

*Aaranyak*

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

# NATUROLE

## WHAT'S INSIDE

- AARANYAK CELEBRATED 66<sup>TH</sup> WILDLIFE WEEK
- WORKSHOP ORGANISED FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
- INCEPTION WORKSHOP FOR LIVELIHOOD PROJECT PROMOTION THROUGH LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION
- WORKSHOP ON LEMON GARDENING AND MARKETING
- SOLAR STREET LIGHT DISTRIBUTION
- WORKSHOP ON VERMICOMPOSTING AND ORGANIC FARMING IN ORANG NATIONAL PARK
- CREATING FUTURE NATURALISTS
- "SANSKAR: MANUHE MANUHOR BABE"

Cover Photo - Udayan Borthakur

## AARANYAK CELEBRATED 66<sup>TH</sup> WILDLIFE WEEK

The "Wildlife Week" is celebrated annually from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> October with an aim to protect the wild flora and fauna and create awareness on the importance of wildlife conservation. This year marked the 66<sup>th</sup> wildlife week celebration. Aaranyak organised various events in collaboration with other agencies on this occasion.

Aaranyak collaborated with the Kaziranga National Park Authority, WWF-India, WTI, TCF and Bhumi to jointly celebrate the week at Burhapahar Range Office complex on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2020. A meeting was held with the members of Eco Development Committee, members of Village Defense Party, fringe villagers



Cont. on page 02



# Update on Activities

from page 01

and selected students. An art competition among the students was also held and used as a medium to create awareness. Later, the prizes were distributed during the ceremony.

On 7<sup>th</sup> October, another event was organised by Aaranyak in collaboration with Pobitora Eco-tourism Development Society (PETDS), Hatimuria Village Development Committee, Hatimuria Arunodoy Yuva Bikash Samiti, ENVIS-Hub Assam, ASTEC and Earthwatch Institute India on "Eco-tourism and Ganges dolphin conservation" at Hatimuria village, near Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary. The day-long programme started with an exhibition of Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials on Ganges dolphins, followed by an interaction on the role of communities and eco-tourism on dolphin conservation. In the afternoon, a dolphin watch programme was conducted at the Pokoria Beel which is connected with the river Brahmaputra.

Aaranyak and the Earthwatch Institute India jointly conducted a series of quiz competitions targeting several species such as the Asian elephants, tigers, pygmy hog, golden langur, hoolock gibbon, and Ganges dolphin among the school students throughout the week. Besides, on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 a webinar on tigers, titled, "General talk on tigers" was organised collaboratively with Earthwatch Institute India and Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, Golaghat, Assam. Dr. M. Firoz Ahmed, senior scientist and Head, Tiger Research and Conservation Division (TRCD), Aaranyak was the keynote speaker. The session was moderated by Dr. Dipankar Lahkar, Manager, TRCD. Other programmes included an essay and video speech competition targeted for school students and other citizens. The aim of this competition was to understand the superstitions that our society have towards wildlife and environment.

## ENCOURAGING CRACKER-FREE DIWALI

The fire crackers burnt during Diwali causes disturbances among the birds as well as other animals. It is high time to avoid this tradition for safeguarding our environment. This year Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, who leads the Greater Adjutant Stork conservation programme at Aaranyak urged the villagers where these storks breed to observe a cracker-free Diwali, through a campaign. This initiative was further strengthened by the participation of Mr. Partha Sarathi Mahanta, IPS, who encouraged the villagers to observe a "Green Diwali".



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2020

The on-going COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines, issued by Government of India and Government of Assam to prevent further spread of COVID-19, has made us hold the Annual General Meeting (AGM), 2020 of Aaranyak using a digital platform. This was the first time in Aaranyak's history that we held the meeting virtually on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2020. The AGM began with an address from our President, Mr. Ranjan Bhuyan. This was followed by speech from our Secretary General, Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar. We also saw an active participation from our members, airing their views, concerns and

ideas. Approximately 100 of our members across the state joined the AGM and it was an encouraging session. The AGM ended with a Vote of Thanks from the Organising Secretary, Dr. Partha Jyoti Das.



