FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR’S DESK

WWF-India has a very small staff strength of just four people in the Kerala State Office. But we have been able to carry out projects, programmes and activities across the length and breadth of the State because of our very active and dynamic volunteer work that we have developed over the years. Some of the lead Volunteers have been assigned as District Co-ordinators and we highly appreciate from the bottom of our heart the sacrificial involvement of all our Volunteers who by spend their time, money and manpower for carrying forward the shared mission of nature conservation and environment protection in the State. To facilitate sharing of experiences and ideas within the network, we organised a two days District Co-ordinators Workshop in July at Vazhachal with the technical and financial support from the Western Ghats – Nilgiri Landscape Programme. The two days event included technical sessions followed by group discussions, short field trips, open discussions and preparation of district based action plans. Since the last few years, we have been facilitating the WIPRO earthian programme in Kerala jointly with CPREEC. Chennai. This provides a platform for the team of school students to put up their projects on the theme of water and biodiversity conservation. In 2016-17, Le’Cole Chempaka emerged the winners at the national level. For 2017-18, CPREEC has asked us again to facilitate the programme in the State and for this year, we have decided to do it for schools in three districts i.e. Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Thrissur. Teachers Training Workshops were organized as part of this to sensitise the Teacher-in-charge regarding the programme and also to chart the way forward on the project submission. CPREEC has also requested WWF to facilitate the Humane Education Programme of Animal Welfare Board of India in Kerala. For this programme, considering the escalating issues of captive Elephants in Thrissur, we decided to do it in Thrissur district and partnered with SSA Thrissur in rolling out the programme covering the schools in the district. As an initial step, a Teachers Training Workshop was conducted and the participant Teachers were sensitized on the various aspects of the programme and also the action plan for the school level awareness classes and competitions to be held were charted. Tiger gets the top priority in the Species Programme of WWF-India and observing International Tiger Day is very relevant as it provides us a platform to make the public aware about the threats faced by Tigers and the need to protect them. This year, Social Forestry Extension Unit, Kollam and Social Forestry Division, Pathanamthitta invited us to take the lead in organizing Tiger Day at SAS SNDP Yogam College, Konni. Marine and coastal area conservation is getting the top priority globally and hence the two days’ Workshop on Sustainable Development Goal 14 – Life below Water with major emphasis on Marine and Coastal Ecosystem organized by WWF-India jointly with NITI AAYOG and CMFRI at Kochi on 4th & 5th July, 2017 was very relevant. At the policy and advocacy level, we put forward a set of suggestions on behalf of WWF in the meeting called by EMC and CED for revamping of Urja Kiran, the State Energy Conservation Awareness Campaign, participated in the meeting convened by KSMTF, NFF and DSAGFU to discuss the impact of GST on the fisheries sector and put forward our observations, tabled a paper on road safety from the environment perspective in the workshop jointly organized by CED and CUTS, tabled WWF submission in front of the consultation meeting of the Kerala Legislative Assembly Subordinate Legislative Committee organized by Kerala State Biodiversity Board at the MSSRF Office Auditorium in Kalpetta, Wayanad. The inauguration of the renovated Marine Turtle Interpretation Centre at Kolavipalam developed as part of the project on Marine Turtle Conservation in Kerala and supported by Johnson Lifts & Escalators, Chennai was a landmark event as this is the first of its kind interpretation centre exclusively for Marine Turtles in India. The Centre was inaugurated on 8th August by Ms. Kulusu, Chairperson, Payyoli. Our Birder Volunteers, around 30 of them, took the lead in carrying out the bird survey in Neyyar WLS of Thiruvananthapuram district and Ranni Forest Division of Pathanamthitta district in this month. The Senior Education Officer also attended the State level meeting on Green Partnership Programme at Thrissur. As part of streamlining the environment education programme, WWF-India is getting ready to launch the new online education platform called as One Planet Academy developed with the technical assistance and financial support of Cap Gemini and as a pre-runner to the national launch, a hands-on training was organized at the Cap Gemini facility in Mumbai which was attended by the State Director and Senior Education Officer from Kerala State Office.

Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director

IMPORTANT NEWS ON NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

GLOBAL

Earth facing sixth mass extinction

The sixth mass extinction of life on Earth is unfolding more quickly than feared, Scientists have warned. More than 30% of animals with backbone - fishes, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals — are declining in both range and population, according to the first comprehensive analysis of these trends. “This is the case of a biological annihilation occurring globally,” said Stanford Professor Rodolfo Dirzo, co-author of a study published in the peer-reviewed U.S. journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (The Hindu, 12 July, 2017).

6,000 sq.km Antarctic iceberg splits

One of the biggest icebergs ever recorded has just broken away from Antarctica. The giant block is estimated to cover...
an area of roughly 6,000 sq.km., a quarter the size of Wales. A U.S. satellite observed the berg while passing over a region known as the Larsen C Ice Shelf. Scientists were expecting it. They had been following the development of a large crack in Larsen's ice for over a decade. The rift's propagation had accelerated since 2014, making an imminent calving ever more likely (The Hindu, 3 July, 2017).

Moss serves as a cheap pollution monitor

Delicate mosses found on rocks and trees in cities around the world can be used to measure the impact of atmospheric change and could prove a low-cost way to monitor urban pollution, according to Japanese Scientists. The “bioindicator” responds to pollution or drought stress by changing shape, density or disappearing, allowing Scientists to calculate atmospheric alterations, said Yoshitaka Oishi, Associate Professor at Fukui Prefectural University (The Hindu, 24 August, 2017).

A Sunderbans denizen staves off extinction

A critically endangered resident of the Sunderbans is set to get a new home, beginning a slow journey to recovery from a disastrous decline in the wild. It is more threatened than the Bengal Tiger, but far less known. Before winter this year, three fresh water ponds in the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve will house the rare Northern River Terrapin (Batagur baska), whose presence in the wild in West Bengal and Odisha had declined to undetectable levels a decade ago. Batagur baska, the 60cm long turtle that is presumed extinct in several Southeast Asian countries, is classified as Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its Red List. The Tiger, by comparison, is classified as Endangered (The Hindu, 23 July, 2017).

Sand Snake Spotted after 70 Years

Wildlife Biologists have sighted an Indian Sand Snake (Psammophis condanarus) in the Seshachalam forests, 70 years after it was earlier seen in South India. The mildly venomous snake is widely distributed in eastern, northern and central India, including parts of the Himalayan foothills, Bengal, Indo-Gangetic plains, north-western arid desert zones including Pakistan and northern parts of the Deccan Plateau, but is not seen in the South. A recent research article in Journal of Threatened Taxa by S.R. Ganesh of the Chennai Snake Park, Vivek Sharma of the Government Model Science College, Jabalpur and M. Bubesh Gupta, Wildlife Consultant at Biolab of Seshachalam Hills, Tirupati, describes the find. Dr. Gupta spotted the snake in a grassy patch early in the morning at Kapila Theeratham, in the Tirumala foothills, in 2013 (The Hindu, 31 July, 2017).

Around 215 animals, including 13 Rhinos, killed in Kaziranga

With 70% of its area still submerged, 215 animals including 13 Rhinos and a Royal Bengal Tiger have so far lost their lives at the Kaziranga National Park in Assam, a senior forest official said. Due to the flooding, the animals at the UNESCO World Heritage Site are facing food shortage within the Park, compelling them to go out to the nearby hills, tea gardens and even human habitations in search of food, KNP Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Rohoni Ballav Saikia said here. As the flood water from the National Park recedes, Mr. Saikia said, more and more carcasses of animals were being recovered from its four ranges (The Hindu, 22 August, 2017).

Rising solar capability may aid 2022 goal

A growing number of Indian firms working on solar energy are seen enhancing capability to counter rising imports from China. India has set itself a target to generate renewable energy of 175 GW by 2022. Anticipating higher expectation, these companies, which manufacture solar modules and related equipment, have developed technology to maximise energy generation thereby helping meet the target with lesser area and infrastructure. Though firms in the Tata and Adani groups are leading on this front, smaller companies are excelling through innovation in a bid to make India self-reliant (The Hindu, 27 August, 2017).

