

Key Events in the History of the North Rupununi Wildlife Clubs

NRDDB Meeting - January 1998

During the statutory NRDDB Meeting a request was made by community leaders that Iwokrama facilitate a workshop to discuss North Rupununi and Iwokrama Forest wildlife management issues, problems and solutions.

Wildlife Management Workshop I – April 1998

Iwokrama facilitated a meeting of community leaders (including leaders from the Pakaraima Mountains and the North Rupununi) to discuss wildlife and fisheries management in the area. At this meeting, it was recommended that Iwokrama facilitate the formation and development of local wildlife clubs and committees and the development of wildlife education programmes in Makushi and English that would help encourage local and national understanding of the importance of wildlife.

Wildlife Management Workshop II – July 1998

The concept of wildlife or junior ranger clubs was further developed with the following ideas in mind. Junior ranger - wildlife clubs would be an integral part of the wildlife management programme of the North Rupununi. These clubs will allow students (8-18 years old) to gain first hand experience of natural resource management and prepare children for the future. Obviously, the clubs could only be formed if there was a strong interest in the schools in wildlife.

The objectives of the clubs should be to:

- develop an awareness and understanding of the forest plants, animals, and physical characteristics
- help in wildlife inventories in the area
- understand natural resource management and conservation

Members of the club will organize activities that help attain these goals. These activities were to include forest walks, camping, learning the scientific and local names for animals and plants, wildlife knowledge competitions between villages, exchange visits to other communities, developing collections of insects, plants, and animals for the schools, and the preparation of wildlife related art work. Iwokrama rangers can help the clubs develop by presenting talks to, or leading forest walks with, club members. Clubs should also be closely associated with the schools so that materials and teachers will be available to club members.

Community Visits to Discuss Wildlife and Junior Ranger Clubs – November to December 1998

A young volunteer (Hannah Fairbanks) and Iwokrama Rangers visited Apoteri, Rewa, Fairview, Surama, Wowetta, Kwatamang, Annai Central, Rupertee, Toka, Massara, Aranaputa, and Yakarinta to discuss the development of clubs in villages. The example of Santa Rosa Conservation Club was used as a basis, and issues of organization, activities, and fund raising were discussed at meetings.

Wildlife Clubs Formed in Communities – December to September 1998

Eleven clubs were formed in Apoteri, Fairview, Annai Central, Rewa, Yakarinta, Massara, Toka, Surama, Wowetta, Kwatamang, and Aranaputa.

Visits to the Field Station by Schools and Wildlife Clubs – 1998 and 1999

Representatives from each of the clubs and schools in the North Rupununi visited the Iwokrama field station and spent three days discussing conservation and development issues.

Chase Wildlife Foundation Support – June 1999

US\$ 3,000.00 was donated by the Chase Wildlife Foundation to purchase Nikon Monarch ATB binoculars for each of the clubs in the North Rupununi.

Columbus Zoo Conservation Fund Support – June 1999

US\$ 3,600.00 was donated by the Columbus Zoo that went toward purchasing copies of the Birds of Venezuela and Mammals of the Neotropics for the clubs in the North Rupununi.

Training in GPS Use, Organization, Proposal Writing and Wildlife Observations – 2000

Iwokrama research assistants and Iwokrama Rangers visited all communities to train wildlife club members in the use of GPSs, organization, proposal writing and to begin club observational activities.

Visit to Santa Rosa Festival - 2000

In May 2000, 12 representatives from the wildlife clubs traveled to participate in the Santa Rosa Conservation Club Festival in Moruka.

Videoconference between Surama club and New York – 2000

In May 2000, the Surama wildlife club held a video conference with two schools in New York. This occurred through a pilot Philadelphia Zoo – American Zoo and Aquarium Association project directed at raising awareness about Giant Otters.

Rain Forest Alliance Network Support for Training – July to September 2000

US \$2,083.00 was donated from the RAN Catalyst Grant to support the participation of fourteen club representatives to be trained in amphibian, mammal, and bird ecological survey techniques.

Presentation to International Wildlife Workshop – December 2001

Paul Nash and Terrence Brasche presented a record of the development of wildlife clubs in the North Rupununi to an international audience in Georgetown, Guyana.

Festival I 2001 – April 2001

Two hundred and forty five children from all over the country came together to show an appreciation for, and to celebrate, Guyana's rich wildlife. The first Wildlife Conservation Festival in Guyana was held at Bina Hill, Annai in the North Rupununi from April 9 to 11. The three-day festival involved the twelve North Rupununi Wildlife Clubs, the Santa Rosa Conservation Club from Moruca and the Kanukuruta Youth Conservation Club from Nappi. At the same time, the North Rupununi clubs were registered as members of the EPA network of national environmental clubs.

Initiation of Citizen Science Monitoring Project – November 2001

The Citizen Science Monitoring project, supported by the Audubon Society, was initiated. The goal of this project is to produce an integrated cost-effective environmental monitoring

programme using wildlife club members and community environmental workers as citizen scientists to monitor key environmental and wildlife features in the North Rupununi. The programme will be developed with the idea that aspects and processes can be transferred to other rural areas in South America.

