

My days with nature

-Anirudh Krishna

I spent a sleepless night on the 19th of April 2012. The reason..... I was to spend the next two days in nature's loving care. 20th April saw me in school at 6 in the morning, jumping with excitement at the thought of spending two days in Coorg. The trip was organized by our school. We left Bangalore at around 6:30. We arrived at the fabled Ranganthittu bird park in Mysore at 9:30 after a bumpy, but charged journey. It was time to see the birds on a boat. Our guide Yogesh .P pointed out various birds, open-beak stork, pink painted stork, little cormorant, spoonbill and flying foxes (bats), to name a few. A crocodile passed close to our boat.

We disembarked at 10:30. The bus took us to a hotel where we had scrumptious dosas. The next leg of our journey saw us winding our way to Coorg Public School. The school was enormous. It had a gym, a swimming pool and a cricket ground. We had a lunch of nan, cauliflower curry and soup. Then we headed to our rooms, where we freshened up and got ready to go to the elephant camp.

We left the school at 4 in the evening. We went to Kantapura aane shabira or Kantapura elephant camp. We saw many elephants up close. We got to know that these giants feed on 10 kg paddy, and a special dish made of maize, jaggery, soya, green gram, onion and cooked rice. They take dust baths and water baths each day. We learned that elephants live longer in captivity, 70 to 80 years, as compared to 60 years, the lifespan of wild elephants. We saw elephants named Krishna, Balaram and an elephant calf. We had an "elephant dung race" where the boys and girls had to pick up elephant dung and put them together. We won! At 6, we were forced to bid a tearful farewell to the elephants and return to the school.

We drank tea, and settled down in a classroom for a seminar on birds by Dr.Narasimhan, who taught us about the habitats, food and climate of Coorg. There are 8500 species of bird in the world, of which 1260 are in India, 520 in Karnataka and 314 species in Coorg alone.

We learnt that there are 28 types of habitats in Coorg. At 8, we had our dinner and were off to bed.

Day 2 - The next day saw us hungry for more of nature, and we were not disappointed.

We had a breakfast of bread, butter and sambar and were off to a park. We went on an elephant ride, saw deer and a narrow rivulet. After enjoying ourselves for 2 hours, we went back to the school and had our lunch.

At 2, Prof. Kushalappa, an expert gave us a discourse on coffee, environment and Coorg in general. We learnt that coffee is closer to nature than tea is. We also learnt that the natives of Coorg were exempt from the Arms Act.

Later, we got ready for the trip to the coffee estate. We saw many varieties of coffee, coffee beans and a machine where the beans are processed. After spending 2 hours in the estate, we returned to our rooms, drank coffee and waited. At 7:30 we had dinner, and got ready for the big event. At eight, we were live on Skype, talking to people from around the world, through a program organized by The North Carolina Museum, Raleigh, NC- USA. We shared our experiences and were thrilled just to be part of it. At 9, we left Coorg, to return to a world of pollution and urbanization.

We came back to Bangalore at 3 o' clock in the night.

I thoroughly enjoyed my trip, which took me right into Nature's lap.