

# NATUROLE

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- PYGMY HOG RELEASED IN MANAS NATIONAL PARK
- AARANYAK'S MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO COPE WITH COVID- 19 CRISIS
- AARANYAK LAUNCHED AN ONLINE MAGAZINE "ecoNE"
- ONLINE ESSAY COMPETITION
- WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY CELEBRATION
- INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY CELEBRATED WITH ZEST
- PRE FLOOD AWARENESS CAMPAIGN IN KAZIRANGA

Cover Photo - Udayan Borthakur

## PYGMY HOG RELEASED IN MANAS NATIONAL PARK

The Pygmy hogs are one of the rarest suids, whose populations was squeezed to extinction until the timely intervention was initiated. In 1996 amidst the socio-political unrest in western Assam few pygmy hogs were brought from Manas National Park and the Pygmy hog conservation breeding programme thus begun for safeguarding the species from extinction and ensure its recovery.

The Manas National Park, is the only place where the original pygmy hog population still exists, albeit in much reduced number. Therefore, to replenish the existing population in Manas, a total of 14 captive-bred hogs were released in two phases from 14<sup>th</sup>



*Cont. on page 02*



# Update on Activities

from page 01

to 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2020. The pygmy hogs were maintained in the pre-release centre at Potasali, near Nameri National Park for six months prior to this release. This initiative was heartily welcomed by the park authorities. Mr. M.K. Yadav, Additional PCCF and Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam mentioned that how this is an important step amidst the crisis of public health and swine health crisis. Also, a documentary was produced on the pygmy hog, released by Media Production and Communications Division, Aaranyak.



## AARANYAK'S MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO COPE WITH COVID-19 CRISIS

The ongoing Covid-19 crisis have brought along new challenges to accomplish many activities. With improvisation and innovation, Aaranyak developed multi-dimensional approaches to cope with this pandemic and continued its activities over the period. The Wildlife Genetic Division, following the recommendation of World Health Organisation (WHO) prepared hand-sanitisers at their laboratory. Further, the Media Production and Communications Division (MPCD) developed videos on how to prepare hand-sanitisers, following WHO's recommendation and circulated this widely through social media outlets.

Aaranyak's management issued an "Advisory of Prevention of Covid-19" among its employees to cope with the crisis. Consequently, multi-lingual booklets in vernacular languages (Assamese and Hindi) and English were developed to aware common people. The booklets were widely circulated through social media and organizational network to reach a wider audience.

The Manager of Environment Education and Capacity Building Division, Aaranyak, through ACS personnel Ms. Pomi Baruah suggested to Government of Assam to develop a SOP for disposal of single-use facemasks. He also wrote in a popular daily encouraging people to follow personal hygiene and sanitization using normal clothes and soaps.

The people in the fringe areas of high conservation value landscapes were hard-hit during this pandemic as most of them were left with no income generation sources. Aaranyak engaged them in preparing cloth facemasks, following the guidelines suggested by office of the Principal Scientific Advisor to Government of India. Across Assam thousands of facemasks were woven and stitched, notably by the women of Hargila Army, self-help groups around Manas and Kaziranga National Park. These facemasks along-with hand-sanitisers were eventually distributed to the Forest Departments, Assam Police and other civil administrations across the state, over the time to cope with Covid-19. Additionally, the Greater Adjutant Stork conservation initiative of Aaranyak produced 5000 face masks to distribute among local communities. The Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup District, All Assam Students' Union, several media houses and Government organizations extended their support and collaboration to this initiative.

Aaranyak joined hands with Assam State Legal Services Authority (ASLSA) to provide facemasks for use in Assam State Zoo by its team members. In a brief ceremony that took place on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 at Assam State Zoo, Executive Chairman of ASLSA, Justice N. Kotiswar Singh of Gauhati High Court graced the occasion using video call. Mr. Nayan Sankar Barua, Member Secretary of ASLSA and Mrs. Mitali Thakuria, District & Session Judge of Kamrup and Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, CEO & SG, Aaranyak handed over the masks to Mr. Tejas Mariswamy, Divisional Forest Officer and Dr. Sankar Sarma, Forest Veterinary Officer posted in Assam State Zoo. The event was also attended by Mrs. Millikan



Dutta, Additional District Judge, Tripti Arie, Deputy Secretary of ASLSA and Ayushree Shravan, under Secretary. Mr. Manas Bhattacharjya and Mr. Jayanta Pathak of Aaranyak were also present during the programme.

