, on the All India Radio, by the State Ministers for Forest and Education, on separate days.
- (vi) Address by the State Deputy Minister for Forests, on the All India Radio, for the children-hour.
- (vii) Stories for children and short dialogues, on wildlife, on the All India Radio.
- (ix) Film-shows and lecturer by the State Wildlife Preservation Officer, Professors, Teachers, Officials, Honorary Game Wardens, institutions interested in wildlife preservations and other individuals and public workers similarly interested.
- (x) Wide distribution of posters throughout the state.
- (xi) Publicity through the District Publicity Officers and Regional Publicity Officers.
- (xii) Wildlife essay-competitions, with prizes.
- (xiii) Wildlife painting competitions, with prizes.
- (xiv) Exhibition of wildlife photography with provision for certificate of merit.
- (xv) Special programmes by Zoological Gardens and Museum Authorities.
- (xvi) Excursion of children and others, to Sanctuaries, Zoological Gardens and Museums, etc.
- (xviii) Fullest cooperation of the press.
- (xviii) Cooperation of all Departmental local Heads, by presiding over and attending local functions.

Time in future

The last week of September is suitable for the wildlife week celebration, on the following considerations:-

- (i) The heavy monsoon recedes and the chances of a heavy rainfall spoiling the celebrations disappear.
- (ii) The close season for small Game- 1st April to 30th September- is in progress, which eliminates to a considerable extent, the possibilities of any wild animal or wild bird being hunted during the week.
- (iii) Most of the birds enjoy life, in a peaceful atmosphere, and are of useful importance to humanity since they destroy harmful insect life.
- (iv) This is also the time, when the State welcomes hordes of migratory birds, which fill the State during the winter season
- (v) In the fitness of things, the Vanamahotsava celebrations precede the Wildlife Week.
- (vi) The schools and colleges are open and working in full form, (it is true that the students and children are more inclined to study hard, for the terminal examinations during the month of September. But considering the comparatively less importance of the opportunity for relaxation, to some extent, in a manner, entertaining them, and at the same time, imparting to them, some useful information about wildlife in a very interesting manner.)

5. Madhya Pradesh

1955

- (i) Instructions issued to all Deputy Commissioners and Heads of Departments to celebrate the day.
- (ii) Radio talk by the Deputy Forest Minister.

Mode in Future

- (i) Meeting in schools and colleges, villages and towns.

- (ii) Prohibiting the shooting of wild animals except cattle lifters on that day.
- (iii) Distribution of posters and pamphlets depicting the various aspects of wildlife.
- (iv) Elephant-parade in places wherever possible.
- (v) Exhibition of films on wildlife.
- (vi) Visit to the local zoos.
- (vii) Radio talk by the State Minister for Forest.

Time in Future

May be celebrated on the last day of the Vanamahotsava Week.

6. Madras

1955

- (i) Procession of zoo animals in the city of Madras.
- (ii) Public Meetings in the City, towns and villages explaining the importance of preserving wildlife.
- (iii) Radio talks by Forest Officers.
- (iv) Visit by children to the zoo, at concessional rates.
- (v) Exhibition of films on wildlife.
- (vi) Appeal issued by the Chief conservator of Forests to the Licencees to abstain from shooting for one week from 7th July as a gesture of goodwill towards wildlife.

Mode in Future

Nil remarks

Time in Future

Last day of the Vanamahotsava week, because of the close relationship between plant and animal life.

7. Uttar Pradesh

1955

- (i) Colorful and impressive processions comprising elephants etc. were taken out.
- (ii) Illustrated placards, posters, pictures etc. were displayed in the procession.
- (iii) Children were given joyrides on elephants.
- (iv) Films on wildlife were shown to the public.
- (v) Lectures delivered at different places on the utility and preservation of wildlife.

Mode in future

May be celebrated on the same lines as this year.

Time in future

May be celebrate along with the Vanamahotsava Week.

8. Jammu & Kashmir

1955

- (i) Radio talk given on the day.
- (iii) Issue of pamphlets in local language.

Mode in future

- (i) Radio talks.
- (ii) Articles in the press.
- (iii) Issue of pamphlets in local language.

Time in future

Wildlife Day should coincide with Vanamahotsava.

9. Hyderabad

1955

- (i) Radio talk by Deputy Conservator of Forests.
- (ii) Lectures in schools and colleges.
- (iii) Students' visit to the public gardens.

Mode in future

Nil remarks

Time in future

(i) July being the monsoon month is not the proper season for the festival.

(ii) Winter months (November or December) may be chosen for the purpose to facilitate visits to forests and wildlife sanctuaries.

10. Rajasthan

1955

- (i) Radio talk by the State Forest Minister.
- (ii) Visit to the zoos by the school children.
- (iii) Screening of films.

Mode in future

- (i) Lecturers on the significance of wildlife.
- (ii) Children's visit to the zoos.

