

The Nature Education Program in Pakke TR and its surrounding areas

Nature Education module: Developed and conducted by Pranav Trivedi

Nature Education program is co-ordinated by Devathi Parashuram with guidance from Pranav Trivedi. Aparajita Datta provides overall supervision.

Local Co-ordinators: Tajik Tachang, Khem Thapa

We began a formal Nature Education Program in 2017 and set up nature clubs (called Pakke Nature Clubs) in seven local schools (5 government and 2 private) in villages around the Pakke Tiger Reserve, Pakke Kessang district, Arunachal Pradesh through which we hope to reach over 650 children from Classes 6-9. Our goal is to expose children to the forests and wildlife around Pakke through year-round activities and nature camps in the Pakke Tiger Reserve, in collaboration with the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department. Through these camps, we also raise awareness/knowledge of importance of forests and wildlife of Pakke for the entire community.

In the first year (2017), we had a total of 150 students from 4 schools. In 2018, we had 211 children from six schools participate in nine camps.

Pakke Nature Clubs

In 2017, Dr. Pranav Trivedi, Honorary Associate at NCF and a consultant/expert on Nature Education, had trained our staff and a few guards from the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department on how to conduct nature education activities/camps for children, followed by an orientation program for the club coordinators in June '17. In 2018, the annual meeting with the club coordinators was held again at the end of June. We discussed the progress of the Nature Education Program during its first year, activities conducted, including the 2017 nature camps, and lastly, we finalized a calendar for nature education activities and camps for the 2018-19 academic year.



The annual meeting with Pakke Nature Club coordinators in June '17 (left) and June '18 (right).

Nature camps inside Pakke Tiger Reserve

The highlight of the Nature Education Program is the camps that we conduct inside Pakke Tiger Reserve, in collaboration with the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department. The aim of the nature camps is to immerse local children in nature and to help develop a sense of pride and connectedness to their natural heritage. We had our first camps from Nov 21st – 28th, 2017 with 135 children from four schools. In 2018, we had over 200 children from six schools participate in nine camps from November 19th – December 8th. We had four three-day camps for older students from Classes 8 - 9 from November 19th – 30th, and five one-day camps for students from Classes 5 - 7 from December 4th – 8th. The details of schools, classes and participation in the 2017 and 2018 camps are in the table below.

Table. Details of participation in the 2017 and 2018 nature camps

Camp	Date	School	Class	No. of students
2017				
1	Nov 21 st	Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, Seijosa	6	36
2	Nov 22 nd – 24 th	VKV Nivedita Vihar	8	32
3	Nov 25 th – 27 th	A2 Govt. Residential School	8	28
4	Nov 28	Govt. Secondary School, Darlong	6-7	39
			Total	135
2018				
1	Nov 20 th – 21 st	A2 Govt. Residential School	8	11
2	Nov 22 nd – 24 th	Govt. Secondary School, Darlong	9	20
3	Nov 25 th – 27 th	VKV Nivedita Vihar	8	26
4	Nov 28 th – 30 th	Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, Seijosa	9	28
5	Dec 4 th	Govt. Middle School, Niti Darlong	5-7	23
6	Dec 5 th	Govt. Upper Primary School, RWD Colony	6-7	26
7	Dec 6 th	Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, Seijosa	6	27
8	Dec 7 th	VKV Nivedita Vihar	7	33
9	Dec 8 th	A2 Govt. Residential School	6-7	17
			Total	211

Dr. Pranav Trivedi developed three modules for children of different age groups:

1. 'Bhelu Bolta Hai' is the one-day module for kids from Classes 5 - 7. Bhelu is the local name for *Tetrameles nudilfora*, an important nesting tree species for hornbills in this area. By structuring the module as a treasure hunt for messages that are tied to different activities, we create interest and excitement in the forest by bringing in an element of magic and wonder.



2. The Tiger's Tale is a three-day module for Classes 8 & 9. There's an old *Nyishi* folktale about how tigers and humans are brothers, so we start off by sharing this story.



3. Paga's Present is also a three-day module for Classes 8 & 9. Paga is the *Nyishi* name for the Great Hornbill and our staff performing a local dance and song, dressed as hornbills.



Through activities in Modules 2 & 3, we try to demonstrate seven key ecological concepts, which are summed up by the acronym EC-DC-ICA. This stands for energy flow, cycling of matter, diversity, community, interrelationships, change, and adaptation. We also try to activate the sensory perception through specific and focused activities and provide time for solitude and reflection for processing all of the above.

Since we were piloting the three modules for the first time in the 2017 camps, we collected qualitative feedback from the students as well as teachers, to help us improve the 2018 camps as well as gauge if our conservation message was being delivered effectively. Some of the major learnings from their feedback are listed below:

1. Our conservation messaging was effective. The most important message that students took back was that we should conserve forests for future generations and that we should not cut trees or hunt animals.
2. They really enjoyed hugging trees, seeing different kinds of plants and animals, the long trails, and the activities/games.
3. When asked what changes they observed in themselves after the camp, many students said that they had fallen in love with nature
4. Leeches in the forest were a huge source of discomfort and fear for many children

To make it easier for children to explore the forest without being afraid of leeches, we had leech socks made for all of them for the 2018 camps. We are still in the processing of entering and collating data from the 2018 feedback after which they will be analyzed.

We also made a short one-minute video about the 2018 camps which can be viewed [here](#).



A day at the rainforest nursery

As part of the nature education calendar, we have activities planned for a year-round engagement with the children from the Pakke Nature Clubs in seven schools. In June 2018, we had Class 6 & 7 students from the local Govt. Middle School visit our rainforest nursery. After a crash course in some of the important native forest species that we raise, they helped our nursery team with their daily duties, including watering saplings, filling bags of soil and weeding. This exposure visit was a great way to marry two of our big projects - Nature Education and Rainforest Restoration. All of us had a lot of fun interacting and the kids even got to miss an entire day of school in the process!.





We organized another rainforest nursery visit for the students of Vivekananda Kendriya Vidhyalay, Seijosa on 28 August 2019. Twenty-four students from Class 5 visited the nursery with their nature club coordinator. During the visit the students participated in all the activities that the nursery staff perform daily like de-weeding, watering the plants, cleaning the nursery. Our field staff also explained to the students about seed collection and various other aspects of maintaining a rainforest nursery. The main aim of this visit was to familiarize the students with the importance of rainforest restoration. This event was entirely organized and conducted by our local field staff in Seijosa.



Vivekanand Kendriya Vidyalaya students visit to Nature Conservation Foundation's rainforest nursery in Seijosa. Photos by Sital Dako