We requested our staffs and members to come forward to render their service as volunteers to the initiative of the Assam Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), "Protirodhi Bandhu". A total of 11 members from seven districts came forward for this noble cause. Moreover, to strengthen the Assam Government's initiative to combat COVID-19, an amount of Rs. 1,00,000/- have been donated to Assam Arogya Nidhi.

In a major move by the Media Production and Communications Division, Aaranyak a series of free educational webinars titled 'Eco talk' using online platforms was initiated amidst the lockdown. The webinars were planned for effective utilization of the COVID-19 lockdown period by both Aaranyak's experts as well as by the interested students and professionals alike. Through this webinar, people, particularly the students who are interested in wildlife conservation, would be greatly benefitted by online learning and experience sharing. Since its beginning on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 webinars were conducted so far. The topics of the webinars were varied, ranging from conservation of threatened wildlife species, environmental hazards, wildlife genetics, wildlife photography, habitat management, GIS & Remote Sensing, to name a few. The webinar series proved to be a huge success, with people participating across the country and abroad.

In addition to the in-house webinars, Aaranyak's staffs took part in other online discussion programmes too. Dr. Parthajyoti Das, Head, Water, Climate & Hazards Division and Organising Secretary, Aaranyak took part in a webinar hosted by the Honourable Minister of India, Health and

Family Welfare and the Chairman, NITI Ayog to interact with CSOs and other non-government organisations of the country on how to work jointly to prevent the Corona pandemic and mitigate the adverse effects. Dr. Das interacted and provided suggestions to the NITI Ayog. In another event, a webinar organised by the Geography Department, Devicharan Baruah Women's College, Jorhat Dr. Das took part in the discussion and highlighted how the dual issues of the ongoing pandemic and the floods are creating havoc in the state. Also, he shared his thoughts on how the medical wastes, if not properly disposed may pose a problem in future.

Aaranyak donated two motor-bikes and face masks to the Golaghat police to deal with COVID-19 pandemic and continue their service. In the remote villages of western Assam, along the Assam-Bhutan borders, Aaranyak in association with PAJHRA, AASAA, AAWAA provided relief to 150 families of seven villages.

The Natural Resource Management Team of Aaranyak is working closely with the under-privileged households of four villages in Karbi Anglong, aiding them with daily wages during this outbreak of COVID-19. As such, the people are engaged in planting saplings in a degraded community forest. So far, of the targeted 10000 saplings, 3200 saplings have been planted covering 3 ha of area. This benefitted 22 daily wagers so far. Besides, an awareness drive, focussing women vegetable-vendors were carried out and provided with hand gloves, face masks, soaps as prevention to the pandemic. An awareness material was developed in Karbi language to spread the word.





## AARANYAK PROVIDES CCTV CAMERA TO GOLAGHAT POLICE

In another move by Aaranyak, two high-tech CCTV cameras were donated to the Bokakhat police on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 for monitoring wildlife crime, road mishaps and controlling the vehicle-speed around Kaziranga National Park during floods. The initiative was highly appreciated by the authorities.



## AARANYAK LAUNCHED AN ONLINE MAGAZINE "ecoNE"

An online magazine, "ecoNE" was launched by Media Production and Communications Division, Aaranyak on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 to highlight the subjects of biodiversity and environmental issues of northeast India. In the short span, this online magazine gained tremendous popularity, and its reach to audience is growing exponentially. The magazine covers an array of stories ranging from wildlife stories, reviews of conservation actions, environmental concerns, rich biodiversity of the region among others. This digital platform was launched with the motto of promoting upcoming writers and environmental journalists of the region. So far, works of many people from various walks of life have been published in the magazine.

## ONLINE ESSAY COMPETITION

An online essay competition on Asian elephants was held by Aaranyak targeting the students of the state. The students were divided into two categories, Group A (Standard VI to VIII) and Group B (Standard IX to XII). The subject of the essay writing competition was, "Role and Importance of Elephants" for Group A and "Man-Elephant Conflict in Assam" for Group B respectively. We received an overwhelming response and it was a tough competition. After a thorough review by our panel of judges, we announced six winners, three in each category.

## AARANYAK HANDED OVER A NEW BOLERO CAMPER TO DFO, BISWANATH WILDLIFE DIVISION

To help in conservation activities in Biswanath Chariali wildlife division of Kaziranga National Park, Aaranyak with support from the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), USA handed over a new Bolero Camper to the Divisional Forest Officer. Mr. Rahul Dutta facilitated the handing over of the vehicle to DFO in Tezpur on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2020.





## INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY CELEBRATED WITH ZEST

Every year International day for Biological Diversity is celebrated on 22<sup>nd</sup> May to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. Aaranyak this year organized a fun event for children of the Hargila Army members at Dadara-Pachariya village. The children came forward and actively participated in it. They drew pictures of birds, plants and elements from their surroundings.

The ecoNE digital magazine of Aaranyak organised an online photography competition with this year's Biodiversity Day's theme - "Our Solutions are in Nature". Three categories, viz., "Species in its environment", "Nature Based Solutions to Loss of Biodiversity" and "Photo Story" were selected as sub-themes. Winners in each category along with their photographs were announced on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

Another online event was organised through facebook live on the Biodiversity Day, wherein experts were invited to provide insights on the vultures in Assam - their present and future. Dr. Dipankar Lahkar moderated the programme, while Dr. Hilloljyoti Singha, Dr. Firoz Ahmed, Mr. Udayan Borthakur and Mr. Mridu Paban Phukan were the resource persons.

## WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY CELEBRATION

The "World Environment Day", celebrated globally on 5<sup>th</sup> June to raise awareness on the environment and to safeguard it. Aaranyak celebrated the day with varied activities across the state, some of them going digital due to ongoing pandemic. A poster was developed with messages highlighting the facts on why we should conserve nature. The posters were put in our social media outlets and circulated through organizational network to reach a wider audience.

In our western Assam zone, an online discussion programme was organised on, "Present Challenges of Forest Conservation in Assam" by the zonal coordinator Dr. Ashoke Kumar Das who is an assistant professor, Botany Department, Abhayapuri College. Dr. Hilloljyoti Singha, HoD, Zoology Department, Bodoland University was the key resource person in the programme. The duo talked about the urgent need to conserve forested areas that harbours threatened species, beyond the protected areas. Dr. Singha highlighted the community conservation efforts at Sankarghola in Bongaigaon district and how it helped in safeguarding the biodiversity. Dr. Das talked about the burning issues such as climate change, sea-level rising and other issues. The programme concluded with vote of thanks by Ankur Barman, the assistant coordinator of the zone.

In the central Assam zone, an online art competition in collaboration with Kaziranga Chitrakala Vidyalaya was organised among the students of different age groups. And on the occasion of the environment day an event was organised at their premises to give away the awards to the nine winners, of the total 70 participants. The event commenced with plantation and an open discussion. Also, the members wrote and recited a poem on nature and made a short video depicting their activity. Mr. Arif Hussain, coordinator of the zone took lead in both the events.

Dr. P.C. Bhattacharjee, the doyen of wildlife in northeast India graced our webinar series, "Eco Talk" on International Day for Biological Diversity. He talked about biodiversity conservation in the region and the challenges post COVID-19.



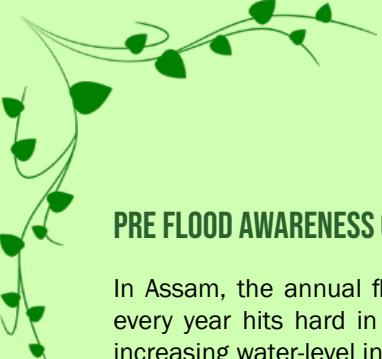
In another event on the day, the youths of Marangi, Golaghat District carried out a plantation drive along the road from Marangi Chariali to Phalangni. Mr. Niranjan Bhuyan, assistant coordinator of the central Assam zone of Aaranyak led the day-long plantation program, where the youths of the area have taken the responsibility of nurturing the plants.

The K9 squad of Aaranyak, which works on the ground and assist the authorities to curb wildlife poaching in high conservation value landscape, came forward to film a video to spread the message about nature and the importance of saving it.

Aaranyak in collaboration with Hohozatri, an NGO organised the 5<sup>th</sup> Gaurav Gogoi State level Dibrugarh Green Quiz cum Science Poster competition. This is an annual event. In the quiz competition, 102 students participated; whereas, 87 students participated in the poster competition across the state.







## PRE FLOOD AWARENESS CAMPAIGN IN KAZIRANGA

In Assam, the annual floods during the monsoon season every year hits hard in the Kaziranga National Park. The increasing water-level inside the park forces the animals to either take refuge in higher grounds or move out, crossing the NH-37. Often the animals become victims of speeding vehicles or hunting. To address this issue, the Kaziranga National Park Authority along with Aaranyak and WTI jointly organized pre-flood awareness campaigns in Deusur and Amguri Tea Estate in Burapahar on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to ensure protection of the wild animals that stray out in the nearby villages due to inundation in the park.

