

Guwahati CMS VATAVARAN 2006

Environment & Wildlife Traveling Film Festival

24 - 26 November 2006, Guwahati Tea Auction Centre, G S Road, Dispur

Organisers: CMS and Aaranyak

Films Screenings

The Jaws of Death, 18 Min, English, 2005

Summary: Kaziranga National Park, the home of one horned rhinoceros is a world heritage site. The National Highway 37 runs across the park on its southern front. The north is bounded by river Brahmaputra. During monsoon flood water from Brahmaputra enters the park and inundates almost 80 per cent of its land area. As the water rises, the animal begins to move towards south for shelter. However they need to cross the national highway before they can reach the high hilly terrain of Karbi Anglong situated adjacent to the park. The innocent animals often fall victim and get crushed by the speeding vehicles. This continues unabated.

Director and Producer: Gautam Saikia has edited more than 25 fiction and non-fiction television serials and documentaries. He has made a film on Biodiversity, Wildlife, Environment and Nature.

River Taming Mantras, 30 Min, Hindi & English, 2004

Summary: Large parts of Eastern India are subject to annual flooding. Over the last 50 years, Government has built 14,000 kilometers of embankments in an attempt to tame the rivers of eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and Orissa. Despite this, loss due to flooding and area now vulnerable to flooding have only increased. Presently, 16 per cent of Bihar is permanently waterlogged, a direct consequence of embankments.

River Taming Mantras explores the technical, economic and political rationales that underlie the adoption of such flood control measures. The film argues that taming these rivers are unlikely to succeed as they have enormous power due to their slit load. While vast sums spent on building and maintenance of embankments provides endless opportunities for siphoning of funds. Flood relief seems to be a cow everyone wants to milk. Ultimately, it is the poor people who suffer -migrating to other states, towns and cities in search of food and shelter.

Director(s) Biography: Sanjay Barnela and Vasant Saberwal are founder members of a Delhi-based production team Moving Images. They have made documentaries on a diverse range of issues including pastoralists of the Himalayas, Women in Panchayati Raj, Politics of Water, Wildlife Conservation and Environmental Degradation apart from filming a few high altitude-climbing expeditions in the Himalayas. Sanjay trained in Film and Video at CENDIT (Centre for Development of Instructional Technology), New Delhi while Vasant did his Doctorate in Environment Science at Yale. They have combined their professional skills successfully to produce films informed by high quality research.

Their films have been screened at various national and international film festivals and have won several awards. 'Hunting Down Water' won the award for Best Documentary at Festival du film de Strasbourg 2004, and was awarded Best Direction at the Festival Cinema de Paris 2004. It also won the award for Best Editing at Miami International Short Film Festival 2004.

Kanha – Protecting a Paradise, 18 Min, English, 2004

Summary: Kanha National Park, in Madhya Pradesh, is one of the most well known Project Tiger reserves in India. It is a veritable wildlife paradise, visited by about 50,000 people every year. The reserve's star attractions are its tigers, and visitors are rarely disappointed in their quest to see one of these magnificent big cats in the wild. But what does it take to protect Kanha's tigers and other wildlife? In a country of one billion people and innumerable pressures, how does a reserve like Kanha manage to thrive?

Director: Shekar Dattatri has been making wildlife and conservation films for over 20 years. His films have been aired on major channels worldwide and have received national and international acclaim. He has also contributed to several international productions as a wildlife cameraman. During the last few years he has worked closely with several conservation groups in the country to highlight pressing environmental problems through short video films. He was on the final Jury of Wildscreen, UK in 2004. Shekar was awarded the Rolex Award for Enterprise for his work in conservation filmmaking the same year.

Loktak: The Dying Lake, 60 Min, English

Director: A Shyam Sharma

Elephant-God or Destroyer, 30 Min, English, 2005

Summary: The film brings the 'big' conflict to the small screen and juxtaposes it with the reverence of elephant as God. On a cold winter night the villagers wait for the elephant herd to strike the paddy fields. 300 people die every year - trampled by these giants and the villagers get meager support with conventional arms to combat them - fire, crackers and beating of empty cooking oil tins. The film is also an exposition of the elephant habitat and behaviour, shot with special wildlife lenses and sitting through in hides.

Director: Krishnendu Bose worked for OBM Advertising Agency in Delhi for a short while and in 1988 went independent, making documentaries on conservation and development politics. He was invited by Environmental Investigative Agency, UK to attend the Elephant conference at Johannesburg in 1997 to present his film on Asian elephants. In 2004, Krishnendu was invited as a community film expert to participate in a workshop with youth in Togo, West Africa.

