



NILGIRI NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

OVERVIEW

Nilgiri Natural History Society endeavours to redefine life, nature and humanity through an ecologically sound and socially responsible value system. It aims to permeate manifestations of actions and thought processes across all walks of life. Inspiration and imagination are core to the Society.

The Society was started in 2010 by a group who have been working in the region of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve for 20 years and are part of Keystone Foundation. The society was launched to include people who believe that ecological societies are possible, where people and biodiversity coexist.

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is a region, which is alive with these examples, and the society seeks to understand and learn from them.

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FORWEWORD

The Nilgiri Natural History Society enters its 8th year and is taking the road lesser travelled to make conservation more mainstreamed and include more diversity in our approaches and activities.

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is rich in biodiversity and is one of the first biosphere reserves for India. It was a significant intervention in India's conservation approaches since it came at a time when all around there was an awareness on the need to integrate communities in the efforts to achieve conservation. In highly complex coupled natural human landscapes like the Indian context its easy to compromise conservation goals for development. In spite of this there is a significant voice for conservation which has lead to policies which are strong on both the conservation and development side.

Creating alliances for conservation across the board – is the paradigm shift that will perhaps arrest many of the pressing issues we see in the world today – biodiversity loss; climate change; acidification of oceans, ecosystem collapse; rising poverty; rising affluence. Prof Gus Speth founder of the World Resources Institute very aptly says how he thought that with 30 years of good science we would be able to solve all the problems of the world only to realise that the real problems were more anthropogenic of selfishness, apathy and greed and to eradicate these we need social and cultural transformations.

Transformations are what we need and those can only be built through alliances. These alliances mean coming to the negotiation forum with less baggage and learning to speak many languages not just human but of the plants and animals; not just of the plants and animals but that of cultures and economies and markets.

Anita Varghese

President



WORKSHOPS & PROJECTS

World environment day, June 5th and 6th

We did a one day workshop with 9th standard students from Hebron School in Ooty, specifically a two day project on water conservation from June 5th to 6th. The first day was spent at Kodamalai village. The students collaborated with the water team at Keystone and the village elders. Together these passionate conservationists planted Shola tree saplings in the wetland area. The goal was to bring people together from the general public, local villages, and experts in the field to work towards a greater environmental cause, in this case being the conservation of water.

Water conservation is especially crucial in the Nilgiris area; for instance wetlands are important sources of drinking water for the hill communities. Wetlands are also called Natural Water Treatment Plants because they are able to clean waste and produce clean water. Due to water reduction in the Kodamalai village, the crew was planting trees and ferns that most mimicked the kinds of vegetation that would closely surround

wetlands, in order to encourage more water in the area.

The next day the students headed down to Happy Valley, a restoration project located quite close to Keystone Foundation. About 10 years ago the spring and wetland found in this valley were identified as important sources of water for Kotagiri, hence many saplings were planted to encourage water renewal. The restoration project was also a collaboration with the local communities to reduce open defecation and dumping waste in this patch of land. Fast forward to World Environment Day and these community conservation efforts then extended to the Hebron students who helped remove invasive plants from the now small patch of forest. Some Jolly good efforts for a Happy Valley!

The students ended their environmental endeavours at the Longwood Shola, an opportunity to experience a fully functioning natural Shola. These two days were a significant first step of hopefully many steps to come towards heightened awareness of the importance of our surrounding

environments and its functions, such as sources of water. If we can instil stewardship of nature and its many facets within the younger generation then there may be a chance, yet, to save what little is left. To everyday being World Environment Day!

Amit's nursery

NNHS and subject manager (nurseries), Keystone foundation have been asked to set up a nursery of Native trees/shrubs and grasses near Chinna Bandishola by Mr. Amit an architect by profession. The idea is that we set up a nursery with close to 500 native species and then on a later date they would be transplanted in a property of about 15 acres. The team would also be regularly monitoring the growth of the plants to make sure the success rate is high and provide any expertise required in terms of nursing them.



