

Report on wildlife club and Citizen Science outreach activities

Prepared by Samantha James, Community Development Coordinator

There are wildlife clubs in all 14 communities of the North Rupununi: Annai Central, Apoteri, Aranaputa, Toka, Kwaimatta, Crash Water, Rewa, Massara, Yakarinta, Rupertee, Kwatamang, Wowetta, Surama and Fairview. Club membership is about 280, with the membership beginning at age 8. Clubs have formed an executive body: the North Rupununi Junior Wildlife Development Council (NRJWDC), which falls under the governing body of all communities in the North Rupununi, the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB)

The population of the North Rupununi is approximately 3,500. About 91% of the population of these villages are Amerindian, representing the Makushi (77%), Wapishana (11%) and Arawak (3%) peoples. The balance of residents are either self-described as "mixed" or of East Indian or African descent.

The NRDDB is a key partner with Iwokrama and the Wildlife Clubs. In addition to being the umbrella organization for the NRJW Development Council, the NRDDB headquarters at Bina Hill is the venue for centralized meetings and the wildlife festival. As distance between communities in the Rupununi is great, communication is done by high frequency radio and via Radio Paiwomak 97.1. Paiwomak, managed by the NRDDB, is the only licensed community radio station in Guyana.

Accomplishments - 2004

Centralized meetings

Outcome: Over 14 leaders from the wildlife clubs came together to plan activities and learn about monitoring, reporting, planning and proposal writing.

Description: Two centralized meetings were held in 2004; one in May and one in December. Nine clubs (18 participants) attended the first meeting. Club reports were given and critiqued, plans for festival and festival regulations were completed. Sessions were held on monitoring and bird identification.

Representation and interest rose dramatically at the second meeting in December, as all 14 clubs participated, bringing the total of participants to 44. Clubs presented their reports, and many club stated that there had been a rejuvenation of club activity in their communities since the wildlife festival in August and their school visits to Iwokrama. A presentation of all the clubs' bird data was presented using graphs showing the presence of birds by feeding guilds over time.

At the second meeting participants elected a new executive committee for the NRJWDC. The group then created objectives for the NRJWDC, a code of conduct for clubs, and an outreach schedule to all 14 clubs. In addition to club activities the EPA Guyana was present at this meeting to explain the Green Fund which they administer, and assisted clubs in creating and writing proposals; most clubs are applying for funds to build a wildlife club house.

Environmental education modules

Outcome: A series of three environmental education modules were presented to primary school students of the North Rupununi. Evaluations show a strong increase in children's awareness of key issues as a result of the modules.

Description: Three experiential environmental education modules were developed by the Calgary Zoo and Guyana Zoos as part of the curriculum for school visits from the coast about rainforests and forest ecology. The modules were further tailored for primary schools from the North Rupununi to be part of a curriculum to the Iwokrama Forest; they are "Rain Forest Ecosystems and Iwokrama", "Web of Life", and "Chain of Life". The modules aim to teach concepts of ecology and sustainable resource use in a fun and participatory manner. Felt pieces, rope, animal, cards, posters, and dried and plaster specimens are the tools used in the classroom. See "School Visits" for more information about evaluation results.

School visits

Outcome: Twelve primary schools consisting of over 190 visitors participated in environmental education and field exercises. Survey results show double digit increases in knowledge of forest ecology, sustainable resource use, life cycles and the Iwokrama programme.

Description: School visits to Iwokrama were reinstated in May, and 12 schools from 13 communities in the North Rupununi visited the Iwokrama Forest. To maximize the use of funds, two schools, Apoteri and Rewa, stayed at the Field Station and visited Turtle Mountain, and the remainder of the school visits were held at Corkwood Ranger Station and visited the canopy walkway. All visitors participated in an interactive environmental education programme of "Rain Forest Ecology and Iwokrama", "Web of life", and "Chain of life". Other activities included birdwatching, story telling, making cultural presentations, nature walks and Citizen Science monitoring activities.

A survey was developed to evaluate school visitors' experience to determine if there had been an increase in their knowledge after participating in the education modules. This was given to 4 schools and a total of 65 participants (32 females, 33 males) were able to provide feedback. Overall, there was a 45% increase in knowledge in the area of forest ecology, a 19% increase in knowledge about sustainable resource use, a 23% increase in knowledge about Iwokrama's programmes, and a 23% increase in knowledge about life cycles. The 7-10 age group showed the highest percentage in increase in knowledge over the 3 older age groupings.