Time in future

(i) Wildlife Day to be celebrated along with the Vanamahotsava Week.

11. Saurashtra

1955

- (i) Radio talk by the Conservator of Forests.
- (ii) Public meetings.
- (iii) Essay competition among students on wildlife and award of prizes to the best essayist.

Mode in future

- (i) Visit to the zoos.
- (ii) Exhibition of films on wildlife.
- (iii) Excursion of students to nearby forest.
- (iv) Provision of traveling and boarding facilities at concessional rates by State Government.
- (v) Essay competition in schools & colleges on wildlife and award of prizes.

Time in future

(i) December suitable as it is convenient to visit the forest during that month.

12. Ajmer

1955

(i) Meeting arranged. The Chief Commissioner and the Chief Minister addressed the meeting stressing the necessity for the preservation of wildlife.

Mode in future

- (i) Meetings.
- (ii) Display of films.
- (iii) Distribution of pamphlets.
- (iv) Excursion of students to nearby forests.

Time in future

(i) May be celebrated along with Vanamahotsava Week.

13. Bhopal

1955

(i) Celebrated along with Vanamahotsava.

Mode in future

(i) Procession with tableau depicting various aspects of wildlife.

Time in future

(i) Early May convenient.

14. Coorg

1955

(i) Issued Memorandum on wildlife.

Mode in future

- (i) Public meetings and meetings in schools and colleges.
- (ii) Film Shows.

Time in future

(i) July not suitable as it is a rainy month, May suitable.

15. Kutch

1955

(i) Please note issued urging the public not to shoot wildlife on that day.

Mode in future

nil remarks.

Time in future

nil remarks.

16. Manipur

1955

(i) Lectures in schools and colleges arranged.

Mode in future

(i) Excursion of the students to the various sanctuaries, zoos etc.

Time in future

(i) May be celebrated on the Govardhan Day, which falls in November.

17. Tripura

1955

(i) Meetings and lectures arranged explaining the various aspects of wildlife.

Mode in future

(i) Lectures in schools and colleges.
(ii) Short excursions by students to nearby places of interest for Nature Study.

(iii) Erection of suitable roadside posters.

Time in future

(i) Last day of the Vanamahotsava Week.

18. Mysore

1955

- (i) Free admission of the school children to the zoos.
- (ii) Talks on wildlife to the school children.
- (iii) Excursion to the Bandipur Game Sanctuary.

Mode in future

(i) Exhibition of films on zoos and wildlife in the interior parts through the Mobile Cinema Vans.
(ii) Broad-cast talks.

Time in future

(i) May be observed on any day during the Vanamahotsava Week.

19. Delhi

1955

(i) No celebration undertaken

Mode in future

- (i) Publication of articles in the Daily Press.
- (ii) Broadcast talks on the utility of wildlife.
- (iii) Cinema Slides.
- (iv) Mobilising the teachers and students in the rural areas to celebrate the day.

(v) Displaying of maps, posters, calendars showing the opening and closing of Game at prominent places like Panchayat Ghars etc.

Time in future

nil remarks

20. Andamans

1955

(i) No celebrations due to the late receipt of the communication.

Mode in future

(i) nil remarks

Time in future

(i) Desirable to observe the day on the last day of the Vanamahotsava Week.

21. Pondicherry

1955

(i) No forest, no wildlife, no celebrations.

Mode in future

nil remarks

Time in future

nil remarks

22. Madhya Bharat

1955

(i) Meetings held and importance of wildlife explained.

(ii) Pamphlets creating a sense of love towards wildlife distributed.

Mode in future

(i) Distribution of pamphlets.

(ii) Cinema Slides.

(iii) Radio Talks.

Time in future

Month of December

23. Travancore-Cochin

1955

(i) A message about game preservation by Dr. Keskar, Minister for information & Broadcasting, Government of India, was broadcasted from the Trivandrum Station of A.I.R.

(ii) Publicity given through Radio and newspapers emphasizing the importance of the Day.

(iii) Wall posters displayed.

(iv) Natural History museum and Zoological Gardens kept open to the Public throughout the day.

(v) Zoos opened to students free of charge.

(vi) Birds and animals in the zoos were given a special diet.

(vii) Meetings organized in schools, town etc.

(viii) Excursions of students to zoos, sanctuaries and near by forests organized.

(ix) Film show on wildlife arranged.

Mode in future

(i) On the same lines as celebrate during 1955.

Time in future

(i) Proper to celebrated the day during the Vanamahotsava Week.

24. West Bengal

1955

(i) Films on wildlife exhibited.

(ii) Radio talks on wildlife given.

(iii) Articles published in the press.

Mode in future

(i) Articles, photographs drawings of wildlife should be invited from the public and prizes offered for the best contribution.

(ii) Essay competition among the students on wildlife and award of prizes for the best essayists.

(iii) Attractive Movie pictures designed to arouse a love of wildlife and building up of such a pool of films.