## PANEL DISCUSSION ON WILDLIFE CRIME

PANEL DISCUSSION

# Collection vs crime: Challenges in conservation!!

Panelists



**MR. RISHI MEHTA**  
Regional Director,  
Wildlife Crime Control Bureau,  
Eastern Region,  
Coast of India



**DR. BINAYA KUMAR SILLIKHAN**  
Secretary, Government and CEO,  
Chen, ICCT/ISAC, Asian Rhinos  
Specialist Group



**DR. BINAYA PRASAD**  
Secretary &  
Coordinator of Endangered  
Taxonomic Group,  
Wildlife Institute of India

Moderator



**DR. SHWETA BHAT**  
Senior Manager,  
Legal and Advocacy Division,  
Ministry

**DATE**  
Wednesday,  
October 21, 2020

**TIME**  
1600 hrs

**PLATFORM**  
Zoom

ORGANIZED BY:



Meeting ID: 810 9999 4395  
Passcode: 151688



Zoom Link - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81099994395?pwd=QjRlbnRlZGZkdz09>



Aaranyak in collaboration with Assam Forest Department and Earthwatch Institute India organized a webinar, titled “Let's talk about our iconic India's wildlife with the green heroes-Tiger and Rhino” on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 for the frontline forest staffs of Manas Tiger Reserve. Shri Amal Chandra Sarma, IFS, Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve, started the session with his inaugural talk. Dr. Bibhab Talukdar, Secretary-General and CEO, Aaranyak, and Dr. M. Firoz Ahmed, Head, Tiger Research and Conservation Division (TRCD), Aaranyak were invited as a resource person and interacted with the participants. Dr. Dipankar Lahkar, Manager, TRCD, Aaranyak, moderated the session. Forest staff from all three ranges of Manas National Park and a few students, research scholars, lecturers across India participated in the webinar. Aaranyak's members and volunteers from the western Assam also participated in the webinar.



The event started with bird watching at the Jeypore Reserve forest area in eastern Assam. The programme was graced by Mr. Mridupawan Phukan and Mr. Debojit Sonowal as resource persons. Ms. Sikha Baruah along with Dip Sonowal led the programme.



## INCEPTION WORKSHOP FOR LIVELIHOOD PROJECT PROMOTION THROUGH LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

An inception workshop was conducted by Aaranyak and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at Maibra Camp, a campsite of Dhansiri JFMC on 27<sup>th</sup> October, 2020. Both the agencies are jointly implementing a livelihood project through landscape conservation for six months in Dhansiri-Sikaridanga JFMC man-made forest and 13 forest fringe villages in Bhairabkunda and Sikaridanga locality in Udalguri district.

The event was graced by the presence of Shri Rihon Daimari Hon'ble Minister, PHE, Public Enterprise, Govt of Assam as Chief Guest, Shri Prakash Ranjan Gharphalia, Deputy Commissioner, Udalguri District, Mr. John Borgoyary, Northeast Regional Head, UNDP, Shri Naba Kumar Bordoloi, DFO, Dhansiri Forest Division, Shri Rohiteswa, Commandant SSB 23 Bn Lalpool, Shri Dipak Medhi, SDO Agriculture, Udalguri District, Dr. Sangeeta Boro, Block Veterinary Officer, Shri Jayanta Kumar Das, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Udalguri and several other officials from Government Departments and NGOs.



## WORKSHOP ON LEMON GARDENING AND MARKETING

It is seen that many people have been financially benefited through lemon cultivation. So, to increase the benefit of the cultivators from the fringe villages of Kaziranga National Park (KNP), the Rhino Research and Conservation Division (RRCD), Aaranyak and Kaziranga National Park Authority jointly organised a day-long training programme on Lemon Gardening and Marketing on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2020 at Kaliabor Nursery. The training was supported by International Rhino Foundation (IRF). Eight farmers were trained on lemon gardening practices, tips and care, the precautions and pest & disease control method and seedling promotion techniques by Mr. Ranjit Bora, the owner of Kaliabor Nursery and a well-known farmer. The upcoming step of this training is setting up the planned lemon garden in Burhapahar. This training paved the way for alternative livelihood in fringe villages of KNP. The programme was attended by Shri Swapan Nath, senior journalist, Kaziranga and Arif Hussain, Manager, RRCD.



## SOLAR STREET LIGHT DISTRIBUTION

Aaranyak distributed street solar lights in Sonitpur East Division and Biswanath Wildlife Divisions, areas adjacent to the Kaziranga National Park, to increase the visibility at night, which are often frequented by wild animals. The solar lights were installed in the fringe areas of Bihali Reserve Forest and Borgang of Sonitpur and Gahigaon, Biswanath Ghat, Kusumtola, Panpur and Gupaljaroni of Biswanath Wildlife Division. A total of 10 such solar lights were distributed for both the divisions. Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, RRCD Aaranyak handed over the solar lights to Mr. Suhas Kadam, DFO, Sonitpur East Division and Mr. Mukut Das, DFO Biswanath Wildlife Division in presence of Mr. Biswajit Das, ACF, Sonitpur East Division on 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2020. Both the officers expressed their

gratitude and mentioned that they look forward to more such initiatives and support in future.