Wildlife Festival

Outcome: Over 212 youths from nineteen communities from Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9, participated in the 4th annual wildlife festival, taking part in games, activities, and learning sessions about the environment.

Description: Between August 19 and 21, participants from nineteen communities traveled to the Bina Hill Institute; this year's theme was "**Our Environment, Our Home, Our Business**". Environmental clubs from the distant villages of Bartica, Santa Rosa, Nappi and St. Ignatius were invited by the NRJWDC; these participants were able to attend through generous travel assistance from Intraseriv Bus Service and Conservation International.

The wildlife festival is becoming a national event and other special guests included the Honourable Mr. Manzoor Nadir, Minister of Tourism, Industry & Commerce, Miss Guyana World 2004, Suzette Shim, and Kelliann Whitney, Director of Education for the Jacksonville Zoo of Florida.

Festival activities included club reporting, discussion of social issues (communication skills, domestic violence and sexual abuse), a nature hike, art, poetry, costume and banner competitions, as well as football, cotton spinning, archery and basket weaving competitions.

Radio Paiwomak Quiz

Outcome: Over two hundred households received broadcast of an entertaining environmental awareness program through Radio Paiwomak.

Description: An environmental awareness program, in the form of a radio quiz, was produced in partnership with Ellen Davis of Radio Paiwomak, and over 20 prizes were distributed to winners who sent their response in by mail.

Training workshop

Outcome: Executive members of the NRJWDC and outreach rangers are more confident in their ability to make presentations to groups.

Description: Executive members of the NRJWDC, and outreach rangers, Ron Allicock and James Honorio participated in a one day workshop on public speaking at Bina Hill. The Rangers are also participating in a three day course on Environmental Education at the Iwokrama Field Station as part of a new Ranger Training curriculum.

Programme Goals - 2005

Short term

- Develop an outreach programme, message and evaluation strategy
- Conduct outreach to 14 North Rupununi clubs from March to April 2005. 2 members from the NRJWDC will also be part of the outreach team.
- Foster the growth and development of all 14 clubs so that they are able to:
 - Raise membership with understanding and support from community members
 - Understand, participate in and complete monthly monitoring activities
 - Understand concepts of Citizen Science
 - Complete their monthly reporting
 - Complete their Green Fund proposals
- Conduct Computer literacy class in basic computing for NRJWDC executive
- Fundraise to ensure continuity for Citizen Science programme and wildlife clubs

Long term

High membership turnover has been an ongoing concern with the wildlife clubs, and clubs cycle through periods of inactivity and activity as they restructure, affecting Citizen Science activities. There remains strong interest in environmental activities and in wildlife clubs, but due to turnover, clubs struggle to complete monitoring activities.

For clubs and youth to engage in community owned conservation and monitoring, ongoing environmental education and skill development are necessary. Long terms programme goals need to make a shift in its education focus while still remaining within the context of conservation and sustainable resource use to include skill development. Skills development in communication, public speaking, and leadership would build the capacity of the youth to be more confident in their ability to promote sustainable resource use, and ultimately, conservation, to peers.

Having built these skills across clubs and youth over time, this would be the foundation to be able to successfully link Citizen Science, traditional knowledge, and locally owned environmental management and conservation. To achieve this, the long term education goals, skill development, and ongoing programme evaluation such as the following necessary:

- To develop an interactive, dynamic, and participatory environmental education programme to be delivered to 14 communities of the North Rupununi, and to share and show sustainable resource use, conservation, and monitoring in situ. This would include:
 - Visits to the Iwokrama Forest;
 - Outreach to communities.
- To build leadership, communication and public speaking skills with clubs.
- To monitor and evaluate change in communities' attitudes and beliefs about the value of monitoring for management. This could be done by measuring:
 - Continuity of current club activities and membership;
 - Continuation of Citizen Science activities;
 - New Citizen Science initiatives developed and implemented by clubs
 - Clubs participation and presentation of environmental education programs within their communities;
 - Club initiated programs to reduce habitat destruction in their communities.
- To build wildlife clubs' capacity to successfully plan and implement environmental monitoring activities in their communities.
- To build further capacity of staff and coordinator in participatory facilitation methods, community communication skills and evaluation techniques, to further support community engagement.
- To keep learning fun and to do this in the context of conservation.