

NATUROLE

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Cover Photo - Alolika Sinha

A SHORT FILM RELEASED ON PYGMY HOG'S RELEASE IN MANAS NATIONAL PARK

The Media Production & Communications Division (MPCD), Aaranyak produced a short film on the journey of Pygmy Hogs from breeding centre into the wild in Manas National Park (MNP). The film is of 15-minutes duration which was released in the month of July 2020, showcases the restocking of the hogs in the Park. The short film talked about the historic event of the collaborative efforts of many organizations and individuals to save the pygmy hog from extinction. The film also captures bytes from people associated with the release event.



Update on Activities

AARANYAK ACTIVELY ASSISTED THE KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITIES



Like every year, the annual flood in Kaziranga National Park has impacted in more than one way. Aaranyak stepped-in and actively participated in ensuring the safety of the animals that strayed out in search of higher grounds due to rising water inside the park. The members, and the volunteers from Aaranyak's central Assam zone and our staffs across various divisions worked relentlessly to mitigate the crisis and assist the department.

The people involved planned a strategy to smoothly carry out the work. They formed groups and worked in shifts to issue timecards and night patrolling around the park. One group from Burapahar area assisted the park officials in Amguri, Burapahar, whereas, the other group from Bokakhat provided backup to the Burapahar team and night patrolling in other areas. The team also conducted awareness campaigns in the fringe villages with Village Defence Parties and local youths.

PLANTATION DRIVE FOR ECO-RESTORATION

The Natural Resource Management Team of Aaranyak conducted a plantation drive as a part of the eco-restoration programme, in the catchment area of the Kohora River, Karbi-Anglong. This initiative had an added advantage by supporting the villagers with daily wages for undertaking the plantation drive. It is worth mentioning that during the pandemic, the people were left with minimum income generation sources, and this initiative has facilitated them with wage-earning.

A committee, "Natural Resource Management Committee" was formed which comprised members from the local communities to supervise the work. Approximately, 3200 saplings were planted in three hectares area and supported 22 villagers with daily wages from several villages such as the Phumen Engti and Hemi Lekthe. The plantation drive is carried-out in phase-wise manner, and in future the efforts will be extended in the catchment area of Jilongso stream, degraded patches, and Jhum fallow areas.



I LOVE ANTS

Greater Adjutant Stork conservation project of Aaranyak has taken an exceptional initiative to create awareness and respect among the children on our little-known creatures of nature, such as the ants. Accordingly, a drawing contest, titled "I love Ants" was organized among the children from different parts of Assam. This type of initiatives helps in instilling a love for small organisms among children, as well as their talents. The contest saw participation from children across the state of Assam.



FLOOD AWARENESS CAMPAIGN IN LAOKHOWA-BURACHAPORI WILDLIFE SANCTUARIES



We in collaboration with Nagaon Wildlife Division, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve Authority, Laokhowa-Burachapori Conservation Society, Wild Aid, and Turtle Survival Alliance organized pre-flood awareness campaigns around Laokhowa-Burachapori complex on 16th and 17th July 2020. Several villages, namely, Bhurbandha, Bhogamukh, 6 & 7 no., Singimari, Pochim Singimari, Sun Sohor, Lalunggaon, East Futaljar, West Futaljar, Amarakanda, Kaliyadinga, Lalung Gaon, Sluice Gate and Sutirpar villages were targeted. The main purpose of the campaign was to create awareness among the fringe villagers as during floods, the animals were prone to risk and special attention was needed for their protection. To affect the cause, leaflets were published and distributed among the villagers by holding roadside meetings. Further, two helpline numbers were assigned and remained active for 24 X 7 service. Awareness related to preparedness, monitoring, and rescue was carried out.

Mr. Smarajit Ojha, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Nagaon, Mr. Arabinda Deka, Range Officer, Gorajan Range, Laokhowa WLS, Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, RRC, Aaranyak, Mr. Dhiraj Das, Beat Officer, Laokhowa Beat Office, Mr. Wahidur Rahman, Mr. Nawman Islam, and Mr. Himangshu Bora, Wild Aid and Mr. Dipen Nath & Khirud Saikia, members, Aaranyak were present in the program.

