

INTERIM REPORT

NR 1: Wadhvana Wetlands

~ May/June 2010:

Research, project planning, meeting with Forestry Department officials to gain permission for planting in the lake area, contacting Vadodara-based artists with a view to their possible involvement, and eventually setting up a working group in relation with Community Science Center, (CSC) Vadodara. (Received first installment of project funds, 2nd week of May 2010.)

Forming a working group:

I made the decision to invite *Dr Jitendra Gavali*, a botanist and director of CSC as collaborator for the project; his knowledge in the field of great value. He is also co author of the book “Trees of Gujarat”, a research commissioned by the Gujarat Forest Department “to study distribution, status, and threat level of various tree species in the State”.

His input includes conducting initial meetings to contact schools in villages around the wetlands area and contacting Forestry Department and local EDC members. Identifying tree and plant species to be introduced, requesting tree saplings from forestry department, and sourcing other materials required for planting.

Developing details:

Planning workshop format and dates, and waiting for the monsoon that is delayed, the project develops by bringing together forestry department, a botanist, artist and scientist who work in collaboration encouraging input from the local communities, specially the younger generation from villages around Wadhvana Wetlands area.

~ July 2010:

July 2, 2010: Introduction of 2 projects and roundtable discussion with *Mr Khanna*, Gujarat State, Chief of Forestry Dept and other officials from Gandhinagar, *Mr Tipre* - Conservator of Forest and in-charge of Wadhvana Wetlands and Jambughoda Forest, CSC members and students. *Dr Mehta* introduces the project titled “Vaho Vishwamitri - citizens’ vision of the Vishwamitri River”, Vadodara. The source of the river is in the Pavagadh range of hills that also form the backdrop of Wadhvana Wetlands. Dr Mehta suggests linking work done on the two water bodies, and invites me to input in the “Vaho Vishwamitri” project in future.

July 2nd also marks the break of monsoon with first major rainfall (5 inches in 4 hours).

Workshop period: July 5 - 24, 2010 (in process).

Awareness workshops about the local ecology and to gather and test knowledge of the younger generation; introduce mapping and map reading

skills leading up to culminating workshops to amalgamate all above mentioned activities to coincide with the winter arrival of migratory birds and tourists. Saplings planted by students and teachers of 7 schools in the villages immediately surrounding the lake. Diaries and drawing/colouring material distributed and students asked to record data about their surroundings for a period of one week (some diaries are collected with the balance due on June 24th).

Sessions led by Varsha Nair, Harshangi Yagnik (of CSC) Mr Tipre, and Dr J Gavali.

Workshops concluded with students aged 10 - 15 from schools in Shimaliya, Manjrol, Wadhvana, Gopalpura, Akotadar and Kukkad villages.

Having introduced the project the students are given diaries and writing/drawing materials and asked to record data related to trees, plants, birds and insects from their memory, by seeking knowledge from their family elders and teachers, and in terms of that which is existing in reality in their immediate environment at present time. At the end of the workshop, they return to their school with saplings that are to be planted in school grounds.

They are also asked to express their thoughts and wishes for Wadhvana Wetlands and their village. The diaries are left with them for a period of a week to start with, after which we gather them and collate the data provided by the students (in process).

The diaries will then be returned to the students and they will be asked to continue entering data, this time to include progress of the bowers that are planted and leading up to the birding season in November/December 2010. In relation to migratory birds, the idea of “**Mehman Aavya Che**” (Guests have arrived) is introduced and participants are asked to consider and note down how to receive the guests, take care of them, and ensure their safety and wellbeing. At the same time, they are asked to come up with ideas of how to receive and inform the other guests arriving in the birding season - the tourists.

Simple line maps of the area are copied on A4 sheets of paper and given to each participant and they are asked to record any “special” sightings of trees, birds, insects etc. and the location of the planting we do together (in process).

They are asked to record related data (as above), both in the diary and/or on the map.