Nine more bird, biodiversity rich areas in Kerala

The bird and biodiversity rich areas in Kerala are drawing global attention with nine more locations being identified as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). The newly identified IBAs of Kerala are Achenchoil Forest Division; Anamudi Shola National Park; Camel's Hump Mountain, Wayanad; Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary; Malayattoor Reserve Forest; Mankulam Forest Division; Mathikettan Shola National Park; Muthikulam - Siruvani; and Pampadum Shola National Park. With the latest addition, Kerala now has 33 IBAs. The new list was released by the Bombay Natural History Society, a partner of BirdLife International, in its recent publication, Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas in India Priority sites for conservation (The Hindu, 3 July, 2017).

Government revives plan for Athirappilly Project

Electricity Minister M.M. Mani’s reply to an unstarrred question in the Assembly stating that the State Government had gone ahead with its proposals to revive and implement the Athirappilly Hydroelectricity Project has triggered strong protests across not only the political spectrum but also among environmentalists. The project had been virtually given up owing to the all- round opposition to
The Punjab Vidhan Sabha had earlier made an attempt to revive the project as soon as it came to power, but dropped the idea when the PDP, its main partner in the Ladakh Democratic Front, came out against the Project. The Congress had also expressed its opposition to the Project. The Opposition, led by Chief Minister Charan Singh, continued with a fact-finding mission to the project site to assess the depth of opposition to the project. (The Hindu, 10 August 2021)

**EXPERTS TALK**
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<td>Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary</td>
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District Coordinators Workshop

Kerala State Office organized a two days’ workshop on 29th and 30th July at Vazhachal for the Volunteers who are coordinating district level activities and other programmes. Twenty-two Volunteers attended the workshop conducted with the support of the Western Ghats – Nilgiris Landscape Programme. Presentations by Senior Education Officer, State Director, Sri. Tiju Thomas of the WGNL programme, short field trips, group discussions, open discussions and district based action plan preparations were part of the meeting.

Honeybee Museum at Thenmala

The work of fabricating and installing the honeybee model has been completed by Mr. Godfrey and Mr. Jinesh. The 27 information panels have been designed with relevant text and attractive images and the layout created at Godfrey’s Graphics. The draft was shared with Mr. Manoj of Thenmala Ecotourism Promotion Society for review and approval. On receiving his approval, the panels have been printed in high quality photo sheets and mounted on forex sheets and installed with acrylic top paneling to prevent vandalism. Necessary additional painting and lighting works have also been completed.

Teachers Training Workshop as part of Wipro earthian Programme 2017

Two TTWs were conducted by the State Office in connection with the Wipro earthian Programme 2017, a CSR initiative of Wipro, implemented jointly by CPREEC and WWF-India in Kerala. The first one was held at Guruvayur in Thrissur district on 19th July 2017 and the second was on 21st at YMCA, Thiruvananthapuram. The thematic introductory sessions were led by the State Director and the Senior Education Officer. The project framework was presented by Sri. U.T. Arasu, Senior Environment Education Officer of CPREEC, Chennai. The participant Teachers were asked to prepare a tentative project action plan to guide the students to come up with good projects. The third TTW was conducted by the State Office at the Dept. of Electronics in CUSAT Campus on 9th August 2017. Smt. Aarti Hanumanthappa of WIPRO earthian was present on the occasion.

Teachers Training Workshop on Humane Education

A Teachers Training Workshop was conducted in Thrissur on the theme “Humane Education” with the support of CPREEC, Chennai on 22nd July in association with
The workshop was inaugurated by Sri. Joymon, District Project Officer of SSA. Following the inaugural session, Senior Education Officer led a session on ‘Urban Biodiversity’ and the issues and concerns with regard to them. State Director led another session titled ‘Humans threatens others; whereas, others sustains us – a closer look for a better understanding’. In the afternoon session, the participants were grouped into six and asked to have a group discussion on the ways of implementing Humane Education in schools. It was very interactive and they presented their findings also. Finally each school prepared their own action plan and concluded the workshop. Each school has to conduct school-level competitions on story writing, poster preparation and quiz.