TRAIL

Longwood Shola

This 1.16 sq. km patch of tropical montane/ cloud forest has again been one of the most sought out trails owing to its easy nature and accessibility. This rare shola patch has many times been the perfect venue to talk about Sholas and Wetlands of upper plateau. Being a refuge for many endemic species, an example for citizen conservation and the perennial water source for villages near and far, it has become our field site for outreach especially for schools.

Vellericombei

Couple of trails were organised to learn a little bit first-hand about the Kurumba way of life. Vellericombei hamlet is en-route to the sacred 'Elithabare' or the Neolithic rock art. This trail passes through coffee plantation filled with various fruiting trees to semi-evergreen forest to deciduous forest and ends at the sacred rocks from which one can get glimpses of the Mettupalayam range/Coonoor range and on a good day even the mythical Bakasura Malai. There were about 10 people on this trail owing to its difficulty but is a haven for many endemic/rare/beautiful avian species. A wide range of subjects such as culture, cultural history, honey rocks of the Kurumbas, medicinal plants, fruiting plants, NTFP and land use changes were discussed.

Banagudi Shola

Banagudi meaning 'a forest temple,' or 'a temple which is nestled in the forest,' has been a sacred site for the Kurumbas for generations. Eco-tourism has been set up here as it's very close to the famous 'Catherine Falls'. We organised this trail about 5 times and in all about 30 people were on this trail. The whole trail which cuts through various landscapes both forest and plantation if done religiously is about 9 km long. One gets to explore the culture, folklore, Gods and the myths of the Kurumbas on this trail and at the same time look at land use changes around their hamlet which are perceived as destructive and degenerative, by some Kurumbas.

Pudukad Trail

Pudukkad is another Kurumba hamlet on the Coonoor slopes near Burliyar and it also hosts one of Aadhimalai's production centres where the focus is on beeswax products. This mid-elevation landscape is a perfect habitat for butterflies, birds and elephants. The trail is not more than 4 km but is hard for some due to its steepness. One has to cross the Coonoor River to get access to rocky patches which have little ponds and streaks of flowing water, which are perfect habitats to see some of the rare butterflies, dragonflies and



ILS



TALKS

Mr Andre Lieu-President of IFOAM was visiting the Keystone campus and readily agreed to meet with citizen groups and interact with the children of Blue Mountain School, Ooty to talk about organic agricultural practices and seed savers. The talk in Coonoor was organised at 'De Rock' resorts and attended by more than 40 people.

damselflies. Another interesting subject to talk about here is water, since the Coonoor River is one of the most polluted water bodies in the Nilgiris and it cuts through these rocks near Pudukkad. There were 15 people on this trail with a majority of them being school students while the rest were bird/butterfly/odonate enthusiasts.

Kodithen Mund

Kodithen Mund as the name suggests is a Toda hamlet and is located very close to the Kodanad View Point. This hamlet is surrounded by the Shola and vast private tea holdings like the Kodanad and Curzon estate. These vast tea holdings are interspersed with

eucalyptus and wattle plantations, which as we know have been depleting the water table of that area for a long time now. The effect is that there is lesser and polluted water for the tribal hamlets and all the other life forms downstream. This is worth mentioning as the Shola forest around the hamlet continues downstream and changes in nature all the way to the Moyar gorge and beyond into the Black Buck sanctuary and to the Eastern Ghats. Geographically speaking this field trip has lots to offer, along with the Todas and lots of endemic species. This is a part of the eco-tourism trail set up by the forest department and has been one of the most sought out trails in the

last six months. NNHS organised the trail for more than 10 diverse groups until now. One of the attractions to this trail is the traditional Toda food which is served for lunch.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION



Nature Education Program for Schools

Lawrence School visit Bee Museum: The Lawrence School send their Standard 6 students for a field trip annually to the Bee Museum. This time around there were 3 sections and about 120 students in all. Once they get to the venue they are introduced to the world of bees and the linkages between various pollinators, our forests, the air we breathe and the water we drink. A documentary on the honey hunters of the Nilgiris made by Keystone Foundation is screened for them, after which the forum is open for questions, discussions and observing various artefacts and information on the bees and their relationship with the communities.