July - September, 2020

ARTICLE ON THE WOMEN CONSERVATIONISTS OF AARANYAK

Ms. Bijoyinee Sarma of Aaranyak wrote about her colleagues, the women conservation practitioners of Aaranyak. The title of her article, 'Women making a mark in conservation' highlighted the conservation work and the contribution the women has made towards conservation. In the first part of the article published she focused on the works of Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, Late Ms. Mehrun Nesa, Dr. Namita Brahma, Ms. Madhumita Borthakur, Ms. Alolika Sinha and Ms. Binita Baruwati. Ms. Sarma wrote the story with an objective to inspire more young women from a multidisciplinary background to join the field.



AARANYAK ORGANISED A SERIES OF LIVE DISCUSSION PROGRAMME ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES USING DIGITAL PLATFORM

The Environment Education and Capacity Building Division (EECBD) of Aaranyak started a series of online discussion programme titled "Science, Environment & Mankind: Fundamentals", which included multiple environmental issues as subjects for discussion and interaction. The main aim of conducting this series is to sensitize common people through interactive discussions. Total five such programmes were conducted so far, wherein experts from various walks of life were invited to talk about multiple environmental issues. The programme was streamed online on our official Facebook Page and moderated by Mr. Jayanta Pathak, Manager, EECBD.

The first panel discussion of this series was on "Snakebite Management", where renowned herpetologists of the region, Dr. Firoz Ahmed, Dr. Abhijit Das, Scientist, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun and Dr. Surajit Giri, a medical practitioner were the panellists. The second discussion focused on "Biomedical waste in the context of COVID-19: its impact on the environment and human health". Dr. Sthapana Sharma, Assistant Professor, Gauhati Medical College, Dr. Simanta Kalita, Programme Director, CEE-Northeast and Mr. Udayan Borthakur, Senior Scientist, Aaranyak were the esteemed panellists. This was followed by a discussion on "Green reporting - a catalyst for environment protection" which saw active participation from the renowned media personalities from Assam, Mr. Prabal Kumar Das, Mr. Pulin Kalita, Mr. Sivasish Thakur, Mr. Uttam Saikia and Mr. Bijay Sankar Bora. The keynote speech was delivered by the noted environmental journalist Mr. Pranay Bordoloi.

INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY CELEBRATION

Aaranyak organised a panel discussion in its series of "Eco Talk", titled "Tiger and Communities- Connecting the dots in NE India" to mark the occasion of the International Tiger Day on 29 July. The ongoing lockdown has made us conduct the session online. The esteemed panelists were Dr. Firoz Ahmed, Senior Scientist and Head, Tiger Research and Conservation Division, Aaranyak, Dr. Jayanta Kumar Sarma, a freelance environment expert, Dr. Bibhuti P. Lahkar, Senior Scientist, Aaranyak and Dr. Smarajit Ojah, Assistant Professor, Nowgong Girls College, Assam.

The panellists during the course of interaction highlighted how the conservation of tigers and their habitats benefit the ecosystem and in turn the mankind, the importance of people's participation in conservation, values of traditional beliefs and cultural ethos of the indigenous communities to secure ecosystems, the potential of Laokhowa-Burachapori complex as tiger habitat among others. It was very interactive session, with participants

The fourth programme in this series was on "Ecosystem Degradation and Emergence of Zoonotic & Vector-borne Diseases". The panellists included Dr. Kumarendra Nath, Assistant Director, Directorate of Health Services, Assam, Dr. Deba Kumar Dutta, Landscape Coordinator, WWF-India and Dr. Jaideep Baruah, Head i/c, Environment Division, ASTE Council, Govt. of Assam. During the fifth discussion programme, conservation practitioners and local youth came together and delved on "Eco-tourism & Community-based Dolphin Conservation". The panel comprised of Dr. Abdul Wakid, Project Scientist, Wildlife Institute of India, Dr. Bibhuti P Lahkar, Senior Scientist, Aaranyak, Mr. Champak Deka, Entrepreneur and Mr. Manoj Das, Conservation worker. The series was highly successful, with 'views' on our official Facebook page reaching hundreds. More such programmes in this series will be streamed online in upcoming months.

posing different questions to the panelists. The session was highly successful and moderated by Mr. Udayan Borthakur, Head, Media Production & Communications Division, Aaranyak.

