

MARINE TURTLE CONSERVATION REPORT 2010 – 2011

Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra successfully implemented all of its programs in the year 2010-11. Under the Marine Turtle Conservation Project this year, 82 nests were protected and 3482 hatchlings released into the sea. The project was implemented across 36 villages along the coast of Maharashtra. Awareness campaigns were also arranged as part of the project. SNM has been working towards the conservation of marine turtles since the past nine years i.e., 2002-2011. To date 681 nests have been protected and more than 30,465 hatchlings safely released.

Turtle Nests, Eggs and Hatchlings - 2010-2011:

Sr. No.	Name of the Village	No. of nests	No. of Eggs	No. of Hatchlings released
	Ratnagiri District			
1	Velas	23	2737	1316
2	Kelshi	7	819	297
3	Anjarla	2	208	34
4	Kolthare (Insitu)	11	in-situ	in-situ
5	Dabhol	7	754	364
6	Guhagar	2	238	34
	Raigad District			
7	Maral	13	1246	414
8	Harihareshwar	3	342	188
9	Srivardhan	2	249	195
10	Diveagar	9	1141	462
11	Velas	1	140	100
	Sindhudurg District			
12	Tarkarli	1	132	72
	Total	82	8006	3482

Turtle Festival:

This year's turtle festival ended in great success. SNM has been organizing the Turtle Festival every year since 2006 at Velas jointly with the Forest department, the Velas Gram Panchayat and Kasav Mitra Mandal, Velas. This year too all of them along with TCS Mumbai jointly organized the Turtle festival, from February 21 to March 31. TCS Mumbai was the sponsor for the Marine Turtle conservation project at Velas. The festival was inaugurated on 21st February, in the presence of and at the hands of the Range forest officer (RFO) Mr. Ashok A. Lad, Sarpanch Mrs. Dipti Patil, Deputy Sarpanch Mr. Virendra Patil and other Grampanchayat members of Velas, Forest officials, Police officials, the TCS HSE associates – Dr. Aniruddha Agnihotri & Dr. Laxmikant P. Naik, and the SNM members. This festival got splendid coverage from the media. Hundreds of visitors from different places and varied occupations visited Velas. Many government

officials from the Forest, Revenue, Administrative, Police and Custom departments also visited the turtle festival.

The residents of Velas handled this festival traditionally. KMM excellently organized the festival at their level. SNM supported them with latest technology and technical assistance. The website posted information regarding the list of KMM members, their phone numbers, and amenities available, for people's perusal. This helped the tourists to liaison with the KMM members directly. Twice a day, we updated the website with details like the turtle nesting status, emergence of hatchlings from nests, the best dates for viewing of turtle hatchlings etc. The festival was a grand success with the release of 1316 hatchlings and close to 520 people, including four foreigners, staying at KMM members' houses and experiencing typical village life and the warmth of the villagers. About 100 staff members of the TCS Company also visited Velas to behold the sight of tiny hatchlings entering the sea.

Daily screenings of the film Kasava Tuzhyacha Sathi were arranged. Consecutive discussions provided tourists with valuable insights into the lives of marine turtles. People visited the Marine Turtle Knowledge and Information Center to learn more about the project. Tourists expressed an eagerness to help protect the marine turtle in whatever way they could. Some were even willing to volunteer at Velas during the festival. Some tourists helped via donations, others via membership. They purchased books on turtles, DVDs, photo frames, eco-friendly bags and miniature models of turtle hatchlings as memorabilia. Sumant Narayan, Yogiraj Rathod, Ms. Dhanashree Joshi, Mr. Mohan Upadhyay, Ms. Vaibhavi Joshi and Subodh Telang worked hard to ensure that the festival became a huge success

This year, many locals realized the profit that was to be gained by associating themselves with the Kasav Mitra Mandal. Hence, they came forward and actively participated in its activities. In this manner, 13 members of the Mandal were involved in the organization of the turtle festival at Velas this year. The members contributed 10% of their total income generated during the festival to the Marine Turtle Conservation Fund to help protect the turtle. These funds are utilized exclusively for the conservation of the turtle at Velas. Mahila Bachat Gats at Velas set up stalls that sold tea and homemade food items to the tourists- thus providing them with an additional source of income. The Turtle Festival at Velas has proved again that nature conservation can be accomplished through livelihood management. SNM would like to thank all the tourists and participants that helped make this unique endeavor a brilliant success story.

