



After a decade long of turtle conservation work along the coast of Maharashtra, this year the main event of Turtle Festival has been handed over to the villagers of Velas. Various training workshops were arranged during this year to build local capabilities.

The turtle conservation was reinitiated on a larger scale in district Sindhudurga. Special efforts have been made to expand the vulture conservation and seek more funding for the same. Various proposals with this regard have been submitted to foreign funding agencies.



Our Mission

Nature Conservation through Field Protection, Awareness, Education and Scientific based Act

Vulture Conservation



IBCN - BNHS sponsored vulture conservation program got over in Jun 2012. This project gave an opportunity to conduct vulture conservation campaigning in district Ratnagiri. Additionally, Sahyadri monitored nesting colonies at Shrivardhan and Chirgaon, district Raigad with the help of local nature enthusiast. Parts of districts Ratnagiri and Sindhudurga were surveyed to locate additional nesting colonies. A reward for the nest information was also declared through news papers.

Anti-diclofenac Drive

Anti-diclofenac campaigning was specifically targeted for veterinarians and chemists in district Ratnagiri. Various meetings with veterinarians were held through Animal Husbandry Department. A campaign was also run through Chemist and Druggist Association, Ratnagiri.

Event Participation

Sahyadri was invited to deliver lectures in various environment conservation and eco-tourism related conferences / events. Sahyadri could spread awareness about nature conservation in general and "Save Vulture" specific campaign with the scientific community, metro based nature lovers and wild life tourists through various events.

School Awareness Drives

Competitions and Film Shows for School Children and Teachers

Involving young minds in the conservation activities paves the long term path to achieve the environment protection goals in general. Awareness drives were conducted during this period through various schools. SNM volunteers screened the "To The Nature We Owe..." film in the beginning of school campaign. A short film always excites the children. After the short film, volunteers connect with the children by providing detail information about specific topic, seek more information from students about their environment and ask them to give a short speech about their participation in keeping the environment clean. Participating children are adequately rewarded. Sahyadri has observed that competitions work better for the 1st-4th grade, group competitions, experience narration work better for 5th-7th grade and essay writing, elocution competition work better for 8th-10th grade. SNM volunteers also present activities like "Best from Waste". In some schools SNM has asked students to create nests from waste cardboards. More than 2000 students were addressed through this drive.



The overall participation of students and teachers is very enthusiastic and they always look forward for such activities. They feel proud about their village being involved in such a rare conservation activity. Sahyadri used "Trained the Trainer" model and conducted 2 workshops about turtle conservation and nature conservation in general for teachers. This workshop was conducted during the "Teachers workshop" ("*Shaikshanik Sammelan*"). The idea is to spread the awareness to more number of schools by addressing the teachers at a common place.

Marine Turtle Protection and Conservation



This year 48 villages in district Thane, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurga were covered under turtle conservation project. As a part of this project 83 nests were conserved and 3,662 hatchlings were released. Of these nests most of the nests in district Sindhudurga are conserved as in situ conservation. Turtle conservation in Sindhudurga district needs special mention as it was reinitiated through a UNDP-Forest Department's project. Hurdles like start of the project half way

through the nesting season, lack of accurate information about sighting, nesting and poaching were overcome by rigorous survey, continuous dialogues with the locals, reward to the nest informer, involving local governance and forest department, awareness drives through turtle trophy cricket tournaments, local cultural events. Great amount of efforts by 31 locally appointed people and 2 supervisors resulted in the conservation of 21 Olive Ridley Marine Turtle nests within just half of the nesting season. In 42% of cases, the nest information was given by a person other than the appointed person shows increased participation of villagers and responsibility towards the turtle conservation. For the first time, Sindhudurga has witnessed participative approach in the conservation at the local level.