VERMICOMPOSTING IN KAZIRANGA

The use of pesticide has multiple negative impact on soil and human health. The use of pesticides must be minimized, and keeping this in view, Aaranyak has come-up with initiatives to encourage organic farming around the high conservation value landscapes. As a part of this initiative, training on the use of vermicompost was imparted to the farmers from Japoripathar, a fringe village of Kaziranga National Park, Bokakhat. Vermicompost is an eco-friendly product and imposes no threats to the environment.

Four vermicomposting tanks were set-up in Pabhoi Greens farm in Bishwanath Chariali. The site was selected to reduce the load of use of chemical fertilizers in the vicinity of the National Park. The farmers were provided with compost tanks and earthworms. They had produced 20 quintals of the compost, which has a market value of approximately Rs 30,000/-. The initial production was used for their crops.

With the success of the initiative, more farmers became interested in the use of vermicompost. Another day-long workshop on vermicomposting and organic farming was organised jointly by Aaranyak and Kaziranga National Park Authority on 8th September 2020 at Convention Hall, Kohora supported by International Rhino Foundation. In this workshop 20 selected farmers from 10 villages were trained by experts, Mr. Mohan Bora, National Award winner and famous farmer from Jorhat and Mr. Bijit

Dutta, Jorhat. Among these trainees, 10 were provided with vermicompost tanks and other 10 will be supported by Aaranyak for organic farming.

The workshop was inaugurated by Mr. P. Shivakumar, Director, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve (KTR) in presence of Mr. Ramesh Gogoi, DFO, KTR and Mr. Swapan Nath, Senior Journalist. Mr. Ritupaban Bora, ACF, KTR, Mr. Perai, ACF, KTR, Mr. Dipankar Deb, Ranger, Bokakhat Range, Mr. Pradip Goswami, Ranger, Burapahar Range, Mr. Tarun Gogoi, and Jukti Bora, Forester-1, from KTR were also present in the program. The workshop was coordinated by Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, RRCD, Aaranyak. Members of Aaranyak, Ratul Das, Numal Das, Niren Sing, Sayanika Phukan, Samim Sultana and Khirud Saikia took active part during the workshop.



WORLD ELEPHANT DAY

This year we observed the World Elephant Day, which is celebrated annually on 12 August, by organizing a webinar titled, "Elephants in the Room" in the series of our webinars, "Eco Talk". Experts on elephants from Southeast Asia comprised the panel for this session, who delved into various issues of elephant conservation and human-elephant conflict through interactive discussion. Dr. Christy Williams, Regional Director, Asia-Pacific, WWF International, Dr. Sanjay Gubbi, Scientist, Nature Conservation Foundation-India, Dr. Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, Senior Scientist & Head, Elephant Research & Conservation Division, Aaranyak and Mr. Kaushik Barua, Founder, Assam Elephant Foundation were the esteemed panellists.

Dr. Williams talked about how various factors such as habitat loss, anthropogenic disturbances, habitat fragmentation, access to nutritious food like cultivated crops and its consequence on breeding, and the behavioural aspects of elephants combinedly were responsible for human-elephant conflict (HEC). To this, Mr. Kaushik Barua added that we need to address the issue of shrinking elephant habitats, or else the magnitude of the problem will be much bigger in the future. Dr. Gubbi further added that how ignoring science and the need for elephants, mismanaging or modifying elephant habitats in the past has led to the intensification of HEC. Dr. Lahkar echoed that we need to protect the elephant and its habitat. We must appreciate

the conservation value of animals and need to pay attention to this national heritage animal. The session was moderated by Mr. Udayan Borthakur, Head, Media Production & Communications Division, Aaranyak.

