



International Year of Biodiversity 2010

Introduction

Guyana signed the Convention on Biological Diversity in June 1992 during the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development. It was later ratified on August 29, 1994. The Convention on Biological Diversity serves as an international framework instrument under which countries can take steps to achieve and implement the objectives of the Convention. The Convention has three main objectives:

1. Conservation of Biodiversity.
2. The sustainable use of its components.
3. Fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

The Environmental Protection Agency has the responsibility for ensuring that the country meets its obligations under the Environmental Protection Act. It has been designated the focal point for all biodiversity issues under the Convention.

Public awareness and support for biodiversity conservation is integral to achieving the primary objectives of the Convention. This is a primary importance in Guyana, where a number of communities continue to depend heavily on biodiversity for their livelihoods and well-being. As such, the EPA is committed to increasing awareness, among key stakeholder groups and the general public of biodiversity, about associated threats and management needs. The UNCBD's designation of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity has provided the EPA with much needed support for its biodiversity-related education and awareness programme. This is particularly timely since Guyana, through its recently formulated Low Carbon Development Strategy, has identified the conservation of its forests and associated biodiversity as a means of achieving a low carbon development pathway.

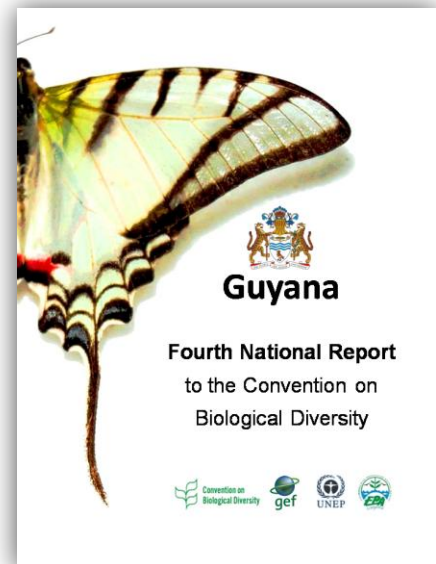
Context

As a signatory to the UNCBD, Guyana is working continuously to fulfill its obligations. A *National Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Guyana's Biodiversity* has been developed. This laid the basis for the development of the *National Biodiversity Action Plan* (NBAP) which has identified important actions for biodiversity conservation. Several of these

are being undertaken including implementation of a Protected Areas System, fund-raising, strengthening legal frameworks, public awareness and education on biodiversity issues.

Guyana has undertaken the preparation of National Reports on the status of its biodiversity and related conservation and management initiatives. A Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) has been established, with the aim of promoting information-sharing among stakeholders. This Mechanism will strengthen planning for conservation and sustainable utilisation of biological resources in Guyana.

With an economy based primarily on natural resources, Guyana's economic development is heavily dependent on the country's biodiversity. As such, conservation and sustainable development are important for both present and future generations of Guyanese. While the necessary steps of preparing and implementing mechanisms for conducting research and sustainable utilisation of biological resources are being taken, it is incumbent upon us all to participate in the conservation and protection of our biological resources. It is against this backdrop that this year's activities were planned, targeting a number of key stakeholders while including the participation of a wide cross-section of the population.



A number of activities aimed at celebrating biodiversity and biodiversity conservation were successfully carried out during 2010. These activities coincided with the preparation and submission of Guyana's Fourth National Report to the CBD.

Activities in 2010

Exhibitions

A total of five (5) Exhibitions portraying different aspects of biodiversity were coordinated by key Stakeholder Institutions. The National Museum hosted an exhibition on flora and fauna found in Guyana. This exhibition coincided with the activities under International Museum Month. A collection of stamps portraying local flora and fauna was hosted by the Guyana Post Office Corporation, while a collection of books, pictures and posters of flora and fauna was on display at the National Library during the month of May.

The Guyana Zoological Park coordinated guided tours of plant and wildlife biodiversity in the Park. The Educational Sessions with selected schools conducted by the Park also focused on biodiversity for the month of May.

Film/Seminar Series

The Environmental Protection Agency coordinated a series of Seminars at the Walter Roth Museum of Anthropology for members of the public. Four (4) Seminars were conducted during May 17 – 22. These Seminars included:

- “The Rupununi – Rediscovering the Lost World”, which focused on the need to understand and conserve one of Guyana’s largest wetlands.
- “Managing Biodiversity – who is responsible?”
- “Conservation and the use of Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture”, which highlighted the importance of Biodiversity and Agro-ecosystems to human food security and well-being.
- “Integrated Conservation and Development Projects: Case-studies from Guyana”.

