

EXTENSION PROGRAMME ON ECOLOGY 2011

The department of Life Sciences of Jain University always believes in providing good hands on experience and updated knowledge to the students so as to keep them on par with the needs of higher education and industry. The need of the hour is the Environment conservation and protection. In view of this the department initiated extension programme on ecology with a stress on tropical rain forests and their impact on society, in association with the Centre for Environment Education.

Centre for Environment Education, CEE was created in recognition of the importance of environmental education in India's overall environment and development strategy. The result of a unique partnership between government and a non-governmental institution, CEE was established as a Centre of Excellence in 1984, supported by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India. The Centre has worked on plenty environmental thrust areas such as soil conservation, ecological awareness, climate change, tiger conservation and others.

Ecology is the study of the distribution and abundance of organisms, the interaction between organisms, the interaction between organisms and their environment, and structure and function of ecosystems. The purpose of ecology is to provide knowledge about the way the world works and provide evidence on the interdependence between the natural world and people. A better understanding of ecological systems will allow society to predict the consequences of human activity on the environment.

The course consisted of a 60 hours programme with 15 hours of theory (twice a week 2hrs each) held at the college premises and 45 hours of field visit (4 days visit to Sri Lankan rain forest and plains). It was conducted in the month of September 2011.

The field visit to Sri Lanka was truly an eye opener to the stretch of the last native rain forests existing in South Asia. It was indeed a practical demonstration to the study of forests and their significance to the climate change which is the matter of global concern now. The visit to the plain regions encompassing the Wudawalawe National Park showed the vast difference which existed between the plain terrain and the rain forest terrain. The National Park was an eye opener to the ocean of colourful birds, the gigantic asian elephants – their behaviour and social life, the crocodiles, the wild buffalos, and the water birds with their own expanse of shrubs and few tall trees. The elephant transit home showed the difficulties faced by the orphaned elephant calves, the venture of the forest officials in nurturing and caring them and handling the other wild animals which may be wounded. The Sinharaja Nature Reserve - the rain forest was really an unforgettable experience. The never ending expanse of lush green foliage with plenty of leeches, birds exhibiting flock feeding, different beaks based on their feeding patterns, their nests, and behaviour was marvelous. The sighting of the vast array of lizards and snakes amidst their excellent camouflage was really tricky. It was indeed very surprising to note that every third specimen that we sighted was endemic to Sri

Lanka. Students also saw a diverse collection of pitcher plants with different sizes and colours. The night sky as it revealed during the night walk showed plenty of glow worms, the active night life of various amphibians, birds and reptiles.

Finally, the programme in a nutshell gave an idea about the forest ecosystems, their importance in producing rain and contribution to climate change, their economic and aesthetic value. It also helped in understanding the differences which exist between the plains and the hilly terrain, the distribution of plant and animal life and their coexistence. Moreover the course exposed the students to their responsibility to nature and in its conservation.