With the floods hitting Kaziranga, the members of the central Assam zone of Aaranyak jumped into action.



## AN AWARENESS DRIVE ON WILDLIFE CRIME PREVENTION

Aaranyak organized an awareness drive on wildlife crime prevention on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 in Silbhori Police Outpost, Silbhori and Shyampur Police Station, Darrang district. A total of 35 VDP members participated in the program. We are glad to share that an immediate impact of the event was evident, when the VDP members, under Shyampur Police station who attended the meeting, rescued two threatened species of wildlife. Later, it was handed over to the forest officials in Mangaldoi Wildlife division through Darrang district police. All norms of maintaining social distancing because of the current pandemic were maintained during the event.



## PLANTATION DRIVE AT PACHARIYA, KAMRUP



As a contribution to create new hope towards nature, a plantation drive was organized at Kushal Kunwar High School, Pachariya by Aaranyak in collaboration with Assam Forest Department and Hargila army on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Dr. Purnima Devi Barman of Aaranyak, who leads the Greater Adjutant Stork conservation initiative expressed her gratitude through her speech to DFO Rangiya and Ranger, Hajo for their kind support.

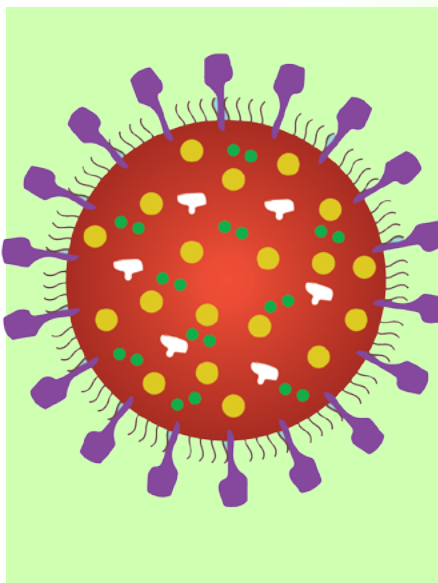
## PLANTATION DRIVE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO NATURE LOVER, LATE HEMANTA RABHA



Late Hemanta Rabha of Bongaigaon district was a flag-bearer of community conservation. He was a member of Aaranyak, who was committed to the conservation of the threatened Golden Langur in Sankarghola in Bongaigaon district. During 1996-97, Hemant Rabha and his fellow villagers started a forest conservation program in the village of Sankarghola, adjacent to the Bhairab Pahar. He mobilized the people and continued his tireless efforts until his demise. However, his journey was cut short and after a long battle with cancer, he succumbed to death at the age of 47. To pay tribute to the departed soul and to keep his legacy alive, the Western Assam zone of Aaranyak carried out a plantation drive on his Adhyashradha. The members of the zone planted 47 species of plants to mark the day. Rabha's death is a huge loss to Aaranyak and to conservation as a whole. We pray his soul rest in peace.



# OUR ACTIVITIES







# Aaranyak

## Administrative Office

Aaranyak, 13 Tayab Ali Byelane,  
Bishnu Rabha Path,  
Beltola Tinali-Bhetapara link  
Road,  
P.O.: Beltola, Guwahati,  
India: 781028

## Research Division Office

Aaranyak, 12 Kanaklata Path,  
Byelane 3, Ajanta Path,  
Beltola Survey, Guwahati,  
India: 781028

## Registered Office

Aaranyak, 50 Samanwoy Path,  
Beltola Survey,  
Guwahati,  
India: 781028

[www.aaranyak.org](http://www.aaranyak.org)

Editor: **Alolika Sinha**; Executive Editor: **Pranjit Borah**; Design: **Media Production & Communications Division, Aaranyak**

Aaranyak invites articles and photo stories on biodiversity and environmental aspects for publication in its biannual newsletter BIOLINK. Please write to -  
The Editor, BIOLINK at [pr@aaranyak.org](mailto:pr@aaranyak.org) and [pr.aaranyak@gmail.com](mailto:pr.aaranyak@gmail.com). For general queries on Aaranyak and its activities, please write to [info@aaranyak.org](mailto:info@aaranyak.org).

PUBLISHED BY AARANYAK