

NATUROLE

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Cover Photo - Avijan Saha

Community Participation to Conserve Greater Adjutant Stork

The Greater Adjutant Conservation Project (GACP) team took multiple initiatives to safeguard the species. 'Rewilding Kids Programme'- an ongoing series of environmental education workshops for school children, saw an expansion on January 2 at Dadara of Kamrup district. It is an initiative that teaches the next generation about various wildlife species, biodiversity, rewilding, ecology, and the web of life through art and several other interactive tools. In another outreach initiative, the GACP team joined hands with Aaranyak's-EECBD and other team members to conduct a programme titled "Nature Conservation with Special Reference to Greater/ Lesser Adjutant Stork" at



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Update on Activities

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IIIT-Guwahati in connection with the 50th session of IIIT-G perspective on March 6. A total of 28 selected students from the IIIT-G's Eco and Outreach Club participated in the same. A brainstorming session alongwith hands-on activities were carried out. Moreover, during the camp a cleanliness drive was carried out which included collection of single use plastic at the institute's hostel premises and Faculty quarters, a plantation programme, and nature observation through campus walk.

On January 10, two Greater Adjutant chicks were rescued from Dadara by our GACP team with the support of community members and handed them over to Assam Forest Department for rehabilitation 10th.

The GACP team with an aim to encourage and appreciate the support of local communities in safeguarding the nesting colonies of the Vulnerable lesser adjutant storks organized an event titled- "Bortokola Mitra Felicitation Programme" on March 7 at Thakurpara village, Chhaygaon, Kamrup in collaboration with Assam Forest Department, Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) and a local youth-group named "Dhodang"- which translates to Lesser Adjutant Storks.

To ensure wellbeing of local communities, the GACP team alongwith the members of Hargila Army partnered with Indian Medical Association, Guwahati Branch and conducted a much-needed free health check-up initiative at Dadara Durga Mandir, Kamrup on March 13. A team of doctors from IMA along with officials from Sun Pharma, offered health checkup services to 110 persons covering almost 99 percent of women community members of the Hargila army. Besides, a programme was launched targeting women empowerment and child development at Dadara of Kamrup district on March 27.

It is to be noted that Assam is an important breeding ground for the Endangered Greater Adjutant Storks and is a stronghold of the species. The GACP has been working closely with the local communities to safeguard the species, its habitat and human wellbeing.



Complementing conservation efforts by providing field gear



Aaranyak has been working closely with the Government line departments and extending support to maximise their effort in conservation of the region's rich wildlife resources and habitats.

On January 4 we provided essential field gears such as raincoats, chargelights, shoes and sweaters to 26 frontline staff of the Majuli Forest Division with generous support from Kirloskar Ebara Pumps Limited (KEPL), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF). On February 7 with the support of DSWF we provided fieldgears at Bokakhat Thana campus in collaboration with Kaziranga National Park Authority and Golaghat Police.

The Village Defense Parties (VDP)- a unit at village-level, which assists Assam's Police department in maintaining security and law & order at their respective villages, also aid in conservation through their activities. Around 160 VDP members around Kaziranga were supported with basic fieldgears such as sweaters and charge lights in order to encourage them and keep up their good work on ground.

Journey for Learning- Aaranyak's landmark initiative with the students of IIFM, Bhopal



The fun and adventure of experiential learning for the students of the Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal began on January 5 in the Karbi villages of Kohora, Karbi Anglong, Assam. Aaranyak through its "Journey For Learning" programme has been supporting the indigenous Karbi people near the Kaziranga World Heritage site through well-conceived and unique ecotourism models for nature conservation. A series of activities were carried out for the 18 day field trip for 25 students of the institute. The programme started with a Chingrum Amei, meaning 'get together' as in Karbi to introduce each other through a meditative exercise to experience a deep connection with nature. Other activities such as- the village walk, forest walk, exercise on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), nature observation, study on river, green audit, Ingnum Kengkum trekking, Jhum site study and applications of GPS (Global Positioning System) were introduced to them.



Facilitating Human Elephant Coexistence

Assam is one of the hotspots of human-elephant confrontation, which is mostly negative in the form of crop damage, loss of human lives and properties and retaliatory killings of the elephants. In order to reduce this and enable human-elephant coexistence, Aaranyak has been working closely with the local communities and line departments.

The team from Elephant Research and Conservation Division (ERCD) supported the Nagaon Forest Division with 10 torchlights to help ward off wild elephants from human habitation and crop fields. To secure the lives and livelihoods of local communities, Aaranyak and WWF-India jointly provided solar powered fence of around 7.5 km length at Segunbari part 1 & 2, Nonaipara and Arongajuli area in Udalguri District. It is worth mentioning that the solar fences are installed in villages with a concept of "by the people, for the people", wherein the local communities participate in the process right from decision making to installing and subsequently maintaining the fence. Another community based solar fence of 3.5 km length was installed at Nichinta village, Goalpara district. This non-lethal fence has been effective in protecting crops, and human properties and hence reducing conflict. The fences are installed in such a manner which do not obstruct the elephant movement path.

Besides, we conducted outreach programmes to generate awareness among the local communities in human-elephant conflict (HEC) affected areas. High-power rechargeable spotlights were provided to the members of VDPs at Tipujan and Bijuli villages of Karbi Hills as HEC mitigation tools.