Hebron School visit Destiny Farms, Environment week, October, 2016: Hebron School organised an environment week/field trip to Destiny Farms which neighbours the Emerald and Avalanche lakes. The Standard 7

students were divided into two groups and had to live camp life for 3 days, all the while monitoring the temperature, rainfall, humidity and wind. NNHS was called in to assist on the nature walks/day hikes to look at various life forms and their interactions within the environment. A comparative study of insect diversity in native and non-native forests was done. The students were expected to form their own web of life using all their observations. The importance of upper plateau lake systems and their many functions were also discussed. They also had a geography and science teacher to help find inter-linkages.

School visits to Keystone Foundation

Kodaikanal International School 5-9 October 2017: Ms Priya teaches 'Social Experience' at Kodaikanal International School. As part of her curriculum she asked us to organise a field trip to Keystone Foundation, a group of eco-development initiatives in the heart

of NBR. The Standard 6 students, about 15 of them, were one of the smartest group of kids we hosted until now. Their understanding of complex subjects such as social enterprise/wellness, mental health/livelihoods/conservation and various other areas of work was impressive. They also visited some Irula villages in Aracode area to see practical applications of Keystone's work and their way of life.

Rishi Valley School, 3-8 December 2017: Keystone Foundation hosts the Standard 9 field trip for Rishi Valley every year. NNHS organised and conducted this exposure trip for them this time around. About 12 students and two teachers were part of the troop that got glimpses of the NGO world along with hikes, nature walks and a couple of field trips to our working areas. Happy valley is a small patch of native trees that Keystone foundation raised to iterate the working balance between Sholas and water in the upper plateau. This has been an invaluable field site to work with invasive species, look at native diversity and to talk about springs in relation to watershed and its management. Most schools we are associated with get a hands-on experience on invasive species removal and raising native ones at this site. It's been over 10 years since the restoration work started, hence one can look at the water levels near the spring box to show that native Shola species are integral to our complex watershed system.

The School, KFI, Chennai 10-14 January 2017: A group of 36 students along with 4 teachers from The School, KFI Chennai were part of a Nature education program at Kotagiri from

January 10th to 14th. After a two day introductory session around Keystone campus, Longwood Shola and Kotagiri town, the students went out in three groups. While one group worked on the upper plateau landscape – Todas and removal of exotic species, the second group moved between the water project and the millet landscapes of Aracode-Irula and the third group went to Hasanur area to understand Irula people and their agriculture and forest dependence. The students came back to Kotagiri and presented their experiences and learnings. A very enthusiastic group and we look forward to working with The School again.

Eco-tourism and Conservation

Promoting eco-tourism at Kodithen Mund: NNHS has organised several student group visits to Kodithen Mund this past six months too. We also took the NFLC 2017 batch to visit and understand the eco-tourism model of the village.

OMCAR Foundation: NNHS is starting to build ties with OMCAR Foundation and Dr Balaji who spearheads some inspiring ocean conservation efforts along the Palk Bay. We took 8 students of the NFLC for a week long program to volunteer for their sea grass restoration work.



Outreach at Jungle Hut, October and November

Jungle Hut as many know is a wildlife resort in Bokkapuram. They have asked NNHS to organise and conduct nature awareness/outreach camps for the two school groups they were hosting. The first group was 37 Standard 7 boys from The Lawrence School and the second (14 students between ages 13-16) was from Bodhi School, Bangalore. This proved to be a good opportunity to engage with the kids. A typical day was filled with nature walks, birding trails and hikes where an introduction to different landscapes was also given, followed by nature based games to understand one's backyard biodiversity. The main attractions in a typical 2-3

day camp were the Treasure Hunt, tree climbing (without harnesses) and the jungle safaris.