Youth Forum

Empowering youth for active roles in ensuring a better future for all of the earth’s inhabitants is a primary function of all programmes implemented by the Agency. For the occasion of IYB, a Youth Forum on Biodiversity was organized for students of Grade 10 on May 20, 2010, at the Guyana National Service Sports Complex.



The Guyana IYB Youth Forum

Forty eight (48) students and ten (10) teachers from ten

(10) schools (Christianburg Wismar Secondary School, Mackenzie High School, President’s College, St. Rose’s High School, Bishops High School, St. Joseph High School, Queens College, Marian Academy, Cyril Potter College of Education and Guyana School of Agriculture) participated in this Forum.

Presentations were delivered by participating schools, Conservation International – Guyana, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The topics of these presentations included “Youths for

Biodiversity Conservation”, “Biodiversity Works for the good of all”, “Biodiversity in Peril”, “Biodiversity is my country’s future”, “Guyana’s Protected Areas System: What is conservation and how to make it work?”, and “Humans need nature to thrive”.

Butterfly Watching

During the month of May, 2010, Butterfly Watching expeditions were coordinated by the International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development at the Guyana Zoological Park. Approximately ninety (90) students from three (3) schools in Georgetown participated in the exercise.



Butterfly watching



Participants at the Environmental Camp 2010

Annual Environmental Camp

The Environmental Protection Agency held its Annual Environmental Camp under the theme “Many Species, One Planet, One Future” during July 19 – 22 at the Yarrowkabra Training Centre, Linden/Soesdyke Highway. The Camp was intended to build capacity among youths to create and implement activities within their respective Environmental Clubs, raise awareness of environmental issues and create a “youth voice” on environmental issues.

Twenty-two youths and five teachers from the Belladrum Secondary and Forth Wellington Secondary Schools, West Coast Berbice; Covent Garden and Diamond Secondary Schools, East Bank Demerara; 8th of May Community High School, Dartmouth, Essequibo Coast; and, Central McKenzie Secondary School, Wismar, Linden, participated in this year’s camp.

Camp activities included presentations (Biodiversity, Climate Change), practical sessions (The Web of Life, All the World’s a Web), games (My Carbon Footprint, Programme Planning),

fieldwork (Avifaunal survey, Bird watching), dramatic and cultural presentations (Biodiversity Performs, Folk Songs, Skits, Dance) and video (The Burning Agenda).

As part of the field sessions, participants were engaged in bird-watching, avifaunal survey and data collection facilitated by the Amazon Tropical Bird Society.

Teachers were also engaged in activities introducing the Schoolyard Ecology method of studying the environment and Programme Planning.

Green Walk and Ride

The annual Green Walk was conducted in Georgetown on May 30, and attracted over 350 participants, representing six (6) NGOs, Agencies and the University of Guyana. On June 06, the first annual Green Ride took place in the town of Linden, attracting over thirty (30) participants representing four (4) groups. Both events were conducted under the theme “Many Species, One Planet, One Future”.



Wildlife Festival

From March 27 to 29, 2010, environmental youth groups from sixteen (16) hinterland communities converged in Annai Village, North Rupununi District, Region 9, for the annual wildlife festival (<http://www.iwokrama.org/people/wildlifeclubs.htm>).

During the festival, club members showcased their knowledge and enthusiasm for the environment through art, poetry, song, and dance. Competitions were held in the display of traditional skills, such as cotton spinning, archery, cassava grating, basket weaving and fire lighting.

This festival gives wildlife clubs in the hinterland of Guyana the opportunity to



Cultural presentation at the Wildlife Festival

socialise, exchange ideas and highlight the work that they have been doing in their respective clubs over the year. The activities for wildlife festival 2010 focused on International Year of Biodiversity and the theme surrounding this year's observance.

Media Programmes

A series of Media Programmes were successfully completed during the year. These included a Panel Discussion on the "Human - Biodiversity Connection," a Message by the Honourable Prime Minister Samuel Hinds on the importance of Biodiversity and a Viewpoint on "Biodiversity and Climate Change" presented by Mr. Shyam Nokta, Chairperson of the National Climate Unit. A News Feature on IYB and its significance was also carried on the National Communications Network Channel 11. Monthly Articles on different aspects of biodiversity were also published in the Guyana Times, a daily newspaper, throughout the year.

Generally, all programmes conducted to promote awareness of IYB were successful. Particularly encouraging was the participation and support of stakeholders in the implementation of activities.