## HOMESTEAD VEGETABLE FARMING AND AWARENESS DRIVE AT BAKSA AND CHIRANG

Homestead farming is a small scale, supplementary food production system, by and large for the household members which can potentially help decrease the poverty and ensure food insecurity. Keeping this in view, Aaranyak organised a day long training programme and awareness drive on "Homestead vegetable farming and awareness" from 9 to 22 November, 2020 at nine different fringe villages in Chirang and Baksa districts supported by United Nations Development Programme India. The main purpose of this training was to strengthen the food basket of one's own production and sale of the surplus products ensuring food and nutritional security.

The villages include No 1 Chourang, No 2 Chourang, No 3 Chourang, No 4 Chourang of Chirang District and Bhuyanpara, Daodhara, Lebra Santipur and Jharbasti in Baksa District. A total of 230 farmers from these villages, which included 127 females and 103 males, participated in the training programme. The programme emphasized on low-cost vermicompost preparation, raise-bed preparation method, importance of kitchen garden, and vegetable gardening using minimum water.

The training drive was led by Aaranyak's Bipul Das, Deputy Manager, Conservation and Livelihood Division (CLD)

and Swapan Kr Das, Assistant Manager, CLD. Mr Dipak Boro, Deputy Commissioner, Baksa, and an award winner progressive farmer from Kokilabari were the resource persons of the training programme. Along with him, Mr Kunja Brahma and Udang Basumatary from Panbari Area, Sangsar Basumatary and Jogasar Basumatary from Kokilabari, Diganta Das, Binoy Boro, Raju Boro from Lebra Santipur and Jharbasti had extended their helping hand.



## WORKSHOP ON VERMICOMPOSTING AND ORGANIC FARMING IN ORANG NATIONAL PARK

On 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 Aaranyak in collaboration with Orang National Park Authority organised a day-long workshop on vermicomposting and organic farming for the farmers of the fringe villages of the Park at Conference Hall, Orang National Park. The programme was supported by the International Rhino Foundation.

As vermicompost is an eco-friendly product and impose no threats to the environment, the promotion of vermicomposting and organic farming in the fringe villages around Orang will be beneficial for both the villagers and the wildlife of the Park. In this workshop 20 selected farmers from Besimari and Nalbari eco-development committee were trained by expert Mr. Mohan Bora, National Award winner and famous farmer from Jorhat. Among these trainees, 10 were provided with vermicompost tanks.

Mr. Sandip Bandi, DFO, Orang National Park inaugurated the workshop with a motivational speech. Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, RRCD, Aaranyak talked about the importance of vermicomposting. Mr. Pranjal Kakoty, Range officer, Orang, Mr. Abdul Malek, President, Besimari EDC and Mr. Pranjit Deka, Forester I, Orang were also present in the programme.



*"A nation that destroys its soils destroys itself. Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving fresh strength to our people."*

**– Franklin D. Roosevelt**



## DAY LONG TRAINING PROGRAMME ON AGRICULTURE IN KARBI-ANGLONG

A day-long training programme on homestead agriculture and horticulture for smallholder farmers from four villages within the Kohora River Basin of Karbi-Anglong, Assam was organised on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The main purpose of the training programme is to reduce pressure on forests within the basin by promoting organic cultivation and sustainable agriculture through integrated approaches of scientific and traditional skills in agriculture. A total of 28 farmers and practitioners including 12 women and 16 men from three villages Hemai Lekthe, Chandrasing Rongpi and Phumen Ingti participated in the training programme. The training programme covered some of the basic but important aspects of agricultural activities viz. seed bed preparation, raised bed cultivation method, areca nut plantation along with homestead area planning, black pepper cultivation, betel leaf, vegetable farming.

Dr. Nasima Rehman, Scientist at Regional Agricultural Research Station, Assam Agriculture University,

Shillongani, Nagaon was the resource person. From Aaranyak, Dr. M. Firoz Ahmed and Dr. Jayanta Kumar Sarma, Dr. Ramie Begum, Assistant Professor, Assam University, Diphu Campus, and Mr. Chatrasing Bey, a retired school teacher of Kohora LP school were also present to motivate the participants to increase their zeal towards learning. Mr. Sarlongjon Teron and Dr. Jayanta Kumar Roy of Aaranyak coordinated and managed the training. Mr. Ratul Das, Mr. Rowel Ingti, Mrs. Najomi Teronpi and Mr. Longki Teron from Aaranyak lent a helping hand to organize the training successfully.



