



NEWS
LETTER

KERALA

2010

September - October 2010

Mruthika

Newsletter of WWF - India, Kerala State Office

FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR'S DESK

The last two months were really very dynamic months in which we were involved in many programmes, some of our own and many in association with others. The month of September witnessed, maybe one of the biggest environmental conclave in Kerala or India organized at Thiruvananthapuram by Shantigiri Ashram. Thousands of delegates, resource persons and dignitaries from across the world participated in the 3 day international conference. We were fortunate to be part of that and it was really exciting to meet new people and learn new approaches of nature conservation and environment protection by integrating faith and religion. Also in September, for the first time WWF in association with the Kerala Tourism Department organized various events in Idukki district as part of observing World Tourism Day. The project on development of a sustainable livelihood index is also on full swing with the new staff Ms. Jerry Mechery joining us and taking the field work to the various stakeholders of the lake. The field work is turning out to be a great learning process in which wealth of information is being unfolded in front of us with regard to the history and other various developments in and around the lake and how it has influenced the ecosystem and its various stakeholders. It is high time that the Government and the people open their eyes to the

serious issue of water conservation in Kerala and act accordingly. Every year, October gets off to a vibrant start with the Wildlife Week celebrations. This year, we observed Wildlife Week with a wide range of programmes in association with CMS Vatavaran - Traveling Wildlife and Environment Film Festival. As part of the festival, different programmes were organised to cater to different sections of the society - environment and wildlife film screenings for school and college students, teachers training workshop, animation workshop for talented children, commonwealth marathon, field visit, workshops, painting competition etc. WWF also joined with Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Cochin University of Science and Technology to organize the three days International Conference on Climate Change and the Environment in which about 200 delegates from different parts of India and few from abroad presented their studies and findings on the issue of global warming and climate change and discussed and debated on how to mitigate this impending disaster. We have come out with various interesting top class publications also during this period. Hope you have a good reading of the details of all these developments through this newsletter.

Renjan Mathew Varghese,
State Director

IMPORTANT NEWS ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

GLOBAL

Japan Recycles Minerals from Used Electronics

Two decades after global competition drove the mines in this corner of Japan to extinction, Kosaka is again a buzz with talk of new riches. The treasures are not copper or coal. They are rare-earth elements and other minerals that are crucial to many Japanese technologies and have so far come almost exclusively from China, the global leader in rare earth mining. Recent problems

with Chinese supplies of rare earths have sent Japanese traders and companies in search of alternative sources, creating opportunities for Kosaka. This town's hopes for a mining comeback lie not underground, but in what Japan refers to as urban mining - recycling the valuable metals and minerals from the country's huge stockpiles of used electronics like cell phones and computers. "We've literally discovered gold in cell phones", said Tetsuzo Fuyushiba, a former Land Minister and now Opposition Party Member, who visited here recently to survey Kosaka's recycling plant. Kosaka's pursuits have become especially important for Japan in recent weeks. Two weeks ago, amid a diplomatic spat with

Tokyo, China started to block exports of all rare earths to Japan. (Source: <http://www.nytimes.com>)

Climate finance, key issue

Financial assistance from developed countries for projects to combat climate change in the developing world has emerged as a key sticking point at the Climate Meet in Tianjin, which is the last round of negotiations before the year-end Cancun Conference. Negotiators from India, China and other developing nations have called on the West to step up commitments with promises, as yet, falling short of expectations. Differences have also surfaced over developed countries repackaging earlier development aid as climate-related funding. Indian and Chinese officials have also expressed their frustration at attempts by negotiators from the West, particularly from the United States, to divide developing nations on the finance issue. Developed countries this week reiterated calls for large developing nations to commit to financing projects in less developed countries. At the Copenhagen Summit in December last year, developed countries pledged to commit \$30 billion to "fast start" projects in the next three years. While much of this amount has been identified, differences have persisted on how much funding would be new commitments and how much would be derived from earlier pledged development assistance. (Source: *The Hindu*, October 7, 2010)

2100, end of coral reefs?