Turtle Festivals

Turtle Festival creates an opportunity for people from metros like Mumbai-Pune-Nashik etc. to visit the project area and understand the importance of the Save Turtle project. It also gives an opportunity for locals to host these tourists and create one more avenue to earn their livelihood. Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra has helped locals to form *Kasav Mitra Mandal* and families register with KMM are known as *Kasav Mitra Parivar* (Friends of Turtles). Sahyadri uses channels like Web site, print media to connect the metro tourists with the local population. The contact numbers of the *Kasav Mitra Parivar* are displayed on the web site (<http://www.snmcpn.in/velas-logistics.html>). To assist tourists, the web site also displays the direction and ST bus timings. SNM arranges various activities like turtle trophy cricket matches, beach walk to understand marine life, film screening to know more about Turtle Conservation project and interactive sessions for tourists. It also helps tourists to connect with the local population and know more about their life.

Marathi and English print media from Mumbai, Pune and local areas covered the festival and the other awareness programs extensively on the regular basis. Kindly refer to Appendix XII for some of the news.

Velas Turtle Festivals 2012-13

The 2013 Turtle Festival began on 9th Feb 2013 and continued till Apr 2013. A total of about 2500 tourists visited till Mar. 2013. During this period, every day tourists and locals gathered on the beach to witness the release of the turtle hatchlings into the sea. SNM's volunteers gave information regarding the lifecycle of marine turtles, their importance in the marine ecology, their status, threats and the need for their conservation. Tourists to Velas also visited the Marine Turtle Knowledge and Information Centre to learn more about marine turtles. Film screenings were arranged to improve the awareness levels about marine turtles and the other biodiversity of the Konkan. The question answer session followed by the film screening helped to clear doubts about turtles. The locals participated in the Turtle Festival and provided food and accommodation to the visitors.

Harihareshwar - Maral Turtle Festival 2012-13

The second Maral Turtle Festival was organized in Mar. 2013. Sahyadri conducted various training programs to provide alternate source of livelihoods through turtle conservation. Film screenings were

arranged to improve awareness levels amongst both tourists and the local community. Debate and question-answer sessions were held during the Festival that drew in an enthusiastic response from the participants.

Dive Agar Turtle Festival 2012-13

For the first time, Sahyadri hosted turtle festival at Dive Agar. Sahyadri had series of meetings with locals, members of Gram Panchayat about festivals. Based on these discussions it was decided to host the following events to spread awareness among locals, young minds and also tourists. Various banners, posters were used to spread awareness.

- “Turtle Trophy” tournament was hosted to attract youth in the conservation work
- Photo exhibition was also hosted in the village to depict the entire life cycle of marine turtles, conservation efforts within India, threats to marine turtles.
- Drawing competition was held to involve young minds.

During all the events, Sahyadri’s volunteers actively participated and used the opportunity to spread awareness about nature conservation.

Mochamad Turtle Festival 2012-13

Villagers of Mochamad; a very small village in *Taluka Vengurla*, district *Sindhudurga* were very enthusiastic about this new idea of Turtle Festival. Series of meetings with *Gram Panchayat* and villagers to make them aware about festival and ensure the participation of all. Sahyadri’s team conducted survey of the entire village to identify families willing to host tourists. Meetings with the Self Help Groups were also conducted to arrange food on behalf of the home stay owners having no food facilities for tourists. This created more opportunities for SHGs as well as creates collaboration among villagers. After shortlisting such families, a quick hospitality training program was conducted to make them aware basic interactions and expectations of tourists.

Local drama companies were arranged to host *Dashavatar*, local form of drama on “Turtle Conservation” and “Marine Life Conservation”. About 200 people from Mochamad and nearby villages saw these dramas. The event was well covered by local, metro news papers and TV channels.

Marine Turtle Knowledge and Interpretation Center – MTKIC; Velas

Awareness is an important tool in the biodiversity conservation. At Velas and other nesting locations,



Sahyadri regularly arranges turtle festival and awareness drives to educate people about the ecological importance of turtles and connect more people with the project. Sahyadri also shows its short film about the turtle conservation during the festival period. During non-festival period, other than one-on-one sessions by local volunteers there was no other way for the visitors to get the complete information about turtles. The need was felt to set up a center to give detailed information about the

turtles.