## AWARENESS MEETING ON HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT



The conflict between human and elephant is now a raging problem, often undermining the conservation efforts. To resolve the issue and usher coexistence, Aaranyak has undertaken multi-faceted approaches at various conflict hotspots across the state. On 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2020, a discussion programme with the Village Defense Parties (VDPs) of East Panidihing was organised to find ways to resolve human-elephant conflict (HEC). The event was attended by Chamarajan Women VDP and Charguwa VDP, which was moderated by Shri Niranjana Bhuyan, Community Coordinator, Elephant Research and Conservation Division (ERCD), Aaranyak. Shri Bijay Kalita assisted in organizing the event.

Another such event was organised on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2020, where Niranjana Bhuyan interacted with the members of VDPs of Dolpa, Balikur, Ajonti and Dhaibari of West Panidihing, Dimou on mitigation of HEC in the

area. The VDPs were supportive towards the approach and expressed their willingness to work cohesively to resolve HEC.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2020 an awareness meeting with the forest staff and anti-depredation squads (ADS) of Kheroni range was organised, which was presided by Kheroni Range officer, Shri Chandra Singh Tissa. During the awareness meet, 60 torch lights were handed over to the Kheroni Range officer to distribute among the ADS members and forest staff to mitigate HEC. Approximately 30 forest staffs, 70 representatives from 40 ADS, media personnel and villagers participated in the meeting. From ERCD, Shri Anjan Baruah and Shri Niranjana Bhuyan took the lead and Bijoy Kalita assisted in organizing the programme. The Range officer and the ADS members appreciated the gesture and remarked that the torch lights will be useful to keep the elephants at bay.





## CREATING FUTURE NATURALISTS

Aaranyak believes in training the young minds to inculcate the value of biodiversity conservation since its inception and has been relentlessly working towards it. As such, an initiative, "Journey to Manas" was conducted for students from the fringe areas of Manas National Park (MNP). A total of 27 students and four teachers were provided with an opportunity to visit this World Heritage Site on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Shri Chandrakanta Basumatary, Brand Ambassador of Forest and Environment Department, Assam, Dr. Ruby Das, delegate from LEA Associates South Asia Limited (LASA), Shri Sanjib Das, a local youth and tourist guide, Shri Kamal Muchahary, a school teacher and Jayanta Kumar Pathak of Aaranyak interacted with the participants on different environment related issues. This programme was supported by LASA.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2020 another orientation tour for 60 students and five teachers from the fringe areas of Manas was undertaken. Shri Kameswar Basumatary, Range Officer-in Charge, Bhuyanpara Range, MNP, Dr Ruby Das, delegate from LASA, Shri Rustam Basumatary, Nature Guide, Shri Abinash Boro, tourist guide, Ms. Binita Baruwati, Prasenjit Sheel, wildlife researchers from Aaranyak, Shri Kamal Muchahary, a school teacher and Jayanta Kumar Pathak of Aaranyak interacted with the participants on different environment-related issues.

Through this initiative the participants had learned that how staying nearby a high conservation value landscape benefits the local people through its various ecological services. Further, they were motivated for playing an active role in protection of MNP. The students were provided with an opportunity to interact with the forest personnel, local youths who have turned into reputed nature guides, wildlife researchers, educationalists as well as nature lovers. We are grateful to the Manas National Park Authority and Jeep Safari Association for their support.



## MULTI-PRONGED APPROACHES FOR CONSERVATION OF GREATER ADJUTANT STORKS



The Greater Adjutant Stork Conservation project team of Aaranyak, led by Dr. Purnima Devi Barman is working towards women empowerment to aid in the conservation of this threatened storks. In one such initiative, a training programme on "cutting and tailoring" for women of Pachariya village was organised. During the inauguration of the training programme, Mrs. Marami Deka of Pachariya village interacted with the participants, educating them on the importance of biodiversity conservation.

On another occasion a conservation campaign on these storks was organised by the team. As a token of appreciation, Dr Purnima Devi Barman felicitated the tree owners, on which the birds nests with Hargila-motif gamosa, stole and facemasks.

A prayer meet for successful hatching of the storks was conducted by the members of Hargila Army and villagers at Dadara village with traditional naam-kirtan. Ms. Pallabi Hazarika, an entrepreneur and owner of Prajapati Asomiya Gohona graced the occasion as a special guest.