Planting around the lake: July 22 - 24, 2010

Currently under planning. Tree guards are ordered and saplings identified. Meeting set up with Mr Tipre on July 16th to finalise the details.

~ Blog:

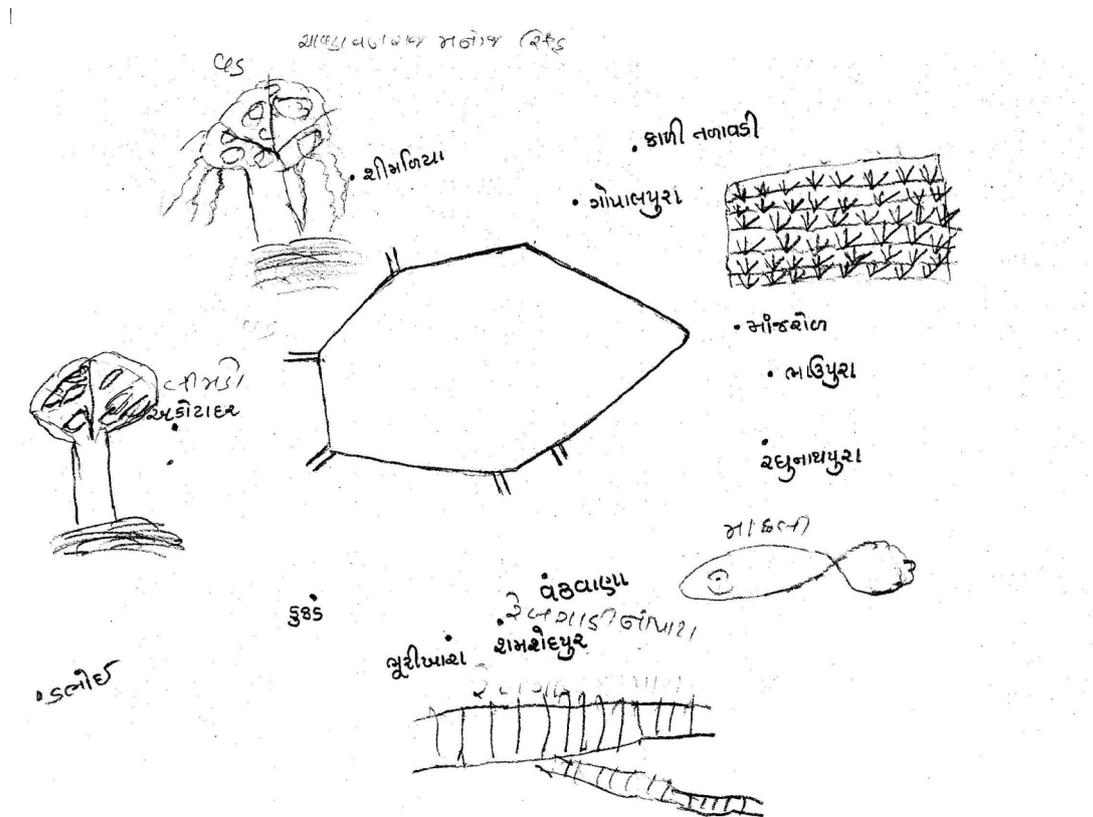
Inputting project updates on the blog related to NR1.

Currently in process: brief information and drawings pertaining to indigenous trees and shrubs that are already distributed, and ones that will

be planted at spots around the lake. Information about migratory birds, and report about the workshops.

- **Culmination:** December 2010. A two day workshop at the start of the birding season when the migratory birds arrive is set up for students taking part in the current workshops to interact with birders and tourists. An exhibition planned of the diaries, maps and outcome of the workshops at Forestry Dept Center near Wadhvana Lake and at CSC, Vadodara. Publication and launch of NR 1 project booklet.

(Map by Vanraj Manoj Sinh, Shimoliya School)



Varsha Nair
Vadodara, July 15, 2010