

SLC-India Trust Conservation Education Program 2007 Field Activities

By Sujatha Padmanabhan, Kalpavriksh
Angmo and Rigzen, SLC-India Trust Education Coordinators

Besides the school-based environmental education activities, students in the nine program schools carried out various community projects aimed at improving the environment.

The students of Markha Government Middle School presented an evening program on nature conservation for their parents and other community members. The evening's host, an elected representative, made a speech remarking that this was the first time such a program had been held in the village where elders and children came together.

Sujatha Padmanabhan, project leader for Kalpavriksh, commented, "Many of us felt that it was a very inspiring evening . . ." At the end of the day just before retiring to bed, Angmo said, "this was a day I will never forget in my life!"



The whole community was invited to participate in the next day's garbage collection project. Angmo described how the children had voted to work on this and also on the water channels to the school plantation (which got destroyed in the floods last year).

About 20 members of the community attended the meeting to decide where the pits need to be made. Three sites were chosen, and parents and students broke into three groups and spent the day digging and lining the pits with stone.



One group of children spent the day in the school painting message boards in Ladakhi and English. At the end of the day these were put up at each pit.

Preservation of local cultural heritage at Matho Govt High School

The children of Matho School had chosen to white-wash the stupas around their school. Even though this had no direct conservation link, we supported their decision as it was linked to their cultural heritage. We provided the white-wash powder, the children brought buckets and brushes, and the Village Education Committee member provided fruit to all. 13 stupas were painted, and the entire school participated in this event.



Village clean up at Ichar village

The second day of the workshop at Ichar in Zaskar coincided with World Environment Day. The children and staff of the school celebrated this day by doing garbage clean up of the village.

Field Trips

Tso-kar Wetland

A three-day educational trip was organized to Tso-kar basin from July 16th to 18th. 43 students from the Government schools of Matho and Markha attended the trip, accompanied by some of their teachers, SLC India Trust staff and a resource person from WWF-Leh. Using binoculars, field guides, and a spotting scope, the children saw many birds including the black necked crane and the little owl, and mammals like the argali, pika, marmot, and Tibetan wild ass. They also made group presentations on what they had learned.



Parents function at Matho Govt School

The children shared, through activities like a wildlife quiz and fauna bingo, what they had learned in the programme. They spoke briefly about the bird and mammal species found in Ladakh. We ensured that every child had a role in the programme. A film on Ladakh's wildlife was also screened at the end of the event.

The event was supported by the Village Education Committee members. A few members volunteered to make tea and dinner which was served to the guests.



The community function held at Matho was attended by 60 to 70 people, besides all the children of the school.



Field Trips, Continued

Rumbak (by Rigzen)

On the way to Rumbak we saw many birds and plants also saw the nest of Golden Eagle, said to have been occupied for 100 years. Near the stream the brown dipper sat on the small stone and searched food. Mr. Jigmet showed us Turbung valley and Hussing valley, he also showed us scat of snow leopard some are new and some are old, also showed us rock scent of snow leopard. After five hours we reached Rumbak the main area of snow leopard and other wild ungulate. At Rumbak we rest at home stay.

Day 2

We went to Youru-tse and up to Gandala base. On the way we saw 76 blue sheep, 15 woolly hare and a marmot colony where lots of marmots. Also we saw one Himalayan griffon and one golden eagle carrying marmot. There were lots of robin assenter, brown assenter, black redstart and other new birds. Unfortunately we cannot find Snow Leopard. We also saw many new plants and we collect all of them.

DAY 3

On the way back to the trail head we saw lots of red billed chough flying around the hill mountain, again we saw brown dipper very closely. After reaching the Jingchain valley we also saw 31 Ladakh urial climb the mountain. Some of them eat the grass.

Student Activism

Letters written by children from Matho and Markha schools to the President of China, requesting him to take action against illegal trade in wildlife, were translated into English. These were sent to the President, and also to some newspapers for media coverage. Unfortunately, both the media and the President did not respond.

Some extracts from the letters follow, to show to what extent the children feel about their wildlife:

It came to my ears that in your country a high amount of wild animals, especially snow leopards are killed through illegal hunting and trading. I want to let you know that in our tradition we believe that the snow leopard is an ornament of the mountains.

You should always have in mind that if you don't preserve the Snow Leopard and other wildlife, this will have a huge impact on our ecosystem in future. Wild animals that are rare now will then be totally extinct and further generations can only listen to stories about wildlife.

To be frankly I've to tell you that I don't understand why people in your country are hunting snow leopards and are trading with their skin! Do these people feel proud of wearing snow leopard skin?

In my country, in Ladakh, we preserve rare species like snow leopards and other mammals. I deeply request you please preserve the snow leopard and other wild animals in China!

Padma Wangtak, Class 8, Age 13, Govt, Middle School Markha

We heard that killing of wildlife happens openly in your country. We are very sorrowful to hear such news. Especially the killing of snow leopards and other wildlife is very tragic. If you carry on killing the snow leopard, one day, such time will come, only your grandmother and grandfather will tell stories about the beautiful wild cat that has once lived in the mountains.

So we request you please follow the rules of the international wildlife protection act and figure out cooperates with other organizations in order to protect the snow leopard.

Sonam Choral, Class 6, Age 12, Govt, High School Matho