To check the death of the chicks of the Greater Adjutant Storks from falling from trees the team had installed nets under the nesting trees.

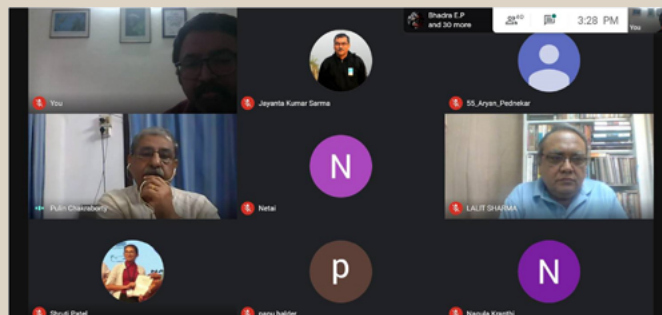




## ORIENTATION SESSION TO KICK-START THE SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAMME

The plans to conduct a summer school for students of the best performing projects under National Children Science Congress (NCSC) 2019, had to be shelved due to the restrictions put forward by Government of India for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, an online Orientation Session was organised to kickstart the Summer School Programme on “Application of Science and Technology for Biodiversity Conservation and Management” on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2020 via Google Meet. Senior dignitaries from the National Academic Committee for NCSC, namely Mr T.P. Raghunath Menon, Dr Pulin Behari Chakravarty, Dr Lalit and Dr Jayanta Kumar Sharma welcomed the guide teachers of the students along with the selected students

and introduced them to the Summer School Programme in the orientation session. Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar and Mr Jayanta Pathak from Aaranyak were present at the session.



## ORGANIC FARMING AWARENESS MEET IN BONGAIGAON DISTRICT

Compared with conventional agriculture, organic farming uses fewer pesticides, reduces soil erosion, decreases nitrate leaching into ground water and surface water, and recycles animal wastes back into the farm. Realizing the importance of organic farming the Western Assam zone of Aaranyak initiated a programme to train and build a network of organic farming among the cultivators. For this, three awareness meetings were conducted, one on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 and the other two on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020 respectively. During the first meeting, Mr. Chatrapati Das, a life member of Aaranyak interacted with the cultivators at Shankargola of Bongaigaon district. Dr. Hilloljyoti Singha, Professor & HoD, Zoology Department, Bodoland University and a life member of Aaranyak, Mr. Dharam Ranjan Roy, and Mr. Ankur Barman, members of Aaranyak were also present in the meeting.

On 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020, two meetings were held in Abhayapuri of Bongaigaon district where Mr. Purna Kalita and Mr. Prabir Choudhury, both from Abhayapuri extended their support to Aaranyak for organic farming.

The meetings were attended by Mr. Chatrapati Das, Dr. Ashoke Kr Das and Ankur Barman, members of Aaranyak, Mr. Bolaram Dutta, Secretary and Mr. Jayanta Das, member of a local NGO- Aie Seuj Samiti. Dr. Ashoke Das, who is an Assistant Professor, Abhyapuri College and coordinator of western Assam zone, Aaranyak took the lead in organising the programmes, where he mentioned about the purpose of this initiative.



## AARANYAK'S FIELD OFFICE AT GELEKI, KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK



We had setup a base camp at Geleki, near Kaziranga National Park, which was inaugurated on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2020 by Dr. Bibhab K. Talukdar, CEO & SG, Aaranyak in presence of other staff and members of Aaranyak. The basecamp will facilitate in smoothly conducting our activities in the landscape.



## AARANYAK GIFTS VEHICLES TO NAGAON AND GOLAGHAT POLICE

About 70-80% areas of the sprawling Kaziranga National Park (KNP) is spread over Golaghat and Nagaon districts of Assam. The Police forces in both the districts have been playing a proactive role in checking rhino poaching in and around the National Park. To boost their activities, and check crime against rhino and other wild animals of Kaziranga National Park, Aaranyak with support from Rhino Rescue Fund of Wildlife Conservation Network has gifted one 4WD vehicle each to Golaghat and Nagaon District Police.