Festival II 2002 – April 2002

Over two hundred people attended the North Rupununi Wildlife Festival 2002 at Bina Hill, Annai, on 2-4 April 2002. The participants included the youthful members of various clubs from as far away as Santa Mission (Santa Mission Junior Rangers Club), Wakapoa (Mora Youth Wildlife Club), Essequibo Coast (8th of May Cleanliness is Next to Godliness Environmental Club), and St. Ignatius near Lethem (St. Ignatius Environmental Club).

The main participants of the festival were the members of the 13 wildlife clubs of the North Rupununi including: Wowetta Junior Wildlife Club, Annai Youth Conservation Wildlife Club, Surama Junior Wildlife Club, Rewa Junior Wildlife and Conservation Club, Kwatamang Conservation Wildlife Club, Yakarinta Giant Otter Club, Massara Junior Wildlife Club, Toka Junior Conservation Club, Fairview Wildlife Observation Club, Aranaputa Junior Wildlife Club, Apoteri Arapaima Junior Wildlife Club, Rupertee Junior Wildlife Club and Crash Water Junior Wildlife Club.

Cycle of Inquiry Training Workshop

This workshop will be held from the 10th to the 15th August 2002 and will focus on developing protocols for monitoring that can be applied in the North Rupununi. The workshop will serve as a training session for using the “Cycle of Inquiry” as a research and management tool for community members.

Amphibian Monitoring Training

From August 18th to 22nd 2002, Dr. Mo Donnelly will be working with wildlife club members to develop a protocol for amphibian monitoring that will provide data for the Declining Amphibian Population Task Force.

Bird Monitoring Activities Implemented – November 2002

All the wildlife clubs were visited between the months of October to November and the bird monitoring protocols were implemented, with clubs beginning to collect data with respect to their specific bird list.

Wildlife Conservation Festival III – April 2003

Two hundred and eighty-five persons attended this year’s festival with the theme “Today we conserve to enjoy tomorrow”. Due to the closure of the bridge in Linden town, invitees from Georgetown could not attend. This however, did not slight the festival success.

The main participants of the festival were the members of all 14 wildlife clubs of the North Rupununi including: Wowetta Junior Wildlife Club, Annai Youth Conservation Wildlife Club, Surama Junior Wildlife Club, Rewa Junior Wildlife and Conservation Club, Kwatamang Conservation Wildlife Club, Yakarinta Giant Otter Club, Massara Junior Wildlife Club, Toka Junior Conservation Club, Fairview Wildlife Observation Club, Aranaputa Junior Wildlife Club, Apoteri Arapaima Junior Wildlife Club, Rupertee Junior Wildlife Club, Crash Water Junior Wildlife Club and Kwaimatta Junior Wildlife Club. This club attended the festival for the first time. Other invitees were from Karanambu Trust and Conservation International, which had an exhibition booth on Day 1.

Implementation of Rainfall monitoring & Phenology Transects – September 2003

The monitoring protocols for rain fall monitoring and conducting floral transect were implemented with the wildlife clubs. This will generate data on daily rainfall and patterns on the fruiting and flowering of plants.

Tour Guide Training – October 2003

Five persons from the following wildlife clubs; Surama, Fairview, Aranaputa and Kwaimatta, has successfully graduated as Certified Tour Guides. These individuals are now legally qualified as guides for the Iwokrama Reserve.

Wildlife Conservation Festival IV – August 2004

Over 212 participants attended the festival. North Rupununi participants included Annai, Apoteri, Aranaputa, Toka, Kwaimatta, Crash Water, Rewa, Yakarinta, Rupertee, Kwatamang, Wowetta, Surama, and Fair View. Participants also came from the distant villages of Bartica, Santa Rosa, Nappi and St. Ignatius; these participants attended through generous travel assistance from Intraserv Bus Service and Conservation International. The festival was also attended by Ministry of Trade Tourism and Industry, Miss Guyana, World 2004, and Kelly Whitney, the director of Education from the Jacksonville Zoo.

Activities included club reporting, sports, workshop on social issues, and competitions in traditional skills such as basket weaving, cotton spinning and archery. Skits and cultural presentations were made by the youths as well as members of the Makushi Research Unit.

Visits to the Iwokrama Forest – May 2004 to January 2005

Over 212 youths from nineteen communities from Regions 1, 7, 8, and 9, participated in the 4th annual wildlife festival between August 19 and 21. Participants from nineteen communities traveled to the Bina Hill Institute to celebrate the theme of “**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 Intraserv 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.

Public speaking and Environmental Education workshops - February 2005

To boost confidence and ability to communicate effectively, the executive members of the NRJWDC, and outreach rangers, Ron Allicock and James Honorio participated in a one day workshop on public speaking at the Bina Hill Institute. Outreach Rangers participated in a three day course on Environmental Education at the Iwokrama Field Station as part of a new Ranger Training curriculum.