Dance with hands held tight, 60 Min, Different Indian Languages, 2005

Summary: 86 per cent of rural women are engaged in agriculture. In 92 per cent of the rural households energy needs is met by firewood. The landless and the poor mostly women among them, procure 90 per cent of this firewood from the forest commons. The sea supports livelihoods of 400,000 women just along the short 300 kilometres of coast of Karnataka. This intense relationship of women and natural resources across the country, throws up a whole range of issues and questions. Does the policy recognize this intensity? Do we all at large value the knowledge systems, which may have developed among these women? How have women coped with coercion from State in their accessing of natural resources? This film tries to explore these questions. The film brings the 'big' conflict to the small screen and juxtaposes it with the reverence of elephant as God. On a cold winter night the villagers wait for the elephant herd to strike the paddy fields. 300 people die every year – trampled by these giants and the villagers get meager support with conventional arms to combat them - fire, crackers and beating of empty cooking oil tins. The film is also an exposition of the elephant habitat and behaviour, shot with special wildlife lenses and sitting through in hides.

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When the Mist is Lifted, 28 Min, English

Director: Moji Riba

The Green Warriors – Apatanis, 28 Min, English, 2004

Summary: The agricultural practice of the Apatanis is unique in South East Asian cauldron of ethnicities. They are the survivors in the ever-changing cultural space of the eastern Himalayas. Apatanis are the survivors in this wonderland of traditions in spite of modernity's onslaught of Green Revolution. They have survived since the time immemorial with their own indigenous agricultural temper vis-à-vis mainstream 'Green Revolution'. Apatanis have shown to rest of India that how a tradition blends with time and transcends those ecological nuances. That's why they are called The Green Warriors.

Director: Jyoti Prasad Das is an arts graduate from Guwahati University and holder of the BFA in Painting from Government College of Art and Crafts, Guwahati. Das has worked as a freelance cameraman for a number of audio-visual productions of Doordarshan and other electronic media before taking to direction. The film "The Green Warriors — Apatanis" is his maiden directorial venture. This film has screened in the 35th International Film Festival of India at Goa in 2004.

The Policing Langur, 28 Min, English, 2004

Summary: In India, monkeys freely wander through cities, towns and villages. But in India's capital, Delhi, a considerable population of destructive macaque monkeys plagues the city threatening people, raiding houses, schools, offices, hospitals and even airports. Paradoxically the only remedy that has been found in dealing with the monkey menace is to engage the services of bigger, powerful langur- "Policing Langur". This film captures the colorful vista of man-monkey relationship in India that stretches from mythology to the modern and makes for a captivating tale of veneration, tolerance and co-existence.

Director: Ajay and Vijay Bedi after graduation in Commerce did a Diploma course in Camera, Lighting and Computer Aided Movie making. They also attended the short Wildlife/ Environment TV Programme Production Course at Media Works, Bristol. Their works include a film on Wild Asses 'Rider of the Storm and First Out of Africa' - about the Ongis Tribals of the Andaman Islands, 'Do's and Don'ts' for visitors to a National Park.

A Second Hand Life, 26 Min, Hindi and English, 2004

Summary: This investigative film brings to light the grim, murkier side of information technology. Tonnes of electronic waste from obsolete computers and televisions are being exported to poor countries like India from the Western world. More than 1.38 million obsolete PCs have been dumped in India in the last five years. Asif, the film's central character, is a worker in the e-waste recycling business. His life reveals how this huge global e-waste business is engulfing us and shows how dangerous are the working conditions in these recycling ghettos. We see how blue chip MNC's sell e-waste as second hand computers to Indian traders and how unscrupulous agents import dangerous waste under the guise of 'charitable donations'. We get a peep into the sweat shops where thousands of labourers, including children, burn, smash and tear apart electronic waste to scavenge for heavy metals such as copper and iron, precious metal such as gold and platinum. The methods of disposal are rudimentary. It results in heavy metal poison affecting the entire food-chain.

Director: Nutan Manmohan began as an investigative journalist with TV Today in 1987. She scripted and directed several programmes for television, which includes a children's serial 'Zara Hat Ke'. She was the Vice President, News & Current Affairs, Star TV from 1996 to 2000 and was associated with more several Current Affairs programs. She was the India Bureau Chief for Focus Asia, Star World. She is now a freelance journalist producing content for Discovery, National Geographic Channel, FOX News and the International Herald Tribune Television etc. Her film 'The last Flight' won the Oriental Bird Conservation's - Wild Wing Award (UK).