A brief event was organised for the occasion to hand over the two 4WD Mahindra Bolero Camper vehicles by Aaranyak at Kohora Police Guest House in Kaziranga in presence of the Field Director, KNP, Shri P. Shivkumar, S.P., Golaghat Shri Pushpraj Singh and S.P., Nagaon Shri Gaurav Abhijit Dilip and other police officials. Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, CEO, Aaranyak formally handed over the two vehicles to Mr. Singh and Mr. Mrinmoy Das, SDPO, Kaliabor. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Singh had appreciated the gesture and thanked Aaranyak for the support. Mr. Abhijit Dilip too expressed his gratitude to Aaranyak for partnering with Rhino Rescue Fund of WCN to offer the vehicle to Nagaon District Police. The event was also attended by SDPO, Bokakhat and Shri Swapan Nath, a senior journalist from Kaziranga area. From Aaranyak, Dr. Firoz Ahmed, a senior scientist, Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, Rhino Research and Conservation Division, Aaranyak, Mr. Manas Bhattacharya, OSD, Conservation Livelihood Division, Aaranyak were present.

## MODERN LOOM TRAINING AT MAJRABARI, BAKSA DISTRICT

A training programme on modern loom for artisans was organised by Aaranyak with support from the PMKVY, MSME, Government of India at the community facility centre at Majrabari, Baksa District on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2020. The training was imparted to 30 selected artisans from the fringe areas of the Manas Tiger Reserve. Mr. Nandeswar Deka was the resource person. Dr. Bibhuti P. Lahkar, Head, Conservation Livelihood Division (CLD), Mr. Manas K Bhattacharjya, OSD, CLD and Mr. Swapan K Das, Assistant Manager, CLD, Aaranyak supervised the training. The nodal agency for the training was Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE). The artisans expressed that the training had enhanced their skills, which will be beneficial for their economic upliftment.



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."*

**- Margaret Mead**





## AARANYAK PROVIDES BICYCLES AT KAZIRANGA

Six bicycles were provided to the frontline forest staff at Bokakhat Range of Kaziranga National Park (KNP) on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2020 to carry out patrolling on river islands to safeguard rhinos that stray out during winter months. During the winters when the water in Brahmaputra recedes the rhinos from KNP stray out to the nearby islands and sometimes as far as to the Majuli river island. The eastern range of the KNP is dotted with several river isles which have contiguity with Majuli island across the mighty river.

The frontline staff faces a tough time every winter to bring back as well as keep track of those straying rhinos. The straying rhinos become vulnerable to poaching. The lack of infrastructure makes the patrolling job difficult. To overcome this difficulty and aid in patrolling Aaranyak provided bicycles to these forest staff. The KNP authority welcomed the move and mentioned that that this may give a new dimension to rhino protection in eastern range of the Park.

Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, CEO & SG, Aaranyak and Mr. P Shivkumar, Field Director, KNP handed over those

bicycles at a function held at Bhakte Chapori forest camp under Bokakhat Range. Mr. Ramesh Gogoi, Divisional Forest Officer, KNP, Mr. Uttam Saikia, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Golaghat, Mr. Pradip Kumar Barma and Mr. Khargaram Dekaroja, Deputy Conservators of Forest, Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, RRCD, Aaranyak, Mr. Ritupaban Borah, Assistant Conservator of Forest, Dr Indrani Borgohain, Ranger and frontline staffs from forest camps at Bhakte Chapori, Gabharu, Sisubari and Moriahola were also present in the programme.



## “SANSKAR: MANUHE MANUHOR BABE”

There are many myths and superstitions that exists in our society, which sometimes turn to be harmful for the environment and the wildlife. Keeping this in view, a public outreach programme titled, “Sanskar: Manuhe Manuhor Babe” was started by Aaranyak. The programme was focused on development of scientific temperament among students and community to eradicate superstitions/myths related to wildlife and environment from the society.

On 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, Aaranyak and Basanti High School in Nalbari district with support from the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council jointly organised a day-long programme at the school premise. During the meet a variety of issues such as snake bite management, superstitions and its impact on biodiversity conservation were discussed at length. A wall-magazine was created and a science exhibition was organised during the event. Dr. Suresh Bharali, Assistant Professor, Tihu College, Mr. Dilip Sarma, Retired teacher, Mr. Harihar Pathak, President, School Management Committee, Mr. Harekrishna Das, Head teacher, Basanti

High School graced the programme. From Aaranyak, Mr. Manas Kumar Bhattacharjya, Jayanta Kumar Pathak and Dhruvajyoti Kalita interacted with the participants to create awareness.

In the series, another sensitization programme was organized collaboratively by Aaranyak and Pobitora Eco-tourism Development Society (PETDS) with support from Assam Science Technology and Environment Council at the Pobitora Village Eco-camp, Morigoan District on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2020. Mr. Jayanta Kumar Pathak and Mr. Manas Kumar Battacharjya of Aaranyak, Champak Kalita and Deepmoni Medhi of PETDS interacted with the participants on various myths related to wildlife.





