

HAMADRYAD: NEWSLETTER OF THE MADRAS SNAKE PARK TRUST

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Editor's Note

A kindly critic of Hamadryad wrote me a short and nasty post card some months ago. "You and your Andamans!" he said. "Can't you think about anything else?".

No. All of us at the Snake Park have the Andaman and Nicobar fever, which is transmitted through contact with these fascinating islands. Our post card friend has obviously not been there.

So we have this group of over 300 islands in the Bay of Bengal- one of the last strongholds of the rain forest in India. It is a bird and reptile paradise. When our field staff stagger back to Madras (with malaria or jaundice or just general decay) from the Islands, there are endless nocturnal story-telling sessions- of king cobra and crocodile nests, unrecorded sea turtle nesting beaches, Laticauda nesting colonies, and much more.

Satish Bhaskar has been with the Snake Park for over three years, involved mainly in the study of sea-turtles on the Indian sub-continent. He is a self-made marine biologist, in his element when being circled by sharks or stung by jellyfish. He has carried out extensive surveys for the Snake Park, covering almost every important nesting beach on the mainland, the Lakshadweep Islands (Laccadives) and, recently, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The Andaman and Nicobar survey covered an eight month period, from September 1978 to May 1979. The aims were - to locate sea turtle nesting areas, and regions where they are exploited, preliminary to drawing up a conservation plan; determining nesting seasons for each species; the extent of human encroachment on nesting beaches; extent of predation, natural and by man; collection of data for future projects on sea turtles.

So, since we can't think about anything but the Andamans, and because we feel Bhaskar's report is a valuable contribution to science, it seems appropriate to devote the entire September '79 issue to his survey.

Z.W.