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## **INTRODUCTION**

Wetlands are the primary resource from which humans derive water and they are a major and a critical component of the water cycle. Wetlands are fundamental regulators of water regimes. Without the appropriate management of wetlands there is no water of the right quality and quantity, where and when it is needed.

The key message for World Wetlands Day 2013 was a need to reconsider our view about wetlands, and recognizing that the very essential requirements of human society are delivered by and through wetlands.

Wetlands have the dual capacity of being 'water providers' and 'water users'. Being critical components of the water cycle that delivers the fresh water, the wetlands need some quantities of water to keep their functions in perfect order. India has a varied terrain and climate that supports a rich diversity of inland and coastal wetland habitats which are unique ecosystems. Wetlands in India (excluding rivers), account for 18.4% of the country's geographic area.

To ensure the availability of water to safeguard our very existence, it is crucial to preserve, conserve and manage our wetlands. These ecologically sensitive areas are getting depleted fast, causing a threat to the environment. Effective conservation programmes for the long-term survival of wetlands is the need of the hour.

The Corbett Foundation believes that support and cooperation of local people is essential for the long-term conservation of our wetlands and it is imperative that people become aware about the importance of wetlands.

## **ABOUT THE CORBETT FOUNDATION**

The Corbett Foundation was established in 1994 by Mr. Dilip D. Khatau, a passionate wildlife lover, the scion of the 4th generation of the powerful Khatau Business House and the former Member of National Board for Wildlife in India. The Corbett Foundation (TCF) is fully dedicated to the cause of wildlife conservation, environmental awareness, community outreach programmes, tribal welfare and sustainable development initiatives. From a small beginning in 1994 in Corbett, TCF has over the years grown into one of the foremost NGOs in India in the field of wildlife conservation and working in Kanha and Bandhavgarh tiger reserves and around the Greater Rann of Kutch. Some of the key programmes implemented by TCF are listed below:

1. Interim Relief Scheme, implemented in collaboration with WWF-India, to provide on-the-spot-compensation to the cattle owners whose cattle suffers depredation by tigers or leopards in the buffer area of Corbett Tiger Reserve.
2. 'Save Indian Bustards Campaign' that raises awareness about the depleting numbers of Indian Bustards and loss of their habitat in Kutch.
3. Cattle Care and Development Programme that focusses on Indian cattle breeds, and their development, treatment, vaccination and care.
4. Rainwater harvesting programmes in the semi-arid habitat of Kutch.
5. Established a Centre on Global Warming at the outskirts of Corbett Tiger Reserve.
6. Established a Tribal Arts and Crafts Museum at the outskirts of Kanha Tiger reserve.
7. Vocational Training Programme for upliftment of tribals and other forest-dwelling communities for a sustainable livelihood generation.

## WORLD WETLANDS DAY

Keeping in mind, the key objective of the World Wetlands Day 2013, “To raise people’s awareness of the interdependence between water and wetlands, to highlight ways to ensure the equitable sharing of water between different stakeholder groups and to understand that without wetlands there will be no water”, The Corbett Foundation undertook awareness generation programmes in schools and villages through its divisions in various parts of the country.

On the auspice of the World Wetlands Day celebrated throughout the world, every year, The Corbett Foundation with its divisions organized programmes such as Awareness Rally, visits to Wetlands, and awareness programmes.

**TCF Bandhavgarh** organized an awareness programme with the students of the Government Middle School, Bijhariya. A total of 45 students and their teacher were taken to local wetland located in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, so that they understand the functioning of the wetlands. The programme started with the introduction of wetlands and genesis of World Wetlands Day by Dr. Sharad Kumar followed by the discussion about World Wetlands Day 2013 theme “**Wetlands and Water Management**”.



The discussion progressed on to various threats faced by wetlands and how these threats jeopardize the long-term conservation of these rich ecosystems and what are consequences of degradation and destruction of wetlands. The participants were also informed about how they can contribute towards the conservation of wetlands.