Kasav Mitra Mandal:

The Kasav Mitra Mandal was established at Velas by Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra with a view to involve local people who were willing to work for the Marine Turtle. The Mandal provides lodging and boarding facilities, guides, film-shows etc. on demand by the tourists and the visitors arriving at Velas, especially during our Turtle festival. It charges reasonably for those facilities and spares 10% of this amount from such income towards

the Marine Turtle Conservation fund. This fund is utilized exclusively for conservation of Marine Turtles at Velas. Many volunteers, local youths, SHGs, Mahila Bachat Gats etc. have joined the Mandal as members. The locals see a source of income in these activities and participate spontaneously. The fact that Livelihood and conservation can go hand-in-hand has been successfully proven at our project village, Velas. Kasav Mitra Mandal is a unique endeavor by Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra to engage the local populace in effective conservation of the marine turtle.

Awareness programs in Schools:

SNM undertakes Marine Turtle conservation and awareness through community participation in Maharashtra. The goal is to involve the local community in conservation of the Endangered Olive Ridley Turtle on the Maharashtra coast. Students form a major part of this community. This makes the creation of awareness among students extremely essential for they are the future guardians of nature. To achieve this SNM is engaged in conducting awareness programs in all the schools along the coast. Under this project, SNM had organized drawing competitions on the subjects of Sea Shore & Marine Turtle and Essay competitions on the subjects- Importance of Marine Ecosystem & Marine Turtles and their Importance. They were held in the period from 1st January to 15th February 2011. Students were divided into 2 groups. Group 1 consisted of students from Std. 5 – Std. 7 and Group 2 consisted of students of Std. 8 – Std. 10. The first three winners of the competition, under each group were given cash prizes and certificates in each of the participating schools. The prize distribution ceremony at the Z P School in Velas, was done at the hands of the TCS associate Dr. Laxmikant Naik.

SNM had also organized lectures and film shows in all the schools, on topics of Environment, Nature conservation, Mangroves and Marine Turtles. Films like Kasava Tuzhyacha Sathi and Call of Nature were also screened in schools. The screening was succeeded by a discussion session that helped answer any queries raised by the audience. There was an overwhelming response from the students as well as the teachers towards this activity. Twenty schools participated in these programs and around we interacted with close to 5000 students throughout the program.

Shri. Shankarlal Pokarna Charitable Trust Project:

Like the last few years, in the year 2010-11 too, the Trust helped implement the Marine Turtle Conservation project in the villages of Maral, Diveagar, Harihareshwar, Srivardhan and Velas in Raigad district. A total of 28 nests and 3118 eggs were protected; 1359 hatchlings were released into the sea.

Awareness programmes were implemented across villages. Similarly, nature education activities are conducted on a regular basis in schools and colleges. These include several competitions, lectures, discussions, slide shows and film screenings. Nature, Marine Biodiversity, Turtle Conservation and its Importance for Human Existence are some of the themes that are touched upon through these programmes.

SNM would like to thank sincerely Mr. Amit Pokarna and all other trustees of Shri. Shankarlal Pokarna Charitable Trust, Pune for their continuous support.

TCS HSE Mumbai Turtle Conservation Project:

This year TCS Health Safety & Environment, Mumbai sponsored the Marine turtle conservation work at Velas. During the turtle festival about 100 staff members of the TCS Company came to witness the hatchlings enter the sea and in general, to experience the beauty of the festival. TCS had also arranged a film show for their staff members. The film Kasava Tuzhyacha Sathi, was also screened for the TCS staff and the consecutive discussions provided the visitors with valuable information on the marine turtles. In order to create awareness among the TCS associates regarding ecological significance of marine turtle, threats to their survival, need of conservation and most importantly their significant contribution to the marine ecosystem the TCS associates also gave speeches and put forth their views regarding conservation. They now plan to start an eco-club for the same.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to TCS Mumbai, Dr. Aniruddha Agnihotri & Dr. Laxmikant P. Naik for their kind support to the turtle conservation project.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to all our donors, well-wishers and supporters who have helped us protect and conserve nature since 1992. We would also like to thank the Forest Department and all the village Panchayats for their unconditional support.