Blue mountain School

We have been conducting outreach sessions on native plants for the students of 6th to 9th grades in Blue Mountain School. We started off with an introduction to NBR, tribal communities of NBR and various forest types. Then we talked about nurseries and their need/importance. They learnt how to work with their hands using different tools and set up nursery beds to raise native saplings. The topics ranged from diversity of seeds and conditions required for germinating various native species. The idea was

to raise various forest type species that would grow in conditions Ooty has to offer, start planting them within the school, and then probably look for spaces outside the school in the future. We have enjoyed the interactions with the children and would like to thank the Principal and teachers of the school who help facilitate the sessions. We continue our program at the school and meet with students every Friday during the term.

Great Backyard Bird Count

In February 2017 NNHS members took part in the Great Backyard Bird Count. It was a special time when a young photographer was also able to get a video of the Kashmiri flycatcher which has now made the Keystone campus a part of its routine annual stopover.



NILGIRI NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31.03.2017

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31.03.2017					
RECEIPTS	Rs.P	Rs.P	PAYMENTS	Rs.P	Rs.P
To Opening Balances			By Administrative expenses		15,992.35
Cash in Hand	13,480.00		By Bank charges		687.42
Cash at bank			By Books and subscription		7,500.00
- Axis bank	1,21,144.03		By Conservation education		2,87,489.00
- HDFC bank	5,525.46	1,40,149.49	By Conveyance		17,018.13
To Bank interest		5,155.00	By Eco restoration		17,360.00
To Donation		5,54,235.00	By Field expenses		16,102.00
To Round off		50.00	By Meeting expenses		1,828.00
To Other income		8,800.00	By Printing and stationery		59,200.00
To Membership fees annual		3,000.00	By Postage and Telephone		19,048.00
To Consultancy income		95,000.00	By Computer repair		500.00
To Advance recovered		1,15,307.13	By Salary		2,24,000.00
To Membership fees Life		12,000.00	By Training expenses		26,099.00
			By Workshop expenses		1,500.00
			By Advance paid		92,000.00
			By TDS		13,205.00
			By Closing Balances:		
			Cash in Hand	1,719.65	
			Cash at bank		
			- Axis bank	5,832.50	
			- HDFC bank	1,26,615.57	1,34,167.72
		9,33,696.62			9,33,696.62

Notes: Refer balance sheet.

per our report of even date.
for J. MATHEW & Co. ICAI Reg. No. 002028S

Place : Ootacamund
Date : 18.09.2017

JOHN MATHEW. C.M
Chartered Accountant. Proprietor. Membership No.025343

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31.03.2017

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31.03.2017			
EXPENDITURE	Rs.P	INCOME	Rs.P
To Administrative expenses	15,992.35	By Bank interest	5,155.00
To Bank charges	687.42	By Donation	5,54,235.00
To Books and subscription	7,500.00	By Round off	50.00
To Conservation education	2,87,489.00	By Other income	8,800.00
To Conveyance	13,718.13	By Membership fees annual	3,000.00
To Eco restoration	17,360.00	By Consultancy income	95,000.00
To Field expenses	16,102.00	By Excess of Expenditures over Income	(46,601.10)
To Meeting expenses	1,828.00		
To Printing and stationery	12,000.00		
To Postage and Telephone	19,048.00		
To Computer repair	500.00		
To Salary	2,24,000.00		
To Training expenses	-		
To Workshop expenses	1,500.00		
To Advance written off	-		
To Depreciation	1,914.00		
	6,19,638.90		6,19,638.90

Notes: Refer balance sheet.