Another event was organised by Aaranyak in collaboration with Naba Arts, Morongi Press Club and Forest Department, Golaghat at Phalangani Bapuji Higher Secondary School, Golaghat. The event began with a plantation programme. An online art competition was also organized to create awareness, about the elephants. The invited guests and staffs of Aaranyak undertook all the precautions such as sanitisation and wearing of facemasks due to the ongoing pandemic during the programme. Mr. Niranjana Bhuyan of Aaranyak took the lead in organizing the event.



AARANYAK SHARED CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIA NOTIFICATION 2020

Aaranyak has expressed its concern and submitted a letter to the concerned authorities on the Draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020. The provisions as flagged, may make way for loss of biodiversity, pollution of air, water and soil, overexploitation and depletion of natural resources among others and also stand to dilute the rights of local, indigenous and tribal people. Altogether Aaranyak opined on the following areas of concern-

1. On the definition of "Accredited Environment Impact Assessment Consultant Organization('ACO')": Clause 3(1).
2. Definition of 'border area' -100 kilometres aerial distance from Line of Actual Control: Clause 3(6).
3. Definition of Eco-Sensitive Areas/Zones: Clause 3(21) and 3(22).
4. General Conditions: Clause 3(30).
5. Requirement of Prior Environment Clearance or Prior Environment Permission: Clause 4
6. Reduction of Public Response Time and Public Hearing.
7. Exemption from Public Consultation for projects related to national defence & security or involving strategic considerations as determined by the Central Government: Clause 14(2)(e).
8. Projects exempted from requirement of EC: Clause 26.
9. Exemption given to certain Projects (B2) from Public Consultation: Clause 14(2).
10. Violation of the provisions contained in the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.
11. Grant of Ex-Post-Facto Environmental Clearance: Clause 3(60) and Clause 22
 - a. Alembic Pharmaceuticals v. Rohit Prajapati &Ors. – Civil Appeal No. 1526 of 2016 (decided on 01.04.2020).
 - b. Common Cause v Union of India: (2017) 9 SCC 499.
 - c. Association for Environmental Protection v State of Kerala: (2013) 7 SCC 226.
12. Monitoring of Projects Post EC: Clause 20(4).

VEHICLES GIFTED TO KARBI ANGLONG POLICE

Aaranyak in association with International Rhino Foundation (IRF) gifted one new 4WD Bolero Camper and two new Bajaj Pulsar 150cc Neon Motorbikes to Karbi Anglong District Police to enhance their efforts to check wildlife crime in the district this Independence Day. Aaranyak is well aware of the proactive role played by Karbi Anglong District Police to check the activities of wildlife criminals. The recent arrest of culprits involved in rhino killing in the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park was praise worthy. Karbi Anglong is a strategic location where wildlife-related crimes were recorded in the past. Thus, in consultation with senior police officers of the district, Aaranyak is trying to complement their efforts by providing vehicles to help them mount vigil against wildlife criminals. Mr. Debojit Deori, The Superintendent of Police (SP) of Karbi Anglong District, Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, CEO, Aaranyak and Asia Coordinator, IRF, Rahul Dutta, Wildlife crime monitoring consultant, IRF, two Additional SPs of the district, Mr. Indranil Baruah and Mr. Hemanta Baruah were present during the event.



DRAWING COMPETITION ORGANIZED BY AARANYAK

A drawing competition was organized by Aaranyak with support from Audubon Naturalist Society on 30 August, 2020 at Mankhova Tea estate, Doomdooma, Tinsukia. The theme of the competition was "Save White Winged Wood Duck and its habitat". A total of 24 students actively participated in the competition. This was followed by a talk on Conservation of White Winged Duck by Niranjana Nayak, an active member of Aaranyak. The winners of the competition were awarded with certificates and prizes.