This year Sahyadri could set up a Marine Turtle Knowledge and Interpretation Center at Velas, first of its kind in Maharashtra covering the following topics

- Identification of turtles
- Information about 5 marine turtle species found in India
- Information about Olive Ridley nesting season
- Information about ex situ and in situ turtle conservation
- Threats to turtles and ways to protect their habitat

The center meets the following objectives:

- Showcase up-to-date information about the marine turtles and conservation program
- Create one more attraction for tourists during non-nesting season

Training Workshops

These workshops were targeted for the people who are directly or indirectly associated with the conservation work. Hatchery managers and volunteers are directly involved in the conservation work whereas villagers, tourists have indirect involvement in the conservation work.

Following objectives were set while conducting the workshops for each target group

Hatchery Managers

- Refresher course through practical sessions
- Interaction with the other hatchery managers to understand their issues
- Get the most up to date information about the conservation work elsewhere

Volunteers

- Prepare cadre of trained local volunteers
- Educate people through informal discussions
- Conduct in the awareness programs
- Educate tourists
- Participate in turtle festivals

Villagers

- Voluntary informers about turtle sighting / nesting
- Practice “Dos and Dents” about their own beaches
- Empowerment to build conservation centric micro enterprises

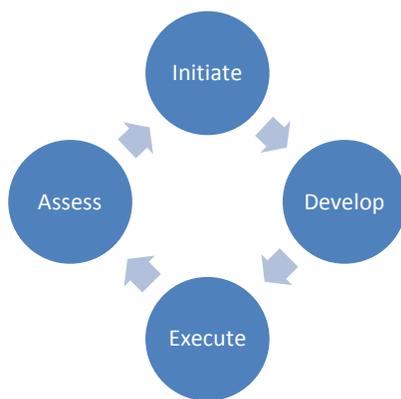
Tourists

- Practice responsible tourism
- Alternate to forest based wild life tourism
- Connect with the village level conservation program

Sahyadri conducted 10 workshops as a part of this project. Please refer Appendix II for the dates and place of these workshops. Sahyadri’s staff made the necessary arrangements like banners, handouts, coordination, content preparation etc. for these workshops.

Develop Alternate Livelihood Options

Sahyadri has always explored conservation centric livelihood options for the local villagers to be part of the conservation program. As a part of this project Sahyadri took a formal process to set up micro enterprises based on the mapping of the available skills and tourists / market demand. The process had the following stages:



Initiate: This stage was to understand the need Sahyadri initiated village level surveys at Velas and Maral to gather the data related to available skills of the SHGs and youth and the existing home-stay owners. The target population for this survey was women, SHGs and families. The data about existing livelihood options, available skills, time, inclination to explore new things etc. was collected during this survey.

In addition to the survey, door to door meetings were conducted at Harihareshwar and Maral to explore alternate livelihood options.

Develop: In this stage, Sahyadri started training the target group depending on their skill mapping. In some cases external trainer was involved. Following is the progress for each of the identified track.

Execute: Once the groups of every track was trained the respective services were rolled out during the Turtle Festival 2013.

Assess: Sahyadri assessed the tracks which have been continued. Home stay track is the most successful track. Till Mar 2013, 3,000 tourists visited Velas.

Based on this model, following is the status of the tracks explored:

