

Samrakshan Trust
Environment Day Celebrations - 5th June 2007
South Garo Hills



Samrakshan Trust's Meghalaya field office has been making sustained efforts towards engendering conservation consciousness in South Garo Hills since 2004. Films depicting wildlife and conservation concerns laid the stepping stones for the programme that has since evolved to undertaking regular activities with schools in aking (*villages*) and organizing events. While colouring - sketching, story telling and other interactive sessions constitute the activities regularly undertaken with schools; the Wildlife Week was celebrated with gaiety during 2006.

Samrakshan Trust celebrated the Environment Day 2007 with pronounced vigour. The participants were an eclectic mix from Rewak aking.

Date	5 th June 2007.	
Venue	Samrakshan Trust Campus – Baghmara.	
Time	9.00 am to 1.00 pm (4 hours)	
Participants	Students of Class 4.	18
	Parents and guardians of the participating students.	16
	Teachers of the participating students.	4
	Aking and gittim (hamlet) nokmas (headmen)	3
	Samrakshan Trust Personnel	10
Total Participants – 51		



Children Enjoying "Match The Following".



All participants during the "Slide show".

At around 9.00 am 40 people from Rewak arrived at the Samrakshan Trust Baghmara campus. Rewak is about 30 kms from Baghmara and abuts 2 state owned forests; Rewak Reserve Forest and Siju Wildlife Sanctuary. After extended deliberations, Samrakshan team had invited the children studying in class 4 with their teachers and parents; the Nokmas were also invited. The design was to impart conservation awareness not only for the children but also for those influencing their opinions. The initial activities of welcoming the participants, taking attendance and sharing the schedule for the event were undertaken after which the importance of the Environment Day was deliberated upon. A synopsis of the activities undertaken by Samrakshan towards conservation awareness in the landscape was also presented.

The 1st activity was screening of the film 'Land of Tiger – Monsoon Forests'. Different species shown in the film attracted the attention of the viewers, specially large mammals like Lion tailed macaque (*Macaca silenus*) and Gaur (*Bos gaurus*). The viewers started discussing Hoolock gibbons (*Bunotithecus hoolock*), some of them claimed to have seen it walking while others talked on the occurrence of strong family bonds in Hoolock gibbons. This was followed by a debate, amongst the participants, on the presence of Gaur on the banks of Simsang (river in *South Garo Hills*), till a few years ago.

For the 2nd activity participants were bifurcated into 2 groups – adults and children. Adults, performing 'A to Z', were to fill up the two blank spaces adjacent to each alphabet, with names of species beginning with that alphabet. They were given a format that could be filled in English, Hindi, Garo (*local language*) or Atong (*dialect used in the region*). They were to write names of mammals or birds or insects or even plants. They enjoyed this thoroughly, some of them also copying the answers from the participants sitting next to them! Children, performing 'Match the Following', were to match the species with their habitats and diets. The names of some species and their habitats were printed on one side of the paper, given to children, while the other side had species' names and their diet; all mixed up. The children were to link the species with their diets and habitats. Children enjoyed this and some of them were helping their friends while some were asking for extra sheets!

Pics from Activity 3.



Malayan giant squirrel (*Ratufa bicolor*)
Garo: Mat Dalgipa.



Little skink (*Mabuya macularia*)
Garo: Miktilwak

The 3rd activity was the Slide Show. The presentation had pictures taken by Samrakshan members and supporters during the past 2 years from within the landscape. Each picture depicted the name of the species in English and Garo and the spot of taking the picture. The participants were interested in the Slow Loris (*Nycticebus bengalensis*) and one of them stated that the Slow loris keeps its head down due to its shy nature. On seeing the Stump tailed macaque (*Macaca arctoides*) they discussed its being the largest macaque found in Garo Hills and its preference for the hills as compared to the jhum (*shifting cultivation*) fields. The participants pointed out the species that they had seen and those they had not. They also asked the facilitator to enhance their clarity on the interdependence of species.

The 4th activity was plantation. Groups of participants planted one sapling each in the Samrakshan campus and took one sapling with them to plant at Rewak. One member from Samrakshan accompanied each group in the exercise. Neem, Guava and Litchi saplings had been procured from the Social Forestry Division of the Meghalaya Forest Department.

Boxes of crayons were then distributed amongst children as a culminating activity and all the participants were thanked for taking part in the celebrations. The participants were encouraged to take pride on the natural wealth present in the Garo Hills and work actively towards conserving it.



Participants planting sapling.



Participants enjoying the snacks.

<i>Acknowledgements</i>
People of Rewak
Meghalaya State Forest Department
United States Fish and Wildlife Service

All pics: Samrakshan Trust.
 Contact: 03639 – 222187, 099540 – 54013, Bolsalgre – Baghmara.