Sensitization Workshops on Wildlife Crime Prevention

This quarter, we organised a number of events to combat wildlife crime in the region. A day-long sensitisation programme on prevention of wildlife crime and role of Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members was organized in collaboration with WCCB-Govt of India, RSBED and Raimona Forest Department on January 7 at North Gongia, Kokrajhar, BTR. The programme was held as part of the continuous endeavour of the Legal and Advocacy Division (LAD) of Aaranyak to raise awareness on wildlife crime that negatively impact the wildlife resource.

We collaborated with Charaideo District Police and organised a sensitization workshop packed with substantial presentations on crimes against wildlife and illegal trade on wildlife parts at the conference hall of Sonari Police Station on February 18. The event was supported by DSWF. The following day our team and the Mass Communication Department of Sibsagar Commerce College joined hands and organised another sensitization programme at the college premises for the students and the media fraternity of the district. The event was graced by the Advocate General of Assam, Mr. Debojit Saikia.

On another occasion we collaborated with WCCB, Kaziranga National Park Authority, Nagaon Police and VDP to organize an awareness meeting on wildlife crime mitigation on February 28 at Kanyak Ashram Junior College, Silghat. The main aim of the programme was to sensitize all the VDP members of the area along with the other participants on wildlife crime mitigation.

Our LAD team collaboratively with WCCB organised a sensitization workshop on 'Wildlife crime and the role of media in mitigating the menace' for the students of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Tezpur University on March 11. The workshop highlighted the global scenario of burgeoning wildlife crime with a focus on Northeast India, the wildlife crimes and prevalent law provisions to deal with it as well as the role of mass media to prevent such crimes.



Aaranyak's presence during initiation of College of Agroforestry & Biodiversity and Bengal Florican Conservation, Research & Ecotourism Site at BTR



Our senior scientist- Dr. Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, who is also the organistaion's Administrator for Manas Landscape, as a representative of conservation partners in Manas Landscape spoke at the foundation stone laying ceremony of the College of Agroforestry & Biodiversity and Bengal Florican Conservation, Research & Ecotourism Site at Naba Dihira, Baksa district, BTR on January 13. Honourable Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma held a meeting with Forest Department officials of BTR and all the conservation organisations working in the lansdscape during the event.

Vehicles for conservation

At Kachugaon Forest Division, Gossaigaon, we had provided four motorcycles for each range of the newly notified Raimona National Park in Assam on January 19 to aid in their conservation activities. In appreciation of Aaranyak's gesture, Mr. Bhanu Singha, DFO of Kachugaon thanked us and mentioned that infrastructure development in the park is crucial for ensuring long-term conservation. This event was successful with the gracious support by Kirloskar Ebara Pumps Limited (KEPL).

On March 24, Aaranyak and International Rhino Foundation (IRF) handed over one brand new 4 WD Mahindra Bolero Vehicle to the office of the Additional Superintendent of Police (STF), Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve to boost the efforts of the department

to check rhino poaching and other wildlife crimes in and around the national park. The meeting was attended Jatindra Sarma, Field Director, KTR. He appreciated the teamwork of different government agencies and civil society organisations that is in practice to ensure longterm conservation. Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, who heads Aaranyak and also serves as the senior advisor for Asian rhinos at IRF, reiterated Aaranyak's commitment to complement the efforts of police and forest officials to check wildlife crime and illegal trade in wildlife which is the fourth largest illegal trade in the world.



Educating farmers about FPO

In order to spread awareness among farmers regarding promotion of the Farmers Producers Organisation (FPO), the National Bank For Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) and Aaranyak jointly organised a daylong event on January 17 at Jharbari village of Kokrajhar District. The awareness programme was organised under the leadership of Sri Bhuvan Muchahary, President of Unified Forest Conservation Network, in which 49 farmers from five villages attended the programme.



Crucial webinar on Youth engagement in water governance in Assam

A series of webinars on youth engagement in water governance in Assam was initiated by Aaranyak's WATCH division in collaboration with the India Water Partnership (IWP) and the Global Shapers Guwahati Hub. This has been designed for the youths of the age group between 18-30 years to make them familiar and involved in action with various water related issues and basic concepts of water governance with special reference to the SDGs while engaging them in exploration of local issues and responding with feedback about their findings, observations with suggestions and problem redressal strategies. The sixth webinar, titled "Water Governance and Policy: Issues and Challenges for Assam" of the series was conducted on January 20.

Observation of World Wetlands Day 2022

Our team celebrated the World Wetlands Day 2022, on February 2, by organizing multiple events across the state. At Panidihing Bird Sanctuary in Sivasagar District an art competition and poem recitation programme was organised in collaboration with Panidihing Surakha Samiti. The event aimed to generate awareness among the younger generation on the importance of wetlands for biodiversity conservation and the impact that they have on people's livelihoods.

At Guru Teg Bahadur Academy, Tinsukia an exhibition on 'Wetland Services' was held by Aaranyak's Eastern Assam Zone in association with Green Life Ecoclub of GTBA, Tinsukia for the students, teachers and other nature enthusiasts. Leaflets highlighting the importance of wetlands and the need to conserve them were distributed among the attendees.

Furthermore, a webinar on “Wetlands Action for People and Nature” was organized by partnering with National Green Cops, Tinsukia district, Green Life Eco-club of GTBA, Tinsukia, Go-Green Eco-club, Makum College, Makum, Aaryabhatta Science Center, Hapjan Block and Science for Social Welfare, Assam. About 40 participants including students and teachers from different schools and colleges of Tinsukia district along with other nature lovers attended the webinar. In another event, we hosted an essay competition for young students