

Landscapes and Lifeskills Programme 1 at GBS

Listening to the Land: Nature, Community and Action



Programme 1 at GBS is offered on the understanding that nature is primary and that the planet is in peril.

Species are being annihilated worldwide as we read this. Great destruction is about. What could be more urgent than working on this? Without a living planet, without rivers and forests and natural communities of plants and animals, human existence is not possible.

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Here are some questions that shape the course.

How do we listen to the land, to plants and animals, to the river and the forest?
How do we work with non-human others, how do we ally with them?

What do we need to know to protect nature better? What is the most pressing problem we can solve with our gifts, our knowledge?

Whom do we love? Do we wish to be part of a community that is allied to this living world? Is there a mountain, a river, a habitat, a species that we will give our lives to?

Where does the problem lie: in our heads, in society, in civilization? Where do we begin? How far will we go?

What are our gifts? Writing, growing, counselling, cooking, teaching, singing, fixing, healing, organizing, fighting? Can we discover our gifts together?

Are we ready to dedicate our gifts to an ecology of action? Supporting nature calls for every unique gift, and an alliance with others as deeply concerned.

We know we cannot do it alone.

How do we learn from history and efforts all around? What has worked and what has failed? Whom can we learn from?



Course foundation:

As always, the land is our teacher, as are the wild plants and animals who live here, as is the local forest and the river. It follows that humans (individuals and communities), who have lived and worked in this place, and listened long to non-human others are also our guides and mentors in our learning process.

Since our premise is that the natural world is primary, all learning and action will always be related to our own unique and direct experience of nature.

Modes of learning: our senses, our bodies, our hands, our hearts, our thinking. Gardening and land care, art, music, discussion, readings, community activities. The intent is to become intimate with the natural world, with natural processes in a way that supports both personal and collective learning.

Course readings: We will bring in a number of writers, thinkers, scientists and artists through various published works, and film documentaries. Philosopher and educator J. Krishnamurti, physicist David Bohm, writers John Berger and Arundhati Roy, historian Mahesh Rangarajan, plant biologist Stefano Mancuso, and Amazonist Antonio Nobre.

Of great importance are stories from the region, local wisdom and teachings.

This year, as we have an international group, course readings will be structured around the work of writer Derrick Jensen, (author of Endgame, A Language Older than Words, Culture of Make Believe), using his text as springboard to explore, among many things, language, nature, civilization and action. If we are lucky with connectivity and our respective schedules, we may be able to host a discussion with Derrick by webcam.

Modular weeks: Some topics will be organized in short 3-7 day modules: on wildlife, plants, art and nature, language and nature and several more. These will be opened to more participants. Announcements will be sent out closer to date.

Facilitators

Lorenzo Castellari teaches physics at Lugano High School. He has been closely involved for many years with schools based on J. Krishnamurti's work. He has also helped set up and run nature education programmes at GBS.

L. Shyamal is a bird specialist, entomologist, Wikipedia editor and informatics specialist. He has been course facilitator many times at GBS

Suprabha Seshan has been at GBS since 1993 and coordinates the educational programmes.

Resource Persons

L. Shyamal: Wildlife investigations, with a focus on birds and insects, conservation strategies.

T. Sandilya: Forest awareness walks. Week 1

T. Anna: Setting up home, the challenges of living simply on the land, group life.

Wolfgang Theuerkauf (founder and chief of GBS): Tea-time Talks. Wolfgang will be available after work for short get-togethers around tea and cake, most days. This is a chance to explore with him topics ranging from plant conservation and forest ecology to history, philosophy and culture.

GBS staff will offer hands-on teaching on plant conservation, organic farming, land care, education, cooking, local natural history, language, art and music in nature.

Raman, of the Kurchiya people, neighbour and friend, will take the group to the forest.

Marcelo Fiorini (to be confirmed), Brazilian anthropologist and film maker, lived with the Nambikwara Indians, and has done extensive work in demarcation of indigenous territories in Brazil will spend some time with the group.

V. Arun: Forest Way Trust, teacher and activist, will offer sessions on issues ranging from environmental pollution to turtle conservation.

Abhishek Jain: Wildlife observation, trips to Nagarhole etc

Sherly Joseph, teacher, resident of Wayanad, and co-founder of Kanavu Educational Trust, will share the history of the Wayanad area: settler migrants, adivasis, local identities.

Excursions during Programme 1

Visits to two or more of the following (independent of later internships)

Nilgiris – Vasanth Bosco's study of the upper regions, based on GBS's previous study of Mukurthi National Park will form the basis of this excursion: explore shola grasslands, remove invasive exotics, meet the many groups involved in conservation, walk in Mukurthi National Park.

Gudalur: Shola Trust - Tarsh Thekkaekara: wildlife/human conflict; adivasis/land rights; forest rights act.

Coorg: Sujata and Anurag Goel (Rainforest Retreat). Explore plantation economy, organic farming, plant pathology, developing a local network, how to run a small enterprise that serves the wider community.

Goa – To learn about illegal mining, strategies of resistance. Meet youngsters in education, activism and theatre. Visit horrible sites and places of great beauty.

Athirapally - Latha Anantha and others (River Research Centre) have been blocking the dam proposal for over 15 years. Explore the full length of a river, learn river ecology, look at issues and local strategies they have come up with.

Programme 2 Internships in Plant Conservation and Habitat Restoration

At Vattakanal Conservation Trust in Kodaikanal and the Forest Way Trust in Tiruvannamalai, and Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary.

Objectives: To explore different techniques in nursery culture, outplanting and habitat support work, as well as educational initiatives.