per our report of even date.
for J. MATHEW & Co. ICAI Reg. No. 002028S

Place : Ootacamund
Date : 18.09.2017

JOHN MATHEW. C.M
Chartered Accountant. Proprietor. Membership No.025343

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31.03.2017

LIABILITIES	Rs.P	Rs.P	ASSETS	Rs.P	Rs.P
CAPITAL FUND			FIXED ASSETS		
Balance as on 01.04.2016	30,390.49		Computer (Opening balance)	3,190.00	
Less: Excess of Expenditure over Income	29,997.90	392.59	Less: Depreciation @ 60%	1,914.00	1,276.00
LIFE MEMBERSHIPS			LOANS AND ADVANCES		
Institutional - as per last Balance Sheet		86,000.00	Opening balance	50,051.00	
Individuals - as per last Balance Sheet	1,42,000.00		Add: Paid during the year	92,000.00	
Add: Received during the year	12,000.00	1,54,000.00	Less: Received during the year	(1,15,307.13)	26,743.87
CURRENT LIABILITY			TDS Receivable - O B		
Audit fees		5,000.00	Add: During the year - 2016-17	13,205.00	83,205.00
			CLOSING BALANCES		
			- Cash in Hand	1,719.65	
			- Cash at bank		
			- Axis bank	5,832.50	
			- HDFC bank	1,26,615.57	1,34,167.72
2,45,392.59			2,45,392.59		

Notes on Accounts : Schedules I

per our report of even date.
for J. MATHEW & Co. ICAI Reg. No. 002028S

Place : Ootacamund

Date : 18.09.2017

JOHN MATHEW. C.M

Chartered Accountant. Proprietor. Membership No.025343

MEMBERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

Membership is invited under the following categories:

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP - All those who are in the age group of 10-17 years, and identify with and are willing to contribute to the vision and objects of the society would be eligible for this. They would be eligible to attend the General Body Meetings and enjoy such privileges as may be notified by the Executive Committee from time to time. The student members would not have any voting right in the Society. The membership fee is INR 100 per year.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP - All those above 17 years of age, who identify with and are willing to contribute to the vision and objectives of the society would be eligible for this. They would be eligible to attend the General Body Meetings and enjoy such privileges as may be notified by the Executive Committee from time to time. The associate members would not have any voting right in the Society. The membership fee is INR 100 per year.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP - Any individual who identifies with and is willing to contribute to the vision and objects of the society is eligible to apply for membership of the Society by submitting the duly filled in membership form of the Society along with the prevailing annual or life membership fee. The applicant may become a member

of the Society upon approval by the Executive Committee. The decision of the Executive Committee shall be final. The annual membership fee for individuals is INR 250 per year and the Life membership fee is INR 2,000.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP - Any institution which identifies with and is willing to contribute to the vision and of the society is eligible to apply for membership of the Society by submitting the duly filled in membership form of the Society along with the prevailing annual or life membership fee. The applicant institution may become a member of the Society upon approval by the Executive Committee. The decision of the Executive Committee shall be final. The annual membership fee for institutions is INR 2,000 per year and the Life membership fee is INR 10,000.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE/OFFICE BEARERS

Anita Varghese (President), Meenakshi Venkataraman (Secretary), Sumin George Thomas (Treasurer), Robert Leo, Pratim Roy, Tina Jagatbir Singh, T.Samraj

STAFF

Gali Prudhvi, Nature Educator. The bylaws and registration documents of the Society are available online at <http://nnhs.in>



ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Nilgiri Natural History Society is registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975 (Tamil Nadu Act 27 of 1975)
Registration No. 54/2010

REGISTERED & MAILING ADDRESS

Nilgiri Natural History Society
144-A, Sargan Villa, Club Road,
Opp. Hill Bunk, Udthagamandalam - 643 001,
The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu
Ph: +914232-2441340/+919442619577

WEBSITE

www.nnhs.in

SOCIAL MEDIA

<https://www.facebook.com/nilgirinaturalhistorysociety/>
<https://nilgirinaturalhistorysociety.wordpress.com/>

E-MAIL

contact@nnhs.in

AUDITORS

J Mathew & Co., Udthagamandalam