

# Refresher Course in Advanced Teaching Techniques at Mysore Zoo

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Zoo Outreach Organisation (ZOO), Coimbatore in collaboration with Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) USA conducted two days "Teachers for Tigers-Advanced Technique Refresher Course at Sri Chamarajendra Zoological Gardens, Mysore, Karnataka from 12-13 November, 2005. The objectives of the refresher course was to do a recap TFT workshop, to explore into the ways of opportunistic utilization of TFT tool aiming at the friends of Tiger; to upgrade information related to teaching techniques and also to boost up their commitment towards the interest of biodiversity conservation and to share the experience of the participants after attending TFT workshop in 2003. The first refresher course was conducted at Bhopal.

The content and methodology of the workshop was specifically designed keeping in mind the feedback given by the participants who attended 2003 workshop.

Twelve trainers who attended previous workshop participated in this course that had a combination of teachers and young zoo volunteers. Apart from this there were 5 more people as observers throughout the programme.

The programme on the first day started in an informal way with welcome and introduction about the programme. Then the sound off game was used to introduce the participants. As a recap of the previous programme, some of the photos from the 2003 TFT trainers workshop was screened. Recap was also done by going through the "T4T" manual chapter by chapter.

The participants were asked to make a flash card by listing on one side of the paper, all activities that they practiced using TFT manual and on the other side a picture depicting one of the activities that they did. Through this they learned how to make a flash card and also we learned how well the manual was used. It turned to be got good response.

While understanding how well they used the manual it was also explained to them using power point presentation how the rest of the trainers in India and other south Asian countries perform with TFT tool kit. The evaluation result was also presented.

It was learned from the evaluation that they had problems to carry out education programmes. In order to give opportunity to all participants to share their problems an activity called Problem hat was done. After a brief introduction about the activity the participants were asked to write the problems they experienced when they used TFT. They were asked to write each problem on a piece of paper and to drop it into a hat that was left on the table. The problems could be with regard to planning, education materials, techniques, reports, finance, management, usage of packets, syllabus or any other they faced. The problems that they had written were utilized for the next day discussion.

The participants were encouraged to do education programmes for other fauna utilizing the TFT as a model. *People for primates* developed by the second author was showed as an example that has adopted most things from TFT manual. Some of the activities from the above kit like "Primates in our culture" was also conducted. At the end all the participants were given "South Asian Primates" posters as a token of appreciation of their exploring activity.

Apart from classroom activities some indoor activities were also conducted. Since this workshop was organised at Mysore zoo, some of the activities like adaptation match and survival on grassland from HELP manual were done at the vicinity of the animal enclosures. For this walk-through aviary and some ungulates enclosures were used. Other activities were finger challenge and create your own critter. To know the essential of "opposable thumb" the finger challenge game was conducted.

Final programme of the day was, the key prepared to understand the linkage of TFT manual with school curricula. The first author had prepared this key considering Tamil Nadu Matriculation Board Syllabus. Participants were asked to bring their school books for the next day's exercise so as to look at how some of the lessons can be linked to TFT manual.

The second day programme was unique with an addition of students from the Youth Club members of Mysore zoo and children from the Government Girls Home. They remained until forenoon and involved in activity demonstration.

The second day of the programme started with the presentation of the participants about their programmes and activities that they did during the last two years.

The following are the presentations: S. Arun Kumar, a teacher said that he is involved in "tribal development project" in which he used dramas from the TFT manual for tribal people. He also showed some video clippings "tiger footage" and also used EE books written in Kannda.

Mrs. Jyoti Ramesh & Duraiswamy Krishnan brought children from Government Girls Home and they presented their education programme on tigers. The students did activities that they were doing one of it was "Tiger mini drama". Mr. Krishnan shared his experience how he taught the mahout children during Dasara function.

Mohan Kumar conducted many programmes on tigers in the year 2004-2005. Apart from tigers, he did programmes on amphibians, primates with RMNH, Mysore.

Then with inclusion of youth club members "Wild India" quiz was conducted. India is divided into four regions and questions were asked from those regions. The participants

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were divided into four groups. They had to choose questions any one of these regions.

To give more examples of friends of Tiger activities like Bear dance and experiences in running a bat club was also explained. To demonstrate carrying capacity of forests the bear dance was done using old newspapers as habitat. And then near the bat roost, the participants were explained about observing, counting and monitoring the bats.

To make the participants understand how the TFT programme is linked with their science curricula an exercise was done by the teachers using their own school books belonging to State board as well as CBSE syllabus. As a group they were asked to go through the syllabus and to look how the TFT programme fit in. They were asked to present the results of their group.

After this the activity 'Links' was done. They were divided into four groups. Each one of the groups has given a set of linking or matching slips. They were asked to link the hints and make the story complete. The existing problem in the wild were given to do this activity.

In order to get immediate solution for the problems that the teachers had the SWOT exercise was done. It was also the follow up of the the activity Problem hat, done on the first day. Since the teachers and volunteers had different set of problems they were divided into two groups to do this exercise. Some of the problems were addressed and

found a solution within the group itself. The trainers were also given some solutions for their problems.

Later the groups were asked to design an education programme for one-day, on special days, one to three hours, and one year programme according to the eco calendar supplied to them. At the end the group members were presented their designed programme. Followed by this the elements of developing a programme with endangered species in which events were explained to the participants. This was taken from the ZOO ED Book, written by Sally Walker, Zoo Outreach Organisation.

Commitment: Each participant was given a reply postcard. They were instructed to address the letter to themselves and state what they hoped to do in next three months. It was explained that this card will be posted back to them after three months so that they can send a reply to incorporating their activities that they did to fulfill their commitments. As the last activity a questionnaire was given to get the feedback about the refresher course.

In the valedictory Dr. B.A. Daniel welcomed the chief guest Mr. Manoj Kumar, Executive Director of Sri Chamarajendra Zoological Gardens, Mysore and the gathering. All participants received a certificate from Mr. Manoj Kumar, who appreciated the interest of the teachers involved in creating awareness in biodiversity conservation. R. Marimuthu gave vote of thanks.

## Announcement

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Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), in association with the University of Oxford Botanic Gardens, is currently organising the **6th International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens** "*The Nature of Success: Success for Nature*". The congress is taking place from **Sunday 10th – Thursday 14th September 2006**.

Themes being addressed during the congress include;

- Achieving sustainability: ideas and solutions
- Public awareness of plants
- Reflection on practice
- Education for all: working with challenging groups

This will be an excellent opportunity to share your experiences and skills with the international botanic garden education community. Knowing of your work, we would like to invite you to submit an abstract for a paper, poster or workshop for the congress which would contribute to one of the themes.

We are looking for 200-300 words on the aims, objectives and subject of your presentation and a short biography (50 words) – outlining who you are, where you work and what your particular interests are. The deadline for abstracts is Friday 30th December 2005. We do hope you will consider submitting a proposal.

Please find the form for abstract submissions attached – this should be completed and emailed back, either to the

return address or to the congress committee at [educationcongress@bgci.org](mailto:educationcongress@bgci.org).

The Congress Organising Committee will be reviewing all abstracts received during January 2006. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to get in touch. We hope are interested in contributing to and attending the congress and look forward to receiving your abstract.

**The Organising Committee : BGCI's 6th International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens**  
**The Nature of Success: Success for Nature**  
**The University of Oxford Botanic Garden, U.K. 10th – 14th September 2006**

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