

National Workshop for Zoo Educators on Conservation Education 27 February-1 March 2012, Vanvihar National Park/Zoo, Bhopal R. Marimuthu*

The Central Zoo Authority has been organizing different kinds of capacity building training programmes for zoo professionals. CZA arranged a first workshop in Bhopal in 2010. Now CZA has a plan to organize this workshop every two years. The objective of the workshop is to infuse Indian Zoo Educators with the most contemporary zoo education techniques, also giving an opportunity to meet, share and discuss their work with others. They invited resource persons from India and abroad.

The second "National Workshop for Zoo Educators on Conservation Education" was held at Vanvihar National Park from 27 February-02 March 2012. Twenty-four participants from 22 zoos across the country participated in the workshop many of whom were educators who were hired very recently also attended. Mr. Sartaj Singh, Forest Minister of Madhya Pradesh, inaugurated the workshop. Dr. H.S. Pabla, PCCF & CWW, Mr. T. R. Sharma & Mr. Dharmendra Sharma Addl. PCCF (WL), Mr. B.S. Bonal, MS, CZA and Mr. B.P.S Parihar, Director, Van Vihar National Park were among the dignitaries.

After the inaugural the participants introduced each other through an animal game. Then the first technical session was started. In this session Mr. M. S. Bonal delivered an extensive overview of the importance of zoo education to India, CZA's vision and CZA's commitments to education.

Mr. Stephen Mckeown of Chester Zoo, UK followed with the talk on "Effective Communication using plain English" explaining why we have to use simple English in zoo education so that it gets the point across to all levels of visitors. Ms. May Lok of Singapore zoo shared various activities carried out by Wildlife Reserves Singapore, which manages Singapore zoo, night and river safaris.

In the second technical session, as a first presentation R. Marimuthu of Zoo Outreach Organization talked about conservation education strategy. Mr. P.C. Tyagi, Faculty of WII gave a lecture on "Conservation education programmes for schools and Colleges in zoos". Ms. Meena Nareshwar of CEE talked about the manual which they developed for zoo educators.

After the presentations were over, the participants were divided into four working groups with an assignment,



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The evaluation group evaluating one of the enclosure at Van Vihar Zoo

which have to be carried out in the zoo the next day. The topic of their assignment and facilitators were:

Group: 1 - Visitor Profile at the Van Vihar National Park/Zoo facilitated by Ms. Meena Nareshwar

Group: 2 - Signage
Facilitated by Dr. Stephen Mckeown

Group: 3 - Enclosure types and enrichment facilitated by Dr. Naim Akhtar

Group: 4 - Evaluation, facilitated by R. Marimuthu

On 28 February the third technical session started with Mr. Stephen Mckewon sharing the conservation education activities of Chester Zoo. Ms. Meena Nareshwar spoke on the effectiveness of signage, design and interpretation. R. Marimuthu gave two presentations, one on developing education materials and another on active learning tools that can be used in zoo education programmes giving

***Education Officer, Zoo Outreach Organization.
Email: marimuthu@zooreach.org**



The visitor profiling group interviews visitors



Signage group doing their evaluation exercise at the zoo



A drama depicting how Kalandars getting and training dancing bears

examples from ZOO workshops. Ms. May Lok then talked about their upcoming new facility River Safari.

In the afternoon each group toured the zoo with a facilitator. They all worked on the assignments given to them very genuinely until evening and made a presentation the next day.

On 29 February in the fourth technical session, Dr. B.C. Choudhury of WII gave two lectures, one on the ways to interpret biodiversity conservation in zoos and another one on vandalism and its management in zoos. After the talks, the zoo educators celebrated Leap Day 2012, an event launched by Amphibian Ark and coordinated by ZOO in South Asia, learning about the current amphibian crisis and active learning methods for teaching kids about it. The last day of the workshop (1 March), in fifth technical session Mr. Moin Ahmed, Regional Coordinator of ISIS shared how the zoo educators could use the ISIS data effectively in their literature and teaching. Dr. Naim Akhtar of CZA presented how wildlife facts can be used in the zoo education programmes.

To teach the participants the effective usage of drama in conservation education, a drama session was conducted. The participants were divided into two groups. Two drama themes were selected from ZOO's educator's manual and one was about human elephant coexistence and another one about dancing bears. Drama instructions were given and drama kits also provided. They were given 45 minutes for preparation and rehearsal. Both the groups performed the drama very well.

As a last part of the workshop, the participants were invited to give a short presentation of their work. All the participants shared their zoo education activities with others. At the valedictory the participants and resource persons were awarded with certificates and memento by Dr. H.S. Pabla, PCCF (WL) of Madhya Pradesh.