If national targets are not revised in the Copenhagen Accord, the international pledge which was agreed at last year's Copenhagen's COP15, a global temperature increase of up to 4.2° C and the end of coral reefs could become a reality by 2100. Just ahead of the next United Nations Climate Change Conference, which starts on 4th October in Tianjin, China, a new report published on September 29, in Environmental Research Letters describes how, due to lack of global action to date, only a small chance remains for keeping the global temperature increase down to 2° C, the Accord's target. Looking at individual countries' agreed targets for emission levels, the report shows that many developed countries such as the USA and the European Union have set their aims very low, aiming at reaching emission levels just a few percent lower than 1990 levels by 2020. Japan and Norway are aiming to drastically reduce their emission to 25 per cent and 30 to 40 per cent below 1990 levels respectively. Presenting their results in Environmental Research Letters, the researchers have found that even if nations would agree to a 50 per cent reduction of emission levels by 2050 there would still only be a less than 50 per cent chance to keep global

warming below 2° C. Rising global temperature levels would not be the only consequence of failing to raise the ambition level of future global emission reductions. Increasing ocean acidification could lead to a rapid decline of coral reefs and the marine ecosystem in the 21st century. (Source: *The Hindu*, 30 September, 2010)

NATIONAL

Guinness record: 50,300 saplings planted in an hour

The 'cold desert' of Leh entered the Guinness Book of World Records after 50,300 saplings were planted at a village here in less than an hour by 9,000 volunteers under a drive supported by Buddhist monks to mark the 'green' Commonwealth Games in Delhi. The earlier record was held by Peru, where 40,000 saplings were planted in 60 minutes by 8,000 volunteers. The programme was flagged off by Drukchen Rinpoche, Chairman of the 'Live to Love' initiative, at 10 seconds past 10.10am. More than 15,000 volunteers reached Changa village, nearly 40 km from Leh town, in the morning, but only 9,000 were allowed to participate. A team of three members from the Guinness World Records was in the village to monitor the event. (Source: *The Hindu*, 11 October, 2010)

Seven elephants die after train hits herd

Seven elephants of a herd died after being hit by a goods train in the Banarhat area of Jalpaiguri district on 22nd September 2010. While four were killed on the spot, the rest died on the next day. The dead include a sub-adult and two juvenile elephants. The incident has once again raised questions over the movement of trains along the elephant corridor in the region. "Incidents of collision have increased over the past four years ever since the conversion from meter to broad gauge of tracks that pass through the sanctuaries in the region. To compound matters, the movement of goods trains has increased too," State's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Atanu Raha said. Goods trains pass through the prime forest area at odd hours, including the period after evening when elephants go out foraging for food. The State's wildlife and forest officials have blamed the railway authorities for failing to ensure that the trains passing through the region do not exceed the speed limit of 25 km per hour. The goods train that killed the elephants was running at a speed of nearly 70 km per hour, officials said. The Forest Department has lodged a first information report at the local thana under the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972. (Source: *The Hindu*, 23 September, 2010)

STATE

Two fish species 'disappear' from the Pamba

Two endemic fish varieties - Catfish and Eel - are feared to have disappeared from the Pamba. No individuals of these species have landed in the nets of fishermen for the last three years triggering suspicion of their population loss. The Catfish (Nadan Mushi) and the Eel (Malanjil) were once found in abundance in this river system. The disappearance of the popular varieties was noted during an evaluation of the harvested fishery wealth of the river by the School of Industrial Fisheries of the Cochin University of Science and Technology. The analysis identified the presence of 60 fin fish species and one prawn variety in the river. Of this, 26 were regularly caught by the fishermen. This also included a few species namely Vaka Varal, Kooral, Manjakoore, Aral, Muthukila, Arinjil and Paral, which had high ornamental value in overseas market. It was estimated that 42 tonnes of fish having ornamental value was being indiscriminately caught annually from this river. The annual average fish landing was found to be 394 tonnes worth Rs.3.70 crore. The fishery wealth of the river was found to be dominated by Thooli. The other varieties that were netted include Varal, Vala, Karimeen, Vayambu and Karuva Paral. Habitat decline and degradation due to increased sedimentation in river bottom, pollution from sewage and agriculture are rampant in the river. Illegal fishing activities using poison, electricity and some plant extracts, poor water quality and invasion of exotic and alien fish species are also posing serious threats to the fish germplasm. (Source: *The Hindu*, 19 October, 2010)

Rare species of cow in Peerumede faces extinction

The High Range Dwarf, an endemic species of cow found only in Peerumede taluk of Idukki district, is facing extinction, thanks to the lack of new initiatives to protect the breed. The farmers in the region too are looking the other way as they are keen on rearing the new hybrid varieties of cattle that provide more milk. This breed of cows, known for its survival instincts in cold weather conditions and hilly terrains, once used to freely graze in large numbers in the tea estates. The cow was first identified over a decade ago as an endemic species by an expert team led by Sossamma Ipe, Professor, Department of Animal Breeding and Genetics, Veterinary College, Mannuthy, in her research paper 'Cattle of High Ranges'. These cows, as

