

National Environment Science Camp

OUR CAMPERS ARE THE UMMEED OR HOPE OF DUDHWA

Dear Principal and Teachers,

The annual migration of the Karavan team to Dudhwa National Park for the National Environment Science Camp, NEVSC 2009-10, finally concluded on 27th March 2010 with the dismantling of tents. It was indeed very difficult to retreat from this Paradise.

But **it marked a new dawn because we were filled with Ummeed or hope for Dudhwa**. The pugmarks of hope are imprinted on the Dudhwa soil and also in the minds of young boys and girls from different corners of India. The NEVSC participants braved long journeys to Re-discover the Garden of Eden. They are the very Ummeed of Dudhwa.

Having sought the blessings of Van Devi, the Revered Guardian of Dudhwa, we set out to organize the **National Environment Science Camp to enable students Observe, Experience and Conserve our Pristine Environment**. As modern lives get more artificial, as our bonds with Mother Nature weaken, we thought of an innovative strategy to woo the youth. And so, **we designed the DECA-DARE to touch their hearts** and kindle an understanding, appreciation and affinity for the Bounteous Nature.

The Deca-Dare is a race with ten courses (Dare1 or D1, D2, D3..... D10). Each course is more challenging than the other. We dared the Campers to overcome the ten courses using both brain and brawn. It was a tough, tough challenge as Campers tried to outperform the others. It was a contest that tested one's wit, decisiveness, observation and analytic power and of course the spirit of adventure. The Campers described the "Deca-Dare" as "Awesome" "Amazing" "Thrilling" and what have you.

The Three Hundred Campers were an irrepressible bundle of energy. Even the indefatigable Karavan team had a hard task master in them. The Campers abhorred rest. Their quest for knowledge was immense and they would turn things upside down to seek answers. We had a tough time and the most wonderful time with the Campers.

The Camp benefited both the Campers and the Organizers. The Campers while being appreciative of our effort have given us some invaluable suggestions and ideas. We are thankful to them and assure them that we'll work on our shortcomings and grey areas.

The National Environment Science Camp is a Mission for Environment Conservation. This year the Campers have made a substantial contribution to conservation and have thus accomplished the Mission of the Camp.

It is common to have lots of fun during any Camping program. But NEVSC is more than just plain fun and amusement. At Karavan, we believe that every single individual has to make an important contribution for the cause of conservation. During the Dare Eco-Regiment, each and every Camper picked up shovels/ spades/ cutting-swords and embarked upon de-weeding the jungles of weeds like lantana, teliacora and congress-grass that have infested the local ecology of Dudhwa. The enthusiasm of the Campers was simply amazing and they performed a pretty good job.



The Campers also contributed for conservation by purchasing the eco-friendly handicrafts (woven by the local Tharu community) as souvenirs to carry back home. The sale of the handicrafts generates an additional income for the Tharu household and in turn lessens the dependence of the people on the forest products.

This Conservation Exercise has been the greatest success of the National Environment Science Camp 2009-10 and it wouldn't have been possible without the whole-hearted support of our Campers. I think our joint campaign, Together Let's Save Our Paradise, has begun in earnest.

The Dudhwa Post retraces the journey of our Campers as described by the Tribe Scribes at NEVSC. We organize the participants into tribes at Dudhwa. The tribe members select a Headman, a Wiseman and a Tribe Scribe. The Scribe records the day to day progress of his tribe. The Tribe Scribes have created a voluminous document of their Camping Experience. We have a select compilation of the Journals submitted by the Scribes.

The Journals provide an exact and vivid description of the National Environment Science Camp: Re-Discover the Garden of Eden.

Please do take a look at the Dudhwa Post and honor us and the Tribe Scribes with your opinion about it.

Regards,
Deepti,
Camp Leader.