## WORKSHOP AT BIHALI RESERVE FOREST

Aaranyak and Sonitpur East Division jointly organized a workshop on “Identification of Birds, Mammals and Reptiles” for forest staff and JFMC members of Sonitpur East Division at Rangagora, Bihali Reserve Forest on 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2020. The programme was inaugurated by Mr. Suhas Kadam, DFO, Sonitpur East Division. The main aim of the programme was to create awareness and capacity building of the people for aiding conservation. The programme included various topics such as bird watching, and identification of reptiles and mammals.

Dr. Rajeev Basumatary, Assistant Professor, DR College, Golaghat, Mr. Abidur Rahman, a birder and Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, Rhino Research and Conservation Division (RRCD), Aaranyak interacted with the participants. A bird watching session at the Bihali Reserve Forest was conducted. Ms. Monica Kishore Paspuleti, ACF, Sonitpur East Division, Ms. Filfila Basumatary, Range Officer, Borgang Range and Mr. Himadri Bhuyan were present in the programme.



## COMMERCIAL PIGGERY TRAINING BY AARANYAK

Aaranyak in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and SBI-RSETI, Udalguri organised a three-day commercial piggery training at No.1 Sikaridanga, fringe village of Dhansiri-Sikaridanga JFMC manmade forest in Bhairabkunda, Udalguri District to augment the livelihood opportunities of the villagers. The training programme was held from 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2020, which was supported by UNDP India. Mr. Agwna Hazowary, commercial pig farm owner and Dr. Sangeeta Baro, Block Veterinary Officer were the resource persons for the training.



## TRAINING FOR “BIZ-SAKHIS”



Aaranyak organised a three day-long residential training for “Biz-Sakhis” at the Aaranyak Common Facility Centre at Majrabari village, Baksa District from 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2020 supported by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India.

“Biz-Sakhis” are rural women business owners who have undergone extensive entrepreneurship development trainings, equipped to mentor and guide women from their communities on starting and/or scaling up their business. The modules for Biz-Sakhis were customized as per the UNDP mandate by Ms. Gita Rani Bhattacharjya, Mr. Jayanta Kr Sarma, and Ms. Rabia Daimari.

A total of 29 women from the villages of Lebra Santipur, Jharbasti, Daodhara, Kokilabari, Bhuyanpara, and Mazrabari of Baksa district and No 1 Chourang, No 2 Chourang, No 3 Chourang and No 4 Chourang villages of Chirang district participated in the training. The training included perspectives of women-society and gender, financial literacy and women entrepreneurship along with the psycho-social aspect of mentorship and business support mentorship.

The training programme was facilitated by Ms. Gita Rani Bhattacharjya, Consultant of Gender and Development, Biz-Sakhi master trainer Ms. Rabia Daimari, Livelihood consultant Mr. Jayanta Kr Sarma, and Mr. Kunja Brahma. Ms Supriya Khound, UNDP India Project Officer, Mr. Puberun Dekaphukan, Technical Expert, UNDP and Ms. Devangana Aideu, consultant was present in the training. Dr Bibhuti P. Lahkar, Head, Conservation Livelihood Division, Aaranyak technically supervised the programme. Mr. Bipul Das, Deputy Manager, CLD, Mr. Swapn Kr Das, Assistant Manager, CLD and Bijoy Basumatary, Livelihood assistant CLD, Aaranyak played an active role in organising the training.



## RHINO GOES TO SCHOOL

Keeping the continuity, in the last three months Aaranyak organised three outreach programme on rhinos under its “Rhino Goes to School” initiative in three different schools with the support from David Shephard Wildlife Foundation. The main aim of this programme is to create awareness among the students. From this programme students will get more information about the current status and conservation threats of our state animal, One-horned rhinos. Each of the programme included audio-visual presentations, open interaction about rhino ecology and conservation and an open quiz competition for the students.

On 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Aaranyak and Biswanath Wildlife Division jointly organized “Rhino Goes to School” in Gomeri High School, Gomeri. A total of 50 students participated in the programme which was inaugurated by Mr. Pranjal Gogoi, Range Officer, Gomeri Range. Mr. Pranjal Gogoi, Mr. Babuli Hazarika, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Biswanath, Mr. Hodananda Sarma, Head Master, Gomeri High School, Mr. Bhaskar Mahanta and Mr. Krishna Upaidhai, teachers, Gomeri High School, Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, Rhino Research and Conservation Division (RRCD), were also present in the programme.