WORKSHOP ON STRENGTHENING CAPACITY OF FRONTLINE FOREST OFFICERS TO CHECK CRIME AGAINST WILDLIFE

Aaranyak in association with Assam Forest Department and International Rhino Foundation, supported by Oak Foundation organised a three-day workshop on, "Strengthening Capacity of Frontline Forest Officers to Check Crime against Wildlife" at the Bhuyanpara Forest Range of Manas National Park from 4th to 6th September 2020. The aim of the workshop was to reduce wildlife crime from Northeast India. A total of 12 frontline staffs of Bhuyanpara Forest Range participated in the workshop and they were reported to have benefited a lot through this workshop. Mr. Rahul Dutta, International Rhino Foundation was the resource person of the workshop.



MASKS DISTRIBUTION AMONG THE JOURNALISTS

The journalists have been in forefront reporting across the state and providing news to the public selflessly even during the ongoing crisis of COVID-19 pandemic. Aaranyak acknowledges their work and support, and as appreciation to them has provided facemasks and COVID-19 awareness materials on 3 September 2020. More such facemasks will be provided in the coming days to the journalists of different media houses.



AARANYAK GIFTS FIELD EQUIPMENT TO SONITPUR EAST FOREST DIVISION

To complement the untiring efforts of forest personnel of Sonitpur East Forest Division to protect the forest resources, Aaranyak gifted field equipment for frontline staffs of the division on 12 September, 2020 with support from David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF). We handed over field shoes, torchlights and raincoats for the field staff to Mr. Suhas Kadam, The Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), by Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, Rhino Research and Conservation Division (RRCD) of Aaranyak in presence of Assistant Conservator of Forest, Mr. Biswajeet Das, Mr. Babuli Hazarika, Honorary Wildlife Warden of Bishwanath District and Saidur Rahman, President, Upatyaka. The DFO appreciated and thanked Aaranyak for the initiative and stated that they look forward to more of such initiatives in the future.



WORLD RHINO DAY

The World Rhino Day which began as a humble campaign in 2010 to save the African rhinos, soon gained popularity and currently celebrates all the five rhino species of both Africa and Asia. World Rhino Day is observed on 22 September every year. To mark the World Rhino Day 2020, Aaranyak in collaboration with Kaziranga National Park Authority, WWF, WTI, TCF and Bhumi organized an outreach programme at the Kohora Convention Centre. The event included talks on Rhino conservation and a documentary was screened. Dignitaries from the Forest Department, Civil administration, Police along with representatives from various conservation organizations and staffs and members of Aaranyak were present during the event. Besides, an inter-district online essay competition was also held by Kaziranga National Park Authority, Aaranyak, and International Rhino Foundation. An art competition was also held in Natundanga village, Burhapahar, jointly by Aaranyak and Earthwatch Institute among the students to create awareness among the fringe students for conservation of our pride, the one horned rhino.

Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, SG & CEO, who also heads the Rhino Research & Conservation Division, Aaranyak was invited by the People for Nature & Peace to deliver a talk on rhinos. Dr. Talukdar shared the conservation history of the Greater one-horned rhinos of Assam.



WORLD RIVERS DAY

The "World Rivers Day" is observed annually on fourth Sunday of the month of September. This year Aaranyak and State Innovation and Transformation Ayog (SITA), Government of Assam had jointly organised a webinar on, "State of rivers in Assam: Challenges of sustainable management for ecological and human well-being" to create awareness on the important role that rivers play in provisioning eco-hydrological services to wildlife and mankind.

Seven expert panellists drawn from academia, government and civil society participated in the webinar, which was moderated by Dr. Partha Jyoti Das, Senior Scientist and Head, Water, Climate and Hazard (WATCH) Division of Aaranyak, with support from MPCD, Aaranyak.

This webinar was the first initiative to begin a discourse on rivers from a multidisciplinary perspective to highlight myriads of services and values of rivers, need to halt further degeneration of rivers and importance of adopting climate-sensitive and adaptive policies for sustainable management of rivers both at national and state level. The objective of holding this webinar was to make people aware about the current problems that have led to degradation and near-death of many small rivers, rivulets and streams that play important role in provisioning of eco-hydrological services to human societies and wildlife, help people understand the values of rivers and appreciate rivers for the services rendered to human societies and environment, inform people about the existing policies and practices for addressing problems of rivers, emphasise the need of conserving, protecting and rejuvenating the dying and degraded rivers and promote the importance of river management policies at the national level and in states for integrating sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and resilience.

