

## Samrakshan Trust Meghalaya – Wildlife Week Celebrations

### Bolsalgre – Baghmara



Samrakshan Trust has been undertaking efforts to involve the community in sustainable conservation of the incomparable natural values of the akings (unit of land owned by a clan) of the Rongara Community Development Block in the South Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. Engendering Conservation Consciousness amongst the community that shares the Conservation High Priority Landscape with wildlife constitutes an important segment of these efforts. The Samrakshan team has been screening wildlife films and conducting sketching / colouring events in the akings during the past year. This is done with a view to enhance sensitivity and engender pride amongst the community for wildlife in general and specifically flagship species like elephant. These akings form a part of the Garo Hills Elephant Reserve.

Samrakshan conducted events in 3 akings during the first week of October 2006 to celebrate the 'Wildlife Week' - a total of approximately 500 participants attended these events. The design, besides commemorating the event with the rest of the country, to protect wildlife, was to take the celebrations to places where the different forms of wildlife co exist with community.

<b>DATE AND VENUE</b>			
<u>Date</u>	<u>Venue</u>		
2 <sup>nd</sup> October 2006	Halwa Atong Songmong Playground		
3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2006	Alokpang Nakalgre Playground		
5 <sup>th</sup> October 2006	Panda Chikasin Playground		
<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>			
<u>Aking</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Number</u>
Gongrot	60	Children	227
Halwa Atong	160	Nokma	3
Ampangre	2	Panda Forest Beat Office Personnel	2
Alokpang	150	Participatory Wildlife Monitoring Informants	2
Panda	130	Members of Self Help Groups	58
		Others	210
<i>Total Participants - 502</i>			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>			
<u>Match The Following</u>	Requires the participants to link select specific species with their habitats on the print outs handed over to them.		
<u>A To Z of Species</u>	Requires the participants to fill up the two blank spaces adjacent to each alphabet, with names of wildlife species beginning with that alphabet.		
<u>Who Am I</u>	Requires a volunteer who agreed to have a photo of a wildlife species stuck on his back without being aware of the species. The volunteer then had to identify the species by asking questions to the participants who could answer only in "yes" or "no".		

All Pics: Samrakshan Trust

Samrakshan decided to celebrate the wildlife week with activities other than those it conducts in the regular course of its activities. Each of these invigorating activities was planned keeping in mind the diversity of the participants.

The first activity conducted was “Match The Following”. The participants were given printed sheets; one group of these sheets had names of certain species and habitats while the other had names of species and diet. These were not in order and the participants were required to link the species with their corresponding habitat and diet using a pencil. The children participated in groups with about 4 of them sharing a sheet and after linking the boxes wanted to take the sheets home. Elders attempted linking the boxes and asked for extra copies for teaching their children.



Who Am I



Match the following

The second activity “A to Z of wildlife” required the participants to fill up the two blank spaces adjacent to each alphabet on the sheets given to them. These had to be name of wildlife species beginning with that alphabet. Both the children and elders filled the sheets- in English, Hindi and Garo (local language) and even a mix of the three. Some of them asked for extra blank sheets while others requested for sheets having “ready made answers”. While some found it too taxing others indulged in cheerful banter.

The third and the final activity “Who Am I” required a volunteer who agreed to have a photo of a wildlife species struck on his back without being aware of the species. The volunteer then had to identify the species by asking questions to the participants who could answer only in “yes” or “no”. Initially one of the Samrakshan members acted as a volunteer to clarify the doubts after which the activity really picked up to become the most popular activity of the day. It evoked highest participation levels and maximum laughter.



Participants viewing the poster put up at the event site.



Women enjoying “A to Z” of wildlife

The activities were followed by refreshments arranged by the Self Help Groups fostered by Samrakshan Trust. Nokmas (village headmen), forest department personnel, Informants, people involved with Samrakshan’s participatory wildlife monitoring exercise and members of Self Help Groups also took active part in the celebrations. The participants suggested conducting the celebrations on a larger scale during the following year.