the name suggests, are small in size, provide milk up to two litres, and has a life span two times higher than that of other varieties. It has a very small hump on its back, and the horns are straight and lengthy. Unlike the exotic varieties, its milk has high fat content and nutritional elements. Like the Vechur and Kasaragod local varieties, the High Range Dwarf too survives on the 'zero input system'. Its number dwindled to mere 800 in 2003. The Peerumede Panchayat long back had introduced a life-insurance scheme for the cows. However, the insurance company later abandoned the scheme citing losses, said sources at the Panchayat. The farmers' interest for exotic varieties that provide more milk was one of the reasons that contributed for near-extinction of the cow, they said. A survey conducted a few years back had put the number of cows below 100. According to the Panchayat officials, in the absence of scientific survey or conservation efforts, the actual figure of the original breed might be far below the estimated number. (Source: *The Hindu*, 31 October, 2010)

New freshwater fishes found in Western Ghats

A group of senior scientists, led by K. Rema Devi and T.J. Indira of the Southern Regional Centre of the Zoological Survey of India, in collaboration with researchers from various institutions, have discovered two freshwater fishes in the biodiversity hotspot of Western Ghats. The discovery of the two species, *Betadeavrio ramachandrani* and *Puntius rohani*, have also been published in the prestigious journal *Zootaxa* and in the *Journal of Threatened Taxa* respectively. The new genus and species of *Betadeavrio ramachandrani* was discovered from Agumbe, a small tributary of Sita River, about 2 km upstream of the Onake Abbi Fall in Shimoga, Karnataka, while *Puntius rohani* was discovered from the Kodayar River drainage of the Kanyakumari Wildlife sanctuary and adjoining areas, said C. Radhakrishnan, Joint Director, Zoological Survey of India, Kozhikode. (Source: *The Hindu*, 30 October, 2010)

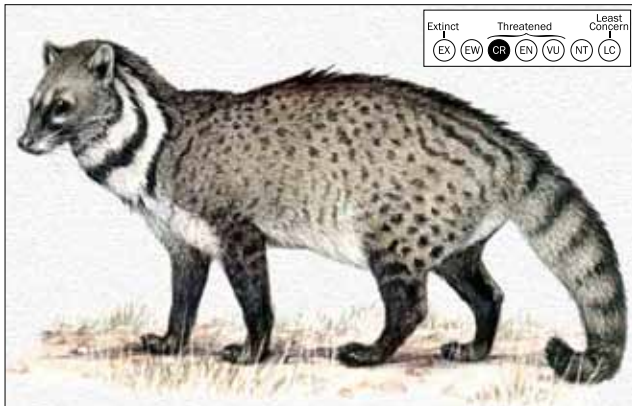
New Pokkali paddy more productive

The on-farm testing of the new Pokkali paddy variety, 'Vyttilla 8' has stood up to the expectations of scientists and farmers. The test farming of Vyttilla 8, developed by the Rice Research Station, Vyttilla, of the Kerala Agricultural University, was carried out on Kadamakkudy island, which has for long been a key centre of the Pokkali rice in the Kochi area. Pokkali, a variety of paddy grown organically, is unique to

Kerala. It is cultivated in the backwater-nourished coastal areas of central Kerala and is resistant to water salinity. Pokkali is traditionally cultivated in saline water fields where prawns are grown for the first half of the farming year and rice is grown in the latter half. Vyttila 8 has proved to be more productive than other Pokkali varieties with a yield of 3.7 tonnes per hectare. The crop duration is 110 days and the rice plant grows to a height of 120 cm, which is shorter than other varieties. (Pokkali, since it grows in water, is taller than other rice varieties). The main advantage of Pokkali is that it does not require application of fertilisers or pesticides. (Source: *The Hindu*, 12 October, 2010)

SPECIES OF THE ISSUE

Malabar large-spotted Civet



The **Malabar large-spotted Civet** (*Viverra civettina*) is also known as the Malabar Civet and called **Jawadi Veruku** - ജവദി വറുകു in Malayalam. The species was once common along the lowland coastal tracts of Kerala and Karnataka in South India. It became rare by the beginning of the 20th century, but was still often used for producing musk in the 1960's. In 1990, isolated populations still survived in less disturbed areas of South Malabar. In 1999, fewer than 250 mature individuals were thought to survive in the wild. It roughly weighs 8 - 9 kgs. The coat is greyish dull white with indistinct black spots that roughly form vague vertical stripes on the body. Another distinguishing feature from the sympatric Small Indian Civet (*Viverricula indica*), with which it might be confused, is its shorter tail when compared to its body length and the presence of a crest of black erectile hairs on the back, which are characteristic of all the four species under the genus *Viverra*. This nocturnal animal is carnivorous, solitary and aggressive in nature. It forages on the ground and