**International Tiger Day 2017**

ITD was observed by Kerala State Office in association with Social Forestry Extension Unit, Kollam and Social Forestry Division, Pathanamthitta and SAS SNDP Yogam College, Konni on 28th July 2017 at the college. The event was inaugurated by Sri.P.K. Jayakumar Sharma, Deputy Conservator of Forests (Social Forestry, Pathanamthitta). Dr. Biju Pushpan, Principal of the college, State Director, Senior Education Officer and Dr. Kishore Kumar of the college, also spoke in the inaugural session. A series containing 5 Tiger Conservation posters also were released in the inaugural session. Session on ‘Diminishing Forests & Vanishing Stripes’ was presented by Sri. Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director followed by screening of the documentary ‘India - Land of the Tiger’. In the afternoon session, Senior Education Officer conducted a quiz programme exclusively on Tigers. It was a session with high energy, fun and information. The PowerPoint presentation and Quiz was shared with the participants with an objective of holding the same programme in at least five schools in and around their colleges. Six colleges were part of it and the reach of the programme extended to 30 schools also.

**Workshop on SDG (14) Life below Water**

The State Director attended the two days’ workshop on ‘Sustainable Development Goal 14 – Life below Water’ with major emphasis on Marine and Coastal Ecosystem organized by WWF-India jointly with NITI AAYOG and CMFRI at Kochi on 4th & 5th July, 2017 and took active participation in the discussions and deliberations.
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fledged Marine Turtle Interpretation Centre. In this regard, the roofing was redone and the art work was carried out by Godfrey’s Graphics. Information panels were also erected to give an exciting learning experience to the visitors. After completion of all the work, the Marine Turtle Interpretation Centre at Kolavipalam, the first of its kind in the country, was inaugurated on 8th August 2017 by Ms. Kulusu, Chairperson, Payyoli Municipality in a function presided over by the ACF, Social Forestry and attended by other staff of WWF-India and Johnson Lifts & Escalators and local people.

State level meeting on Green Partnership Programme at Thrissur

Mr. Sivakumar, Senior Education Officer and Sri. Vinod M., Senior Coordinator, Marine Programme participated in the State-level Review Meeting of the Green Partnership Programme, a joint venture of Kerala Forests & Wildlife Department and other NGOs working in the field of bird documentation outside forest areas on 21st March at Thrissur. The meeting was called by PCCF (Social Forestry) and all the Asst. Conservators (Social Forestry) and most of the partners of the birding community shared their experience and interacted. The final output was the decision of the PCCF and CCF to strengthen the programme with more participatory events.

Hands-On training and meeting at M/s. Cap Gemini in Mumbai on OPA

One Planet Academy (OPA) is one of the six pillars of WWF-India’s national Environment Education programme. This provides a platform for teachers, students and any nature and environment enthusiasts to interactively learn about nature and environment through an online resource hub. M/s Cap Gemini, an IT company based in Mumbai, is the supporter and developer of this online resource hub. They provided a two-days hands-on training and experience sharing session for the State Directors and Education Officers of WWF-India at their office on 3rd and 4th of August. State Director and Senior Education Officer became part of this venture. It is proposed to formally launch OPA at the national level on 11 September.
Teachers Training Workshop as part of Wipro earthian Programme 2017

The third TTW was conducted by the State Office in connection with the Wipro earthian Programme 2017, a CSR initiative of Wipro, implemented jointly by CPREEC and WWF-India in Kerala, at Dept. of Electronics in CUSAT Campus on 9th August 2017. Smt. Aarti Hanumanthappa of WIPRO earthian introduced the programme to the participant Teachers. The thematic sessions on water and biodiversity were led by State Director and Senior Education Officer. The project frame work was presented by Sri.U.T. Arasu, Senior Environment Education Officer, CPREEC, Chennai. The participant Teachers were asked to prepare a tentative action plan to guide the students to come up with good projects.

Remote Sensing Day

The National Remote Sensing Day was observed jointly by ISRO, ISRS & ISG with an awareness programme organized at All Saints College, Thiruvananthapuram. The State Director delivered an invited talk titled “Geoinformation Technology for Natural Resource Management” with case studies from WWF projects on species and habitats. After the session, there was an interactive session with the participants, mainly college students.