After this, a game was played wherein participants were divided into eight groups and each presented with an object (Sponge, Cradle, Pillow, Soap, Filter, cereals, Mixer and Antacid) as metaphor for natural functions of wetlands and their importance.



The groups were given time for discussion with their team members and note down their views on a paper. Later the group leader was asked to explain the functioning of wetlands with the help of metaphor to audience.

Out of the eight presentations, three were selected as winners and prizes were given to the winner teams.

At the end of the programme, Dr. Sharad Kumar briefed the students, on how by making slight changes in our life style we can give our contribution in the wetland conservation.

Enthusiastically the participants took an oath to work for the preservation and conservation of the wetlands.



**TCF Corbett** celebrated the day by creating awareness about the importance of wetlands conservation among kids of nine schools with their teachers. The students were taken to the Tumaria Wetland. The programme began with an introduction of participants, followed by briefing about the reasons for celebrating this day and its brief history by Dr. Harendra Singh Bargali.



Participants were informed about the RAMSAR convention and how World Wetlands Day got representation all over the world for creation of awareness for the wetland conservation. Students were told about functional values of wetlands and also imparted with tips on bird identification. Kids were introduced to the direct and indirect benefits or services provided by the wetlands and how crucial they are for sustaining life on earth.

**TCF Kanha** celebrated the World Wetlands Day with the middle school students of Bhandarpur. The programme began with a power point presentation in class by Ms. Sanskruti Marathe, followed by a rally to a nearby wetland of Tikratola. Rally proceeded through a village and hence



students were asked to voice slogans pertaining to the theme. "If there's wetland, there's water, if there's water, there's Life".

The students were asked to explore the wetland for insects, birds and plant life. The students were asked to sketch any animal signs such as tracks or trails; they might see which would help to identify the type of animal or bird. They were asked to observe plants and how they are adapted to life in the water. The students were asked to explore the banks for invertebrates and note where the creature was seen and think of the role it might be playing in the habitat. The students were earlier taught that the invertebrates are an essential link in wetland food-chains as they are source of food for fish, frogs and birds. They were encouraged to discuss food-chains and webs.



After an hour at the spot they gathered back in school for a "Water Cycle Game". The kids were asked to form three groups and each group was provided with an empty bucket and a sponge. A filled in water tank was also placed. The kids were questioned about the water cycle. After which they were explained what each item represents, viz. the filled tank represents Ocean, the sponge represents Cloud and the bucket represents wetland/catchment area. The kids themselves were representing air currents.

Then the students were demonstrated as to how the game is played and how it simplifies the understanding of the water cycle. The group to get maximum water in the bucket wins.



The kids thoroughly enjoyed themselves and poured in their hearts while playing.

After the game the students were led inside the class and a small experiment was conducted that depicted one of the very important functions of the wetlands i.e. recharge of groundwater. A tray with mud holding grass, prepared a day before, was brought in and students were asked to imagine it as a small version



of the wetland they just visited. They were then asked to make two sections in the tray holding a metal plate in between representing non-porous material such as rock/non-permeable matter. Then one of the kids was asked to pour



water in one section and another asked to make a depression on other side like a well. The wetland's function of soaking up of extra rainwater was refreshed. As the water content increased at one end, the well on the other end started to fill with water, thus clearing the concept of groundwater recharge and the role of wetlands. The activity thus helped the kids in understanding the basic concepts of water cycle and ground water recharge while having fun at the same time.

The dedicated staff of TCF put in their best to create the necessary awareness about the importance of wetlands among kids and grown-ups alike. The objective behind which was to encourage the students to think beyond the water and land concept and see the interconnectedness of different life forms with each-other and with their habitat. The various activities conducted by TCF intended to enhance the observational skills of students leading to increased interest and developing a sense of responsibility towards their environment while making the event more rewarding.