has never been observed in trees. It feeds on small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, birds eggs and other vegetable matter. The species is reportedly difficult to maintain in captivity for extracting musk, a secretion from anal glands of all civets that is used as a stabilizing agent in perfumes, in oriental medicine and flavoring 'beedis' (local cigarettes). Its original habitat was the Malabar Coast moist forests belt below the Western Ghats, where it lived in wooded plains and adjoining hill slopes. It was once very common in the coastal districts of Malabar and Travancore. Extensive deforestation has reduced the Malabar forests to a series of isolated patches. Cashew plantations are a refuge, which probably holds most of the surviving populations. They are now threatened by large-scale clearance for rubber plantations. The major threat facing isolated populations that have managed to survive in marginal habitats is changing cash crop practices and accidental hunting with dogs. They tend to be treated as raiders of poultry, and are captured and killed when encountered.

ACTIVITIES OF WWF-INDIA KERALA STATE OFFICE

Nature trail to Kottully Wetlands, Kozhikode

On 1st September 2010, around 45 nature club members from four different clubs of Kozhikode attended the programme that was led by Dr. Jafer Palot of Zoological Survey of India and Prof. P.I. John, District Co-ordinator.



Methrankayal issue of Vembanad Lake

Methrankayal is a 420ha paddy field reclaimed from the Vembanad Lake, one of the biggest Ramsar Site in India. The Industries Department is moving a proposal through a private agency to convert it into a 17 hole golf course and resort. The Kerala State Office has been raising our opposition against this from the start itself.

A meeting to discuss on the Methrankayal issue was convened at Kottayam on 25th September by Thanal and Kuttanad Vikasana Samithy.

Session on Environmental Pollution

A.K.Sivakumar, Education Officer delivered a multimedia presentation on 'Environmental Pollution' at Sri Ayyappa College, Eramallikkara, Alappuzha District on 8th September 2010. About 80 students attended the session.

Friday Forum for September, 2010



The open forum for September for school students to discuss environment related topics conducted regularly on the first Friday of every month at Thiruvananthapuram was held on 9th September 2010 at Museum Auditorium. Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director delivered a talk on 'Remote Sensing in Natural Resource Management'. About 140 students from different schools participated.

Paper presentation at the International Climate Congress

The State Director attended the conference organized by Shantigiri Ashram from 9th to 11th Sept, 2010 at Thiruvananthapuram as a special invitee and delivered a talk on 'Reducing Ecological Footprint to mitigate Climate Change - the Kerala Scenario'.

Ozone Day at Thrissur

Like in the past years, the International Day for the



Preservation of the Ozone Layer was organized this year as a joint venture of WWF-India Kerala State Office and the Kerala State Pollution Control Board in Thrissur. The competitions were organized on the 15th of September and about 60 students attended the painting, poster design and quiz competitions. The one day awareness programme on 17th was held at Jawahar Balbhavan, Thrissur. The workshop was inaugurated by Dr.C.K.Rajan, Director, Chair for Environmental Studies, SCMS. The technical session was led by Dr. Madhu, Dept. of Atmospheric Science, CUSAT. The workshop was attended by about 170 students from various educational institutions in the district.



Nature Education Camp at Vazhachal

Twenty one members of the Eco club of Tata Consultancy Service (TCS) of Infopark, Kochi attended a camp organized by WWF for three days from 24th to 26th of September 2010 within the Vazhachal forests. The participants got a wide range of experience and enjoyed the nature walk, bird and butterfly watching, feel the nature, feel the river, night safari etc.



World Tourism Day in Idukki District

The Kerala State Office joined hands with the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala to observe the World Tourism Day on 27th September on the theme 'Tourism and Biodiversity'. The painting



and poster design competitions for school and college students were organised earlier at Kattappana and Thodupuzha. The photography competition for general public was also announced. The closing function was organized at Kumily on 27th September. Ms. Zia Zakeera, Panchayat President, Kumily Grama Panchayat was the Chief Guest of the function. The technical sessions were handled by Shri. Joykutty George, Deputy Director, Department of Tourism and Dr. Gigi K. Joseph, Lecturer, Nirmala College, Muvattupuzha.



New staff

Ms. Jerry Mechery has joined on 1st October as Research Associate in the Kerala State Office in the project on 'Development of Sustainable Livelihood Security Index for Vembanad Lake'.