Indian Leopards - The Killing Fields, 53 Min, English, 2003

Summary: In a beauty pageant of the animal world, the leopard would find a spot right at the top. Its fiendish cunning is the stuff of legend. Feared and admired, the leopard leaves no one untouched. But a lack of knowledge about the life of this elusive cat adds to the threat of its survival. And many more people are regularly killed by leopards than by tigers.

This film presents a family who lost a child, a scientist trying to understand the leopard and conservationists trying to balance between the need to conserve wildlife and the need to protect people.

Director: Praveen Singh has been working in wildlife related television programming. He had studied MFA in Science and Natural History Filmmaking at Montana State University. He was the reporter of Panda Award winning series, 'Living on The Edge' and worked as a production co-ordinator for the reality wildlife series called, 'Wild Things'. This is his first independent documentary. It was a finalist in two categories at IWFF, Missoula, 2004. Praveen won a 'Student Emmy' - the first prize in documentary category in the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Foundation College TV Awards, USA. The film was a finalist at the Wild South Festival, New Zealand, 2005 in Best Newcomer category.

In Search of A Job, 14 Min, English

Synopsis: Assam has long tradition of using domestic elephants for logging business for centuries. A 1997 Supreme Court order has made these elephants and their masters suddenly jobless. So these 1200 elephants are now desperately in search of an honest livelihood.

Director: Mrinal Talukdar

Where The Tallest Grass Grows, 29 Min, English,

Synopsis: In the land of Assam, bamboo grows tall and figures ubiquitously in life and beliefs, in legends and history. This film portrays man's intimate bond with bamboo, the tallest grass species, without which life at the grassroots is impossible even for a single day. Shot across the hills and plains of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, the film not only highlights man's bond with bamboo, but also covers 13 rare and easily available species of the tallest grass found in Assam. In portraying the age-old tradition of bamboo culture the film suggests the possibilities of developing the tradition for the benefit of those at the grassroots keeping the culture alive since long

Director: Mauleenath Senapati is a 1996-batch graduate in Film Direction from the Film & Television Institute of India, Pune. Since passing out of FTII, he has been making films on diverse aspects relating to the traditional societies of North-east India, including a documentary-series on the empiric knowledge and the belief-system backing the rich folk medicine tradition of the North-east. Presently he is shooting a film on conservation of fresh water dolphins in the Brahmaputra.

Point Calimere- Little Kingdom by the Cost, 25 Min, English

Summary: Point Calimere is a unique sanctuary by the sea in Tamil Nadu, famous for its herds of blackbuck and flocks of flamingos. It is also known for its feral ponies, and an 18 sq.km. patch of dry evergreen forest full of medicinal plants. In 2002 the swamps around Point Calimere were declared a Ramsar Site, a designation given to wetlands of international significance. Over a hundred species of migratory water birds visit these swamps in winter, but over the years their populations have been declining. Point Calimere – Little Kingdom by the Coast offers a glimpse into this remarkable ecosystem and the problems that confront it.

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Leaving No Trace – Cyclist in the City, 15 Min, Hindi & English, 2006

Summary: We should all switch to riding bicycle this is the mantra of the film. Seen through the eyes the septuagenarian Gandhian Dasharath Shah, the film emphasizes the advantage of using cycles to commute with in the city instead of the poison spewing motor vehicles. Making a fashion statement, both college student and officer goes in cities are gradually waking up to the beauty of this “2-wheeler” ride. Bicycling is the most healthy and safe mode of transport, provided the road rules are adhered to and is also being adopted by the army at AFMC, Pune.

Director: Prayas Abhinav is an artist, water and activist working from Mumbai. His practice is strongly inter-disciplinary –attempting to blend art, film technology, drawing, poetry fluidly for fuller and more complete experiences. He dreams of establishing and open, sustainable and independent platform to reach his audience and interact with it. A lot of his works are accessible on his site. Manjushree Abhinav is an alumni of film and Television institute of India, Pune with specialization in Film Editing. She has made documentaries for various NGO’s Like Oxfam and Uttaran, She has taught in National Institute of Design (NID) and FTII as a faculty on the Film and Television discipline.

The Last Flight, 24 Min , English, 2004

Summary: Vultures are dying. Almost 95 per cent of their population has been wiped out in the last ten years. For four years, the film covered every investigation, travelling to all parts of India, following the trail of the mystery deaths. The culprit was finally nailed. It was Diclofenac a veterinary drug. Diclofenac enters the vulture body as it consumes the carcass and causes death by kidney failure. This was a case of a species being wiped out by a pharmaceutical drug. The film starkly showed that vulture decline threatened the very existence of the rural farmer and made a strong case to phase out the drug.

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