(iv) Enlistment of the cooperation of the press.

Time in future

nil remarks

25. Punjab

1955

(i) Meetings organized in towns and schools.

(ii) Press-notes and leaflets issued.

(iii) Procession of students and General public taken out at various places with mottos and placards exhorting the public to cultivate love for fauna and flora.

(iv) Cinema shows on wildlife arranged.

(v) Exhibition of stuffed birds and animals organized.

Mode in future

(i) On the same lines as celebrated October, during 1955

Time in future

nil remarks

26. Orissa

1955

(i) Note on the subject distributed in English and Oriya.

(ii) Meetings organized in schools, colleges and towns.

(iii) Excursion of students to the nearby forests organized.

(iv) Radio talk by an officer of the Forest Department.

Mode in future

(i) On the same lines as celebrated in 1955.

Time in future

(i) May be celebrated during hot weather and for one week instead of one day.

27. Himachal Pradesh

1955

(i) Meetings organized, speeches made emphasizing the importance of the preservation of wildlife.

Mode in future

(i) Committees consisting of M.L.A.s, Municipal Commissioners and representative of Educational Institutions may be formed at District and Taluk level to chalk out necessary programmes for the occasion and their implementation.

Time in future

(i) Should not coincide with Vanamahotsava Programme; may be observed on the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi a befitting day to spread the message of "Ahimsa".

II. Universities

1. Andhra University

1955

(i) Meetings organized in the colleges.

Mode in future

nil remarks

Time in future

nil remarks

2. Madras University

1955

(i) Day observed in colleges and lectures delivered explaining the significance of the day.

Mode in future

nil remarks

Time in future

nil remarks

3. Mysore University

1955

- (i) Wildlife Day observed in most of the institutions
- (ii) Lectures delivered explaining the significance of the day and emphasizing the importance of preservation of wildlife.

Mode in future

- (i) Excursions to Forests in December.
- (ii) Essay Competition among students on wildlife.

Time in future

nil remarks

4. Rajputana University

1955

nil remarks

Mode in future

- (i) Occasional talks on the subject.
- (ii) Screening of films on the subject.

Time in future

nil remarks

5. Allahabad University

1955

nil remarks

Mode in future

- (i) Occasional lectures on the subject.

Time in future

nil remarks

6. Annamalai University

1955

- (i) Celebrated as part of Vanamahotsava.

Mode in future

nil remarks

Time in future

nil remarks

7. Travancore University

1955

- (i) Meetings were held in all colleges stressing the importance and significance of wildlife preservation.

- (ii) Pictures and illustrations depicting wild life exhibited.

- (iii) Excursions undertaken to nearby forests for nature study.

Mode in future

nil remarks

Time in future

- (i) May be observed either in August or September as the weather in July is likely to be inclement.

8. Sri Venkateswara University

1955

- (i) Meeting organized in the University. Staff and students addressed the meeting on the significance of the day.

- (ii) Pictures of game birds and game animals displayed.

- (iii) Few films screened.

Mode in future

nil remarks

Time in future

nil remarks

Just two years later

Enclosure "K" in the Proceedings of the Third Session of the Indian Board for Wildlife held at New Delhi, February 1958 summarised reports from various state governments, zoo administrations and universities in connection with "Wildlife Week -- 1957" -- held during the first week of October.

From this Report we can easily gather that Wildlife Day has become Wildlife Week and it has been firmly established in the first week of October. The first part of the Report consisted of a very long list of talks broadcast from various radio stations during Wildlife Week Celebrations in 1975. The list of speakers is indeed impressive, including State Governors, Chief Ministers, Zoo Directors, State Forest and other Ministers, Chief Conservators of Forest, Zoological Society officers and members, Maharajas, I.G. Forests, Wildlife Preservation Officers, Assistant Conservators, Wildlife Advisory Board Chairmen, and others. Some of the more famous names are Shri Jayachamarajandra Wadiyar then Governor of Mysore, Shri S. Nijalingappa, CM of Mysore State, Maharaj Fatehsingh Rao Gaekwad, Baroda, Reuben David, Superintendent of Ahmedabad Zoo, Shri Dharmakumarsinji, etc.

State governments, probably the Forest Departments, also reported again with new events reported and much more use of film and posters, the latter being provided by the I.B.W.L.

This year as well, there was a zoo section in which several zoos reported their activities. These activities included making changes in the zoo for the welfare of the animals as well as organising functions for the public.

In this report the Universities made a very good showing, with 26 universities summarising their activities and making suggestions for further Wildlife Week.

So what began as Wildlife Day became Wildlife Week in two years with good reports still coming in. It would be interesting to know how many institutions celebrate Wildlife Week today. At Zoo Outreach Organisation itself we get from 50-75 or more requests, and growing every year. It is a credit to the Indian wildlife community that this celebratory period for wildlife could become so well established.