

World Wetlands Day 2012

The World Wetlands Day 2012 was commemorated in Kerala from 8 - 10 February, 2012 (the dates had to be changed from 31 Jan – 2 Feb to 8 – 10 Feb because of the demise of the Governor of Kerala and official mourning declared for one week during that period). The events were organized by WWF-India Kerala State Office in association with the District Tourism Promotion Council, Kottayam and CSI Madhya Kerala Diocese with the support of Department of Ecotourism, Government of Kerala.

On the 8th of February, 2012 a workshop on 'Backwater Tourism in Vembanad' was organized at Hotel Arcadia. The workshop was attended by about 40 selected students from the Department of Tourism and Travel Studies and School of Environmental Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University. A.V.George, CEO, AVG Group of Companies, Anil Kumar C., GM, Coconut Lagoon, Sukumaran Nair, Founder Secretary, Pampa Parirakshana Samithi, spoke as part of the inaugural function of the event. The technical sessions were led by Deepak Dayanandan, Tourism Consultant, Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director, WWF-India and Jerry Mechery, Project Officer, WWF-India. The sessions were followed by very dynamic interactive sessions.

On the 9th of February, 2012 a select group of 30 students from various institutions in and around Kottayam was taken on a Wetland Field Visit by boat. The trip started at 7am from the Kodimatha Boat Jetty. The students had a rather different experience in learning about the values, functions and services of wetlands by directly observing and interpreting from the field. The students watched each and everything happening in and around the lake, made close observations, took photographs, interacted with various classes of stakeholders and by the end of the day had a wealth of experience at hand to make a multimedia presentation to be delivered during the next day awareness session.

On the 10th of February, 2012, an awareness session was organized at CSI Retreat Centre, Kottayam which was attended by about 180 Teacher Trainees from about 6 Teacher Training Institutions from in and around Kottayam. Narayanankutty IFS, Director, Department of Ecotourism, Prof. M.K. Prasad, leading environmentalist of the State, Dr. Peter Mathew, Principal, Mount Tabor Training College, Ravi Dee Cee, MD, DC Books, Renjan Mathew Varghese, State Director, WWF-India addressed the gathering as part of the inaugural function. Following the inaugural function, the student teams who had gone for the previous day's wetlands field visit, made their presentations through poems, stories, charts, multimedia presentations etc on their experiences and what they saw and understood about wetland ecosystems. The presentations were evaluated by Prof M.K. Prasad and the three best presentations were given prizes. Following this, the technical sessions were led by Prof.M.K. Prasad and Mr. Jojo T.D., Programme Coordinator, ATREE. The day's events concluded by 3.00pm with vote of thanks and distribution of certificates.

As part of WWD 2012, an All Kerala Photography Competition on the theme 'Wetlands and Tourism' was also announced. Around 120 entries were received. They were evaluated by a panel of judges and prizes given. The photographs were put up as photo exhibition at the Art Gallery, Kottayam Public Library on 9th and 10th February, 2012.

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