Exhibition on 'Biodiversity of Kerala' at Mata Amritanandamayi Ashram

As part of the birthday celebrations of Mata Amritanandamayi, WWF-India Kerala State Office was specially invited to be part of the celebration programmes by putting up an awareness and exhibition stall in the Ashram at Vallikavu, Kayamkulam from 26th to 28th September. Sri. Harish Kumar, Office Attendant and two volunteers coordinated the exhibition. About 2 lakh devotees visited the Ashram in the three days celebration period.

Wildlife Week with CMS Vatavaran



CMS Vatavaran has chosen Thiruvananthapuram as one of the venues this year for the Travelling Environment and Wildlife Film Festival. With the good experience with other WWF offices in other states, for Thiruvananthapuram also WWF-India Kerala State Office was specially requested to be the organising partner. In this regard, all possible help and support were offered in planning, coordinating and implementing the various events as part of the programme which included film screenings, painting competition for students, teachers training workshop, eco tour, animation workshop for students, panel discussions etc.



Wild Wisdom Quiz 2010

The regional level rounds for Kerala of the national Wild Wisdom Quiz Competition in connection with Wildlife Week was held on 21st September 2010 at Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode. The southern region quiz was held at Museum



Auditorium, Thiruvananthapuram and Sri. Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director mastered the quiz. The central region quiz was held at Chavara Cultural Center, Ernakulam and was mastered by Sri.Jain J. Therattil, Lecturer, St. Aloysius College, Thrissur. The northern region quiz was held at Regional Science Center and Planetarium, Kozhikode and was mastered by A.K.Sivakumar, Education Officer. The State level final round was conducted in Thiruvananthapuram at the Auditorium of the Directorate of Museum and Zoos on 6th October. The quiz was mastered by Prof. Kunhikrishnan, Dept. of Zoology, University College.



Paper presentation at the seminar organized by Christ University

The State Director delivered an invited lecture on 'Reducing Ecological Footprint to mitigate global warming and climate change' at the National Seminar organized by Christ University in Thiruvananthapuram on 9th October, 2010.

Forest Certification Workshop

A half day workshop on 'Responsible Wood Trade and Forest Certification' was organized at the Press Club Fourth Estate Hall, Thiruvananthapuram on 21st Oct, 2010 as part of the GFTN India and European Commission Switch Asia Project. Shri. K.Balakrishnan IAS, Additional Chief Secretary inaugurated the workshop. Shri. Balachandran K. Thampi, Additional PCCF, Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department and Dr. R.V.Varma, Chairman, Kerala State Biodiversity Board

was also present in the function. Dr. T.R.Manoharan, Head, Forestry Programme, WWF-India delivered the technical presentation and led the discussions. About thirty timber traders attended the workshop.



Participation in the International Conference on Climate Change

The State Director attended the International Conference on Climate Change and the Environment organized by Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and Cochin University of Science and Technology in Kochi from 24 - 26 October, 2010. WWF is also an organizing partner of the conference.

Publications

These publications are mainly intended for the education and awareness of the younger generation, mainly the student community, on the various aspects of ecosystem and species diversity. 'Wings of the Night' mainly elaborates on the various bat species that we see around us and details on their ecology and behaviour. It also helps to clear many wrong understanding that people have about these winged creatures. 'Walk the Grasslands' is a very good illustration on the grassland ecosystem and its biodiversity.



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Mr. A.V. George
Mr. Renjan Mathew Varghese
Mr. A.K. Sivakumar

Do You Know?

Manufacture, stocking, distribution, sale, use, transportation, collection, segregation, recycling and disposal of

- plastic carry bags of less than 20 x 30 cm
- plastic cups
- bottle
- packaging material
- plastic carry bag / Container made of halogenated material is **BANNED** in the State.

less than
30 micron
thickness

Violation of

- manufacture, reuse, recycle l11ay please be reported State Pollution Control Board / Police
- stocking, distribution, sale, use, transportation may please be reported to Local Authority / Police
- prohibition on transportation of banned articles into the State may please be reported to Commercial Taxes Department

Penalties

- handling of banned plastics upto 10,000 no. punishable under section 188 of I.P.C. attracting upto 1 month imprisonment or Rs. 200 fine or both
- handling of banned plastics greater than 10,000 no. punishable under the Environment (Protection) Act attracting upto 5 years imprisonment or Rs. 1 lakh fine or both and Rs. 5000 per day for continuing the violation



KERALA STATE POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

(under the Department of Environment of the Government of Kerala) PATTOM P.O.,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695 004

Head Office: Pattom P.O., Thiruvananthapuram-695 004. Tel: General: 0471-232910, 2318153, 2318154, 2318155
e-mail: kspcb@keralapcb.org Fax: 2318152 web: www.keralapcb.org

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