



**HSNC UNIVERSITY, MUMBAI**  
**KISHINCHAND CHELLARAM COLLEGE**



**A Report on**

**A Biological Excursion to Velas – Dapoli**

**Organized by**

**Department of Life Sciences**

**19<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022**

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The Department of Life Sciences, K.C. College, HSNC University, organized a long excursion of four days three nights to Velas – Dapoli, Ratnagiri Maharashtra, from 19<sup>th</sup> November 2022 to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2022. A total of 14 students including First year, Second year and Third year undergraduate Life Sciences students along with the faculty members of the Department of Life Sciences were a participant of the excursion.

The journey commenced on 19th November 2022, Saturday at 12 pm from K.C.college and it the group reached their first destination, Velas at 8:30 pm. After the check-in at EcoVillage centre and dinner, a stroll along the Velas beach offered a clear view of star studded skies with a few meteor shooting towards the ground. A rare phenomena of Bioluminescence was observed in the seawater where waves dashing along the shore were illuminated with blue green colour shots due to the bacterial oxygenase luminescence. The dance of fireflies in the nearby bushes made the amazing experience completely surreal. A short trip to the ancient Bankot Fort, mesmerized the students with its history dating back to 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD.

The next morning was much more exciting as the students were introduced to the tracking of marking made by the female of the famous Olive Ridley Turtle during the Marine walk on the Velas beach which is the only Marine beach that is given a conserved status. Students also observed the aquatic flora and fauna, led by very knowledgeable Mohan Upadhye, who works for the Turtle conservation under Mangrove Cell. He acquainted students with various Turtle conservation practices with the participation of local villagers. Mr. Mohan also shared his intriguing experience on satellite tagging and naming of the first five Olive Ridley female turtles of western Indian sea-coast. The group also got an excellent opportunity to participate in a meeting called by the Chief Forest Conservator of the region and the villagers to appreciate the participation of the villagers in making Velas an ecologically and economically viable ecotourism spot. Students then attended a talk by young researchers Swanand about the distribution and behavior pattern of otters in Ratnagiri. Furthermore, the students went for bird watching and observed both local and

migrant birds such as *Egretta garzetta*, *Haliaeetus leucogaster* and *Alcedines*. With this enthralling story we were done with the first half of our excursion. The two days at Velas were truly enriching with knowledge on biodiversity, conservation and a success story of Eco-tourism.

Monday 21<sup>st</sup> November was the day to visit Dapoli and on the way, the students got an opportunity to visit a Sacred grove and ancient Shiv temple at Devare village. On reaching Dapoli, the first visit on the agenda was to Dr. Balasaheb Sawant Konkani Krishi Vidyapeeth, an Agricultural University, in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra state. At their Agriculture Technology center, Dr. Warwadekar explained about the major crops grown in Konkani region such as Mango, Cashew, Rice, Areca-nut, Kokum. He pointed out various hurdles in agricultural mechanization in the Konkani region and mentioned the development of new technologies and machines by DPSKKV Dapoli to overcome these hurdles. For example, Tractor drawn Hydraulic Elevator, Hand Operated Areca nut de-husker, etc. It was followed by a tour of agricultural fields guided by two student volunteers who explained in-depth about different plantations and agricultural practices such as Organic farming, Vermicomposting, Alternate farming and so on. Moreover, the KC students were fascinated by a visit to Renewable Energy Park where machines run on renewable energy were developed and used for different agri-practices. The tour continued to the Animal Husbandry and Dairy department, Mushroom cultivation and ended at Rubber plantation. On the morning of 22<sup>nd</sup> November, students were taken to Harney port to observe the process of Fish landing. They witnessed the 'Fishy business' of harvesting bounty of various types of fishes such as Sea-lions, Prawns, Silver Pomfret, the rare Parrot fish, Octopus, Squids, Sting Rays and many more. Students gathered knowledge on the Fish trade and then came the time to start the return journey for Mumbai. But the learning still continued during an in-transit visit to a Cashew processing factory. A labour and machine intensive process of handling the Cashew seeds and processing them with machines like Riffler along with drying, de-husking and sorting was ably explained by the factory guide. After a visit to the factory store and a refreshing kokam drink, the group got on to the bus for their final leg of return journey to Mumbai with a heavy but contented heart.

The four day long excursion allowed the students to explore and understand the learning outside four walls of the educational institution. The trip made them appreciate their environment, importance of nature's unadulterated beauty and conserving the rich biodiversity of the region. According to them, living in a village, away from the hustle and bustle of a busy city was more peaceful and the hospitality of the local host was heartfelt. It offered a different perspective on benefits of Ecotourism where local villagers come together for co-existence with nature. The excursion reinforced experiential and contextual learning and gave the students memories to last for a lifetime.

**Report Compiled by: Riya Gupta (TYBSc Life Sciences)**