The speakers highlighted major issues about the present status of our rivers, policies and practices of managing rivers, the significance of rivers for the environment, society and culture and recommended a way forward for new outlook and management strategy for rivers derived from modern science, technology and

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from page 08 traditional knowledge combined with the need and principles of sustainable development for ecological and all-round human wellbeing.

The webinar also marked the commencement of an action research project on "Dying rivers of Assam: A study on degradation of selected rivers and riverine ecosystems in the Brahmaputra Valley for developing a community-based action plan for their rejuvenation". The project will be carried out by WATCH Division of Aaranyak with support and collaboration from SITA.



A WEBINAR CELEBRATING THE WORLD RIVERS DAY

STATE OF RIVERS IN ASSAM: CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT FOR ECOLOGICAL AND HUMAN WELL-BEING

SEP 27TH 2020 11^{AM} TO 12:30^{PM}

PANELISTS



DR. ANANTA HAZARIKA
Vice-Chancellor,
University of Science & Technology,
Majuli (ISTM)
Former VC, Gauhati University
Advisor, State Innovation and
Transformation AroG, Govt. of Assam



DR. A. K. BISTA
Former Secretary,
Water Resources, Govt. of Assam
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PROF. S. B. BHOWMIK
Department of Life Sciences,
Dibrugarh University



DR. SANJITA BORUAH
Associate Professor and HoD
Department of Zoology
D.H.S.K. College
Dibrugarh

THE OBJECTIVES OF HOLDING THE WEBINAR IS TO

1. MAKE PEOPLE AWARE ABOUT THE CURRENT PROBLEMS THAT HAVE LED TO DEGRADATION AND NEAR DEATH OF MANY SMALL RIVERS, RIVULETS AND STREAMS THAT PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE IN PROVISIONING OF ECOHYDROLOGICAL SERVICES TO HUMAN SOCIETIES AND WILDLIFE;
2. INFORM PEOPLE ABOUT THE EXISTING POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING PROBLEMS OF RIVERS; AND
3. HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE MYRIADS OF VALUES OF RIVERS AND APPRECIATE RIVERS FOR THEIR SERVICES RENDERED TO HUMAN SOCIETIES AND ENVIRONMENT
4. EMPHASISE THE NEED OF CONSERVING, PROTECTING AND REJUVENATING DYING AND DEGRADED RIVERS
5. PROMOTE THE IMPORTANCE OF RIVER MANAGEMENT POLICIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL AND IN STATES FOR INTEGRATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, DISASTER RISK REDUCTION, CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE.






ORGANISED BY:
Aaranyak

SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2020
TIME: 11AM TO 12:30 PM
(90 MINUTES)

STATE INNOVATION AND TRANSFORMATION AROG,
GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

World Rivers Day

MODERATOR



DR. BINETA JYOTI DAS
Head, Water, Climate and Hazard
Division, Aaranyak

THE LINK FOR GOOGLE FORM REGISTRATION:
<http://bit.ly/WRD-AARANYAK>

Poster design and logistics support:
Media Production & Communications Division, Aaranyak

AARANYAK TURNS 31

Aaranyak completes 31 years of its existence on 9th September 2020. With a humble beginning as nature club, over the years it has transformed into a premiere scientific research and conservation organization of the country. We observed the 31st Foundation Day, with a brief programme which was streamed live on Aaranyak's official Facebook page, because of the present restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The event commenced with flag hoisting by Mr. Ranjan Bhuyan, President, Aaranyak and Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, SG & CEO, both being the founder members. This was followed by a keynote speech by our President and the Secretary General respectively. The few staffs and members present during the event also did "Bonti Pryajalan" and shared their experience of being associated with the organization.



AARANYAK'S 31ST FOUNDATION DAY



Aaranyak

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Aaranyak invites articles and photo stories on biodiversity and environmental aspects for publication in its biannual newsletter BIOLINK. Please write to -
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PUBLISHED BY AARANYAK