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Campers Journal

Tribe: Flawless Victors

National Hill View Public School, Bangalore

Day 1

Glimpses of the Garden of Eden

We arrived late in the evening, tired, exhausted and in a bad condition. We all wanted to rush to the loo, so we had a quick dinner and speed off to the toilets. There was the problem. No tap inside the tent; meaning we had to fill water from outside. Many friends got stuck inside. It was indeed a lot of fun to see people suffering. Once we were all done we went to the tents to sleep. It was a great relief to lie in the cozy beds under warm blankets. In an instant every one was lying asleep close to unconscious.

The first day included a lot of things like giving us a feel of the forest; selecting the headman and the Wiseman of the tribe which gave us a very united feeling. We gave our tribe a name and started off with the first dare- Brave Hearts. It included Poachers, Brave Hearts, booty, plans and weapons. **It was brilliant feeling, taking us back into the world of Hunt and Evades. The forest felt more familiar after this dare.**

The second dare: Weathering The Woods was survival of the fittest; where we tested our legs, their power and the capacity of our lungs. It was a tiring but an amazing time searching for flags. We had various unusual moments where we did weird things.

Latter in the n night, we had 'VanDevi' visiting us and to please her, a performance was necessary there was also the Java man who judged us. There were dances and skits, some funny while some educational. Then all went to bed and a relief filled night's sleep followed.

Day 2

Exploring the Garden of Eden

A relaxing night and blissful sleep made us as fresh as dew in the morning. It was a great feeling waking up when the sun is not properly arisen. The drum beats were great as they woke up the sleepy campers. A surprise awaited- we had to report by 7:00 AM; meaning no time to bath. We all rushed to the toilets, brushed and changed our clothes. Bathing in deodorants were a common sight. Every one rushed to the large tent for a quick breakfast. We then started Probe the Grove. We walked to the marshes which was a tough job in itself. But the real trouble followed: searching for specimens was a messy, tough but fun job. The specimens were beautiful, fascinating but at times scary.

Seeing the pug marks was an event which gave us the assurance that we were in the wild. There was a feeling of pride when a specimen was caught. Once we finished the collection, we rushed back and started constructing the relationships between the specimens collected and pinning our plaster casts on the charts. It was a task which took us back into the text books and forced us to recollect all the information received in the four walls of the classrooms. It was a brain stressing task which we had to complete in half an hour. A project in such a short duration of time! Somehow this super human of the task was completed, so was the observations and the explanations. Lunch followed. A surprise awaited us. This time a good one. We were visiting river Mohana, the international boundary between India and Nepal. A walk through the Tharu village took us to the beach of river Mohana. On the way we were informed that a sand replica of the village has to be constructed and so the observations were keen. Tharus are simple people, with cozy homes and lush fields. Mohana and the beach were visible after two Km of walk. **We jumped, somersaulted, dived and did things which can never be done on hard cement.** Walking into the waters was forbidden, so we started off with the constructions it was a very enjoyable task. On the way back we chewed on some juicy and farm fresh sugarcane, it took us into the village life. Once we were back, we were given time to refresh and had to assemble for Dare: Night –Raiders, a task which allowed us to explore the wild in the night like a true camper. Setting up the machan was worse. **The sound of the wild was clearly audible in the deadly silence. Each call, rustling of leaves and hooves sound made the heart skip a beat.** Spotting an animal was the biggest thing; it rushed the fear and excitement in us and made the time in silence valuable. Time was over soon before desired, but all together it was a breath taking experience. Once back in the camp, Dare: Earth Summit, where the five kingdoms of life justified themselves, awaited us. This included welcoming yA-mA, the Warden of Eden, scary man he was but good at judgments of funny songs and crazy dances. The five kingdoms of life started off with their big speeches and funny cracks. Major yA-mA screamed at some defenders and laughed at others. Once we were done with yA-mA and earth summit we ate dinner and went to the tents hoping for some blissful sleep because tomorrow we had to be up by 4:30 AM; when it is close to pitch dark the time of the owls.