The second outreach programme under this initiative was conducted on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at the West Mayong High School, Pobitora. Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, RRCD, Aaranyak, Mr. Ashok Dey, Executive Member, Aaranyak, Mr. Swapan Nath, Sr. Journalist and Mr. Pranab Goswami, organizing officer, Aaranyak were present in the programme as resource persons.

The third one was organised by Aaranyak at the Tikirai Chapori on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2020. Mr. Arif Hussain, Manager, RRCD, Aaranyak, Mr. Swapan Nath, Sr. Journalist, Kaziranga were present in the programme as resource persons. A total of 45 participants participated in the programme. Mr. Jiban Doley, Teacher, Mr. Rameswar Das, Mr. Tikheswar Doley and Mr. Babu Kanta Daw, social workers, Mr. Ivan Loying, Ms. Sayanika Phukan, Ms. Samim Sultana and Mr. Khired Saikia, members of Aaranyak were also present.



## MUSHROOM CULTIVATION TRAINING



After the Covid 19 pandemic, like many people in India, migrant workers who returned to their villages around Manas National Park suffered from loss of income sources. To facilitate them and build their capacity on alternative livelihood options, Aaranyak and Department of Bio- Technology, Bodoland University in association with Technology Incubation Centre (TIC), Kokrajhar jointly organized a series of Mushroom cultivation training. The training was organised across three districts at four different venues from 26<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2020. A total of 166 participants from Panbari area of Chirang District, Daodhara village, Jharbasti village, Lebra Santipur village of Baksa District and Sikaridanga area of Udalguri District participated in the training programme.

Dr. Sandeep Das, Professor, Department of Bio-technology and Head, Technology Incubation Centre, Bodoland University showed various aspects of mushroom cultivation, which included sowing of mushroom to its processing. Further, the nutritional and medicinal value of mushroom was well explained by Dr. Das. Dr. Das and his team trained the participants on how to cultivate mushroom, basically oyster mushroom and how it helps in lifting up of economy in rural areas. Leaflets of “Training on cultivation of Mushroom” were distributed in two different vernacular languages viz. Bodo and Assamese which was conceptualized by Dr Sandeep Das. The training was supported by Dr. Das’ project associates Mr. Shiv Boro and Mr. Harish Ch Upadhyay from Bodoland University. From Aaranyak, Dr Bibhuti P. Lahkar technically as well as logistically supported the training and was assisted by Mr. Bipul Das, Mr Swapan Kr Das, Mr. Kunja Brahma and Mr. Udang Basumatary in Chirang District; Mr. Diganta Das and Mr. Jibon Chetry in Baksa District and Ms. Rabia Daimary and Mr. Akash Daimary in Udalguri District. The training was supported by UNDP India.



## AARANYAK PROVIDED 21 HOARDINGS TO RAISE AWARENESS



To raise awareness among picnickers and tourists, Aaranyak in association with the District Administration,

Udalguri District, and Forest Department provided 21 hoardings with an iron frame to the Bhairabkunda Ecotourism Conservation Society. This activity was supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Aaranyak developed all the IEC materials keeping in mind the different aspects of social and behavioural change communication of picnickers, tourists, local people with an aim to protect the ecosystem and ecological services received by the local community.

## CONCERN ABOUT RESORTS AT THE NIMATI-KOKILAMUKH AREA IN JORHAT DISTRICT

The wetland and grassland of Nimati-Kokilamukh area are prime habitat of some globally threatened bird species, such as the Swamp Francolin, Common Pochard, Marsh Babbler, Yellow-breasted Bunting among others, besides being breeding and wintering home for more than 200 species of birds. Of late, some resorts came-up in the area which is uncondusive for the presence of these globally threatened species and their habitat.

Mr. Udayan Borthakur, a senior scientist and an executive member of Aaranyak appealed for an immediate review of the situation to Deputy Commissioner, Jorhat District through a letter. The district administration promptly responded to the matter, and halted many activities of the resort immediately. Aaranyak also expressed its deep concern over the issue through print and social media.

It is worth mentioning that the Nimati-Kokilamukh area falls within Janjimukh-Kokilamukh Important Bird Area (IBA), recognized by Birdlife International and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) as part of a worldwide assessment and home to as many as 26 Globally Threatened species of birds. It is a matter of major concern that these resorts are permitted to be developed at such crucial bird habitat and also being allowed to operate day and night, with loud music and assemblage of crowd at an unsustainable scale.





#### **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**

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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)**.

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