- Increase in home stay members at Velas – Last year about 2,500 tourists visited Velas. They were accommodated in the existing 11 home stay members. Generally over a week end about 300 tourists need accommodation which makes about 21 tourists per family. Looking at the available capacities of every family, they were getting overburdened. As the number of tourists is going up, there was a clear space for some more families to start the home stay. A campaigning with this respect resulted in 13 more families to participate in the program. It proved to be the most successful track
- Tourist Guides - Harihareshwar in Dist. Raigad has a 400 year old temple which has the historical and the cultural importance. Survey revealed that the temple has visitation of more than 1 Lac people every year. It was also noticed that the tourists come to worship are completely unaware about the historical and cultural importance of the place. Additionally, Harihareshwar has marine turtle nesting, dolphin sightings and an excellent biodiversity. A survey of tourists revealed their interest in knowing more about the place. With this background SNM could sense the need of tourist guides in this place to meet tourist demand and provide alternate livelihood option to local youth. Unfortunately, the program was cancelled owing lack of adequate number of participants. Repetitive attempts to convince the youth to participate failed so the overall track has been kept on hold.
- Making *Agarbatti*: The survey revealed that *agarbattis* have lot of demand in the shops at Harihareshwar temple. These *agarbattis* were bought from distributors outside the village. Also some of the manufacturers are out of Maharashtra. Need of manufacturing *agarbattis* locally was felt as it will bring down the cost and will also give earning option to SHGs. 2 SHGs one each at Velas and Maral have continued this track and shall start selling their product during this festival.
- Making hand gloves: The survey showed that some of the women have basic sewing and stitching skills which can be explored further to make industrial hand gloves. A marketer for the same was asked about such a possibility. Through the discussions it was decided to explore the possibility further. 2 training sessions were arranged at Maral for SHGs. Unfortunately, this track has also been kept on hold because of further support by the marketer to provide the necessary raw material. Sahyadri may decide to pursue this further through other contacts.

Publication of Book

This year, Sahyadri got its “Turtle Protection - Conservation” book redesigned from a professional artist and published the same. Also based on the tourists’ demand to publish the same book in English could also be materialized due to assistance given by two volunteers. This will help to reach non-Marathi speaking tourists and spread the “Save Turtle” message to the other states also.

The book shall be distributed free of cost to schools, colleges, libraries,



Gram Panchayats, environment NGOs, all hatchery managers of the project area, other turtle conservation related NGOs and individuals, Environment Department; Maharashtra, Forest Department; Maharashtra.

What's New

- ❖ Expanding the ambit of vulture conservation to build sustainable conservation path is on cards. With this respect, Sahyadri has applied to few foreign funding agencies.
- ❖ "Forest Conservation" along the Northern Western Ghats covering Konkan region shall be taken up with high priority. Tie ups with villagers and interested citizens from metros shall be done to create a collaborative conservation model.
- ❖ Fund raising for "Nature Interpretation Center" at Chiplun shall also be pursued this year.

Appeal

The massive force and desire of owning and changing the land usage towards non-environment friendly activities like resorts and mega cities can only be countered by collective action of equally impactful group of nature enthusiast.

"My Forest" is Sahyadri's model of having collective ownership of forest and realize its true economic value thereby preventing razing of trees and other biodiversity of the land. The cost of this project is Rs. 15 L. Sahyadri appeals to join hands and own your forest for Rs. 1 Lac

Foreign Donations Now Accepted

Name of account: Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra,
Chiplun

Name of Bank: Bank of India

Address: Centre I complex, Karad Road,
Bahaddur Sheikh Naka, Chiplun

Account Number: 148010110000226

SWIFT Code: BKIDINBBBOS

FCRA Registration number: 083950039

Donations within India

Name of account: Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra,
Chiplun

Name of Bank: Bank of India, Chiplun

Account Number: 141110110000077

NEFT: BKID0001411

Name of Bank: Bank of Maharashtra, Chiplun

Account Number: 20061344941

NEFT: MAHB0000296

Donations will be entitled for IT exemption under 80G

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The Maharashtra State Forest Department came forth and sponsored sea turtle conservation through hatchery management in 16 villages. The turtle conservation program of 10 villages was supported by the Maharashtra State Environment Department. UNDP GEF supported the turtle conservation program in district Sindhudurga. MCBT sponsored the turtle conservation program in district Thane and parts of Raigad.

"Shri Shankarlal Pokarna Charitable Trust" provided funds that assisted in improving awareness and promoting education at the local level.

Tata Consultancy Services supported the Turtle Festivals and awareness drives in 5 villages

In addition, the local Gram Panchayats in each village and Kasav Mitra Mandals, villagers and all the volunteers have worked to ensure the large-scale success of conservation programs.

The support of individual donors has always been the back bone of our activities.

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