Day 3

Time running out for the paradise

Early morning or rather to say late night came the drum beats waking us up. While some of us couldn't help swearing, others sadly went to brush. An early morning bus ride took us to the tourism area of Dudhwa National Park. We went to the safari into the forest. **It was lot of fun seeing the animals in their natural habitat. The ride in the jeep through the thick vegetation and the wait for the animals got us really excited.** Animals were spotted by us like the weeds in the garden. Places which had historical importance to the park were also visited. We moved on to Kishanpur wild life sanctuary, where we had lunch and then sat with our tribe members to start Dare: Wanderers in the Wilderness. We recollected our experiences from the safari and identified the Diamonds. We then went on a safari in Kishanpur where we saw plenty of animals. We returned to the campsite in the early hours of dusk.

Just as we reached the toilets. **A scream of fear, agony and surprise was heard above all sounds. A girl spotted a slipper with blood. A chill ran down every one's spine when they saw the blood. Some people burst into tears, while some chanted prayers and others laughed their head off.** Deepthi and the crew discussed the case with us and made it evident that it was a setup for the dare. We went out and searched for clues. These clues made us create a relative theory for the crime which was narrated in the court of yA-mA.

yA-mA, the man looked serious this time. We narrated the story and questioned the accused, who were witty, persistent, aggressive and knew how to evade. Finally, at the end of the court we were informed that the crook was the notorious 'Po-Ching'. And all the fear was gone. Happiness filled the camp. Dinner and sleep followed.



Day 4

Together Let's Save Our Paradise

A sad morning, when we would say bye to this Garden of Eden, this heaven. To contribute and thank it for its warmth we cleared an area of land through Eco-regiment. This piece of land was cleared so as to build an Amphitheatre for the Tharus to knock their culture back into them. This was followed by breakfast. And breakfast by Knowledge Incubator, where we tested the Knowledge we gathered through this camp. We also had a Tharu Market set up for us. The scribes had a tough time writing down and a feed back was also filled in.

This trip was a great opportunity for us and we will be thankful to Deepthi and her crew for giving us this wonderful time.

Campers Journal

Tribe: Kings of the Jungles
Sela Qui World School, Dehradun

Tribe Scribe: Karman

Day 1

It was a pleasant day with the fragrance of wild adventure we were about to face. Our adventure started with the Dare 1 - Brave Hearts. It challenged our bravery and we **experienced the forest so closely that it was like exploring the meaning of life.** It was great.

Dare 2 was Weathering the Woods. In this dare we were challenged on Team work and the unity of the Tribe. We learned how to read maps and find check points; developed Team Work and Leadership qualities.

At the camp fire, we were to present a play to the holy Van Devi. It was like preparing the play while answering rapid fire questions. It challenged our mind and our coordination.



Day 2

Dare3 was Probe the Grove. In this dare, we had to explore the jungle ourselves.

We had to work on making an Eco-system and to present all the things we

had collected with proof. We had to show the interdependence of the things of the Eco-system. It was the first time when I thought that I should leave my home and live in the jungle.

The next dare was Night Raiders; where we were checked on our bravery and daring spirit. We had to go into the forest and make a shelter. It was like making a tree-house in the forest. **We had to stay quite and observe the human animal conflict.** It was quite a good experience.

In the Dare Earth Summit **we got to know the reasons of the human-animal conflict. We animals are angry with humans. And an important lesson was that Nature can put an end to everything. For instance, humans have no answer to HIV.** We also got to know that humans are full of pride.

Day 3

Dare 4 & 6 checked our awareness, observation power and hunger for knowledge. We were on a safari and observed interesting and endangered animals; the swamp deer, the spotted deer, wild boars to name a few. We also had a quiz on the Diamonds of Dudhwa. Today, **I got to know that diamonds are not only the pearls that glow but also the things, places and people that bring happiness to our world.**

Dare 8: It was the **CIB, the most interesting task that checked our skills to perform under pressure**, to investigate, collect proof, find the culprit and make an appropriate decision. We got to know the dangers faced by the jungles from people who think it only in terms of money-making. We also learnt that forests need to be saved for the very survival of many, many animals.

Day 4

We visited the River Mohana, observing the Tharu Village and making a model of it on sand. This dare checked our skills of observation. It was a different experience and full of fun.

In the Final Dare, we had to clean up our tents. **Here we learnt that resources are not just for use and throw but are meant to be used properly.**

This is our lesson for Environment Conservation.

I would like to conclude with the following note:
Life is meant for exploring the wonders of the world and not for destroying the world. And this Camp has been a lifetime experience for us.



THE SCIENTIFIC SPIRIT OF NEVSC

The National Environment Science Camp is a truly scientific Camp that adopts scientific and empirical methods to study the Environment. Our approach to achieve the objectives of the Camp was through a step by step process of **Observation, First-hand Experience and Conservation.**

At NEVSC the entire methodology was as natural as a gentle breeze and an adventurous one at that. It was called the Deca-Dare. The Dares on the first day, Bravehearts and Weathering the Woods, were designed to help the participants **Understand the Constituents and Importance of the Environment by means of Observation, Analogy and Analysis.**

On Day 2 of the Camp, when the participants explored the three unique Eco-systems of Dudhwa National Park, **they discovered the challenge and joy of Field Work and Data Collection.** The Dares on the third day, Wanderers in the Wilderness and Camper's Investigation Bureau, helped the Campers **study, analyze and make spot assessments of situations, circumstances and events that have created Environmental Problems** like depletion of natural resources and loss of habitat.

The most memorable day of the camp was the last day. The participants armed with spades, shovels and cutters **formed an 'Eco-Regiment' to make their own invaluable contribution to Conserve the Ecology of Dudhwa.** Finally like true scientists, the participants Documented their extensive field work and Camping Experience.

We at Karavan Heritage and Nature Society believe that facts are not half as important as the concepts; but what is of supreme importance is actually a inner feeling for the Beauty and Bounty of Mother Nature. This is the very essence of the National Environment Science Camp.

Wildlife Sightings at the National Environment Science Camp

The Terai Ecosystem of Dudhwa National Park is home to rich Biodiversity. But wildlife sighting is a matter of patience and luck. During the National Environment Science Camp, the campers kept a record of the wildlife sightings. Based on their reports, we have summarized the observations as follows:

Sr.	Category	Common Name (Scientific Name)	Habitat (where sighted)	Frequency	Average Numbers Sighted by participants
1.	Mammal (Carnivore)	Royal Bengal Tiger (Panthera tigris)	Woodland (Kishanpur)	Once	1
2.	Mammal (Herbivore)	Elephant (Elephas maximus indicus)	Wetland (Banke Tal)	Once	1
3.	Mammal (Omnivore)	Wild Boars (Sus scrofa)	Woodland	Every time	3-4
4.	Mammal (Herbivore)	One horned Rhinoceros (Rhinoceros unicornis)	Grassland	Twice	1-2
5.	Mammal (Herbivore)	Swamp Deer (Cervus duvauceli duvauceli)	Wetland (Jhadi Tal) Grassland (Madariya)	Every time Once	25-30 75
6.	Mammal (Herbivore)	Sambar Deer (Cervus unicolor)	Woodland (Kishanpur)	Once	1
7.	Mammal (Herbivore)	Barking Deer (Muntiacus muntjak)	Woodland	Four times	1-2
8.	Mammal (Herbivore)	Hog Deer (Axis porcinus)	Grassland (Madraiya)	Once	15-20
9.	Mammal (Herbivore)	Spotted Deer (Axis axis)	Scrub Forest	Every time	20
10.	Mammal (Herbivore)	Blue Bull (Boselaphus tragocamelus)	Woodland	twice	1 (Male)
11.	Mammal (Scavenger)	Jackals (Canis aureus)	Scrub Forest	All times	4-5
12.	Mammals (Primates)	Common Langoor (Presbytis entellus)	Scrub Forest	All times	Numerous
13.	Mammal (Primates)	Rhesus Macaques (Macaca mulatta)	Near Human Habitation	All times	Numerous
14.	Aves (BirdsofPrey)	Crested Serpent Eagle Marsh harrier	Wetlands Wetlands	Thrice Once	1 1

15.	Aves (Wild Ducks)	Red Crested Pochard Common Pochards Pintails	Wetland (Jhadi Tal)	All time Twice	12 (male) 3 (male) 1 (male)
16.	Aves (Geese)	Gray Lag Goose	Wetland (Jhadi Tal)	Twice	40-50
17.	Aves (ResidentMigrants)	Yellow Wagtail	Wetland	1	2
18.	Aves (Resident Water Fowl)	Adjutant Storks Black Necked Storks White Necked Storks Open Billed Storks Purple Heron Snake Bird Lesser Whistling Teals Purple Heron Brahminy Ducks	Wetland	Thrice Twice Once Once Thrice Twice Twice Four times Twice	2 2 3 30 4 10 1 4
19.	Aves (Common Water Fowl)	Small Egrets Little Cormorant Pond Heron White-breasted water hen Purple Moorhen White-brested Kingfisher	Wetland	All times All times Thrice Thrice everytime Six Times	10 5 1 2-3 10-15 1
20.	Aves (Familiar Birds)	Red Wattled Lapwing Tree-pie Red Vented Bulbuls Rose-ringed Parakeets Black-headed Orioles Spotted Owlet Peafowl Partridges	Woodlands	Twice Once Once Once Once Once Four Once	1 4 5 2 3 1 2-3 4-5
21.	Reptiles (Gavials,Crocs)	Crocodile (Crocodyluspalustris)	River Suheli	Four times	1-2
22.	Reptiles (Tortoise & Turtles)	Turtles (exact species could not be identified)	Wetland	Twice	2-3
23.	Reptiles (Snakes)	Python (Python molurus)	Woodland	Twice	1
24.	Reptiles (Lizards)	Monitor Lizard (Varanus bengalensis)	Woodland	Once	1

Note: All the figures mentioned above have been recorded by the campers themselves.
Scientific Names of the Birds have not been mentioned for want of space

National Environment Science Camp 2009-10

Reminiscing the lighter moments!

Dear Principal and Teachers

While visiting a place like Dudhwa National Park, it is but natural to chance upon the wildlife. Even a fleeting glimpse is memorable. But God forbid any encounter. Such a thing is best avoided.

This year at National Environment Science Camp, we too had a wonderful even if an infrequent sighting. The magnificent Royal Bengal Tiger was reserved for few lucky ones only. A group managed to sight the Mighty Rhino and her calf foraging in the Woodland. Another group fled in panic upon sighting a gigantic rogue tusker. The Pride of Dudhwa, the Endangered Swamp Deer, was seen in big herds by almost all the groups. However, the Karavan team alone was destined to see the Great Pied Hornbills perched on the towering Sal trees inside the dense jungles. It was all magical, unbelievable.

But that's not unexpected in a forest! What really provided spice to NEVSC were the unimagined surprises which will tickle us for an age and have made the experience so delightful.

Well! The most humorous of all was of course the Dare CIB or Camper's Investigation Bureau. After a long day exploring the jungles, the weary participants yearning to get back to the Camp would be confronted by brilliant theatrics of the Karavan Team. We enacted an imaginary crisis situation and conducted ourselves in a weird manner. Very soon the Campers (more so, the teachers) would draw outlandish conclusions from the apparent chaos at the Campsite. Some people imagined jackals raiding the Camp; others thought of animals being poached; others assumed an act of black magic. Some others would just look around dumbfounded convinced that something has gone horribly wrong. We'd go laughing in splits somehow suppressing our smiles. The teachers always panicked more than the students and beseeched us to ensure the safety of the students. Meanwhile, we took a bit of sadistic pleasure in letting the suspense persist. But when the suspense gradually wore off, everybody would have a hearty laugh. But for a while, it frightened the wits out of many.

The other amusing instance was at the Mohana River. While returning from the banks, the Campers had to cross a section of the river by tightrope walking on a narrow tree-branch. A smart aleck Camper decided to avoid the balancing act and took a different route, despite being forewarned. He had opted for trouble. He was soon waist deep in quick sand and had to crawl out on his knees

without his shoes. It was a funny spectacle as he stood stupefied plastered with silt, while all the Campers jeered at him.

Another rib-tickling moment occurred during the Dare Earth Summit. It was like this, one of the campers dressed as a Santa Claus met Major yA-mA (a member of our team enacting the Warden of Eden). As the little Santa presented a gift to the hurly-burly Major yA-mA, yA-mA embraced him tight and wouldn't let go. The poor Santa Claus was seen struggling to wriggle out of the clutches of Major yA-mA. It was really funny.

I too was at the receiving end not once but twice. There is a black buck called Moti in Dudhwa who strolls around the reception area. He was rescued during the floods and has lived in human contact since. He is quite friendly but his display of friendship is highly intimidating. He stands high on his hind legs and tries to lick you. And then you scamper away in fear. Not once but twice, he tried to strike a friendship with our Campers. I tried to shoo him away, only to face his wrath. He charged at me. And I had to catch him by his horns. Both of us struggled. My word, he was strength personified. I wouldn't let him go, lest he charged at me again. At this juncture, there were some silly onlookers who took a snap of my travails on their mobile phone. I was damn irritated, instead of lending a helping hand, they were having great fun at my expense. Moti fled only when struck by a big stick.

The National Environment Science Camp 2009-10 left behind cartloads of memories to cherish. So, even as we analyze the camp and study the feedback, we chuckle upon reminiscing those lighter moments.

Yours truly,

Vikrant Nath,
Camp Coordinator.

A Summary

National Environment Science Camp 2009-10

Location:

Dudhwa National Park, Northern UP, Indo-Nepal Border

About Dudhwa:

Dudhwa is the last remnant of Terai region, one of the most endangered ecosystems on the planet.

This complex ecosystem is a beautiful mosaic of dense Sal jungles, Grasslands and Swamps. Forty-seven species of mammals are found at Dudhwa; of these thirteen species are endangered.

Organizers:

Karavan Heritage and Nature Society, Lucknow

Theme of the camp:

Rediscover the Garden of Eden

Objective:

To Observe, Experience and Conserve our Pristine Environment

Duration:

4 Days

Period:

9th November 2009 to 27th March 2010

Number of Participants:

300 participants from 10 schools all over India

Winners:

National Hill View Public School, Bangalore

Runner up:

Centre Point School, Wardhman Nagar, Nagpur

A NOTE OF THANKS

On behalf of Karavan Heritage and Nature Society, Lucknow, I would like to convey my sincere thanks to the following schools & institutions whose students and teachers participated in the National Environment Science Camp 2009-10 held at Dudhwa National Park.

I hope that in the time to come this movement for environment conservation will grow from strength to strength.

- KCP SARP School, Vijaywada, Andhra Pradesh
- Blue Mountain School, Ooty, Tamil Nadu
- Delhi Public School, Guwahati, Assam
- Don Bosco School, Guwahati, Assam
- City Montessori School, Anandnagar Branch, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
- La Martinier Boys School, Lucknow Uttar Pradesh
- St. Xavier's High School, Jhansi Uttar Pradesh
- Tagore International School, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi
- Sela Qui World School, Dehradun, Uttarakhand
- National Hill View Public School, Bangalore, Karnataka
- Delhi Public School, Jalandhar, Punjab
- Center Point School, Nagpur, Maharashtra
- Central Academy, Jodhpur Rajasthan

Regards,

Col.(Retd.) R. N. Khanna,

President,

Karavan Heritage and Nature Society, Lucknow.