

What's up elsewhere

More than tigers

There are active education programmes about heritage and the environment in many countries. Meena Nareshwar describes the work of the Centre for Environment Education in Ahmedabad, India.

The Centre for Environment Education (CEE) is a Centre of Excellence supported by the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Indian Government. It has been working since 1984 to improve public awareness and understanding of environmental issues so as to promote the conservation and wise use of nature and natural resources. CEE creates expertise in the field of environmental education, and develops innovative programmes and educational materials.

CEE's main office is in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Its work must be relevant to the very diverse cultures and circumstances of India, so the Centre has established Regional Cells to cover major zones of the country, State Offices to intensify its programmes at the State level, Field and Project Offices to implement activities with a strong localized focus, and camp sites in different bio-geographical areas. CEE also has international offices at Australia and Bangladesh. Altogether about 250 staff work for the Centre.

The Centre's interpretation programmes seek to convert peoples visits to national parks and heritage sites into exciting educational opportunities. Increasingly interpretation is also emerging as a vital tool that helps impress on visitors the critical link between environment and sustainable development.

The focus of CEE's interpretation has been to observe and appreciate the lesser-known organisms in nature, and appreciate and understand the diverse interrelationships in nature. By being only "tiger centric" or "lion centric", one tends to miss out a lot. The centre's work covers signs, exhibits and visitor centres, as well as publications such as brochures and posters. It also organizes training and capacity building programmes which aim to develop skills for the staff involved in interpretation programmes.

Among the sites the Centre has worked with are Kanha National Park, a Tiger Reserve in Central India (in collaboration with the US National Park Service), Chilika lake, the largest brackish water lagoon in the country, and national parks and sanctuaries like the Gir National Park in Gujarat, which is the last natural habitat for the Asiatic Lion.

In the area of cultural heritage interpretation, CEE has had the privilege of developing the exhibition and signing for the Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad. Cultural trails for understanding and appreciating Ahmedabad's cultural heritage have also been developed. CEE is also involved in developing the Gujarat Archaeological Monuments Interpretation Project. This project, sponsored by the Government of Gujarat, Directorate of Archaeology, involves the development, design, fabrication and

installation of wayside exhibits, and the production of brochures and booklets to interpret around 200 cultural heritage sites under the control of the Directorate.

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