



An Educational Tour to Gharial Breeding Centre, Kukrail (Lucknow) for M.Sc. EVS Students

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A Brief Report on

An Educational Tour to Gharial Breeding Centre, Kukrail (Lucknow)

As a part of the UG & PG curriculum, educational visits are essential in bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical exposure. They allow students and participants to explore real-world applications of knowledge, especially in areas of environmental science, conservation, and biodiversity. **One such enlightening excursion was to the Gharial Breeding Centre in Kukrail Reserve Forest, located near Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh accomplished as the part of M.Sc. I year curriculum activity.**

The Gharial Breeding Centre is a conservation initiative dedicated to the protection and revival of the gharial population, a critically endangered species of crocodilian native to the Indian subcontinent. In the 1970's the number of Gharials (*Gavialis gangeticus*) in the wild had come down drastically to roughly around three hundred. Hence, to save the dwindling population of these critically endangered species in the wild, the Gharial Rehabilitation Centre in Kukrail (KGRC), Lucknow was established in the year 1975. Likewise, through an ex-situ conservation program, it was sought to recover this endangered species and since its inception, the Gharial Rehabilitation Center has played a vital role in increasing the gharial & turtle population in nature. Established as part of the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department's efforts, the center plays a pivotal role in the larger context of wildlife conservation in India.

Gharials are significant for maintaining ecological balance in freshwater systems, but their numbers have dwindled due to habitat destruction, poaching, and human interference. The center works to reverse this trend through specialized breeding programs, public awareness campaigns, and habitat restoration projects. The educational tour is not only a learning experience but a step toward building a generation more conscious of environmental issues. **For a better understanding about the biodiversity conservation and management, an educational tour to the Gharial Breeding Centre in Kukrail Reserve Forest, located in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, was organized by the Department of Environmental Science, Integral University, Lucknow on 2/11/2024 for the students of MSc I Year.**

Objectives of the Visit

- Ø To learn about gharials, their habitat, and the threats to their survival.
- Ø To understand the breeding program and steps taken to increase the gharial population.
- Ø To highlight the role of such species in maintaining aquatic ecosystems.
- Ø To bridge theoretical knowledge with practical insights into wildlife conservation.
- Ø Through this visit, participants are exposed to the real-world implications of ecological imbalance and the critical role organizations and individuals play in countering these issues.

Area description

Gharial Rehabilitation Centre, Kukrail, Lucknow is located in the East Block of Kukrail Reserved Forest adjoining the Kukrail Picnic Spot. With increasing colonization, now it is very much near to Indira Nagar. The area proposed for BHS is 10 hectares (the entire area of Gharial Rehabilitation Centre, Kukrail). The terrain of the area is gently sloped towards Kukrail nala which is a tributary of Gomti river. The Centre is full of floral biodiversity in the form of various types of trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses (including bamboos). The area has good biodiversity of fauna which include- Rhesus Monkey, Jackal, Fox, Common mongoose, Small Indian mongoose, blue bull, Five striped squirrel.

Highlights of the Visit

The students reached the Centre at 10:30am by the conveyance provided by the University. Inside the Centre, students visited different sections of the centre like Breeding station, Nursery, Museum. Following are the details:

Breeding station: The educational trip began with a guided walk through the Kukrail Reserve Forest, which houses the Gharial Breeding Centre. The facility is surrounded by lush greenery, making it an ideal location for gharial conservation. Gharials are long-snouted crocodiles native to the Indian subcontinent. They primarily feed on fish and are known for their distinctively narrow jaws. The gharial population has declined due to habitat loss, fishing nets, and pollution. The breeding center collects gharial eggs from river banks to protect them from natural predators and human disturbances. The eggs are incubated in a controlled environment, and hatchlings are raised until they are strong enough to be released into the wild. Apart from gharials, the center also provides insights into other species, such as turtles and migratory birds found in the reserve forest.

Botanical Garden and Nursery: The Botanical Garden and Nursery within the Gharial Breeding Centre at Kukrail Reserve Forest serves an integral role in enhancing biodiversity conservation and providing a holistic environmental education. While the center is primarily focused on gharial conservation, the botanical garden and nursery complement these efforts by fostering an ecosystem that supports diverse flora and fauna. They play a significant part in creating an enriching environment, both for the wildlife and for visitors.

Museum: The museum at the Gharial Breeding Centre in Kukrail is an integral part of the conservation and education initiative. It offers visitors a deeper understanding of gharials, their habitat, and broader ecological and conservation themes. The museum complements trophies of different wild species, visual boards presenting critical information like ecology, history and conservation interests.

Recreation: The center has a small playground area for children, canteen and watchtowers are also present to view the aesthetic value of the area and its adjoining natural forests.

Conclusion

The educational tour to the Gharial Breeding Centre at Kukrail was an enriching experience, blending education with environmental awareness. It provided a comprehensive understanding of gharial conservation efforts and inspired participants to take an active interest in protecting endangered species. Such initiatives are essential to cultivate a sense of responsibility toward nature and ensure our ecosystems' sustainability for future generations. The students raised their concern about the ecotourism initiatives inside the Centre and asked questions related to ex-situ conservation strategies. After the visit, students reported to the Department and were highly satisfied by the trip. The program was successfully organized under the supervision of **Dr. Ambrina Sardar Khan** (HoD, EVS) and Faculty Coordinators (**Dr. Azram Tahoor** and **Dr. Mariya Hasnat**).

Glimpses of the Visit:



*With Deep Regards
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"We are not heading towards a bright & hi-tech future;
Instead, we are heading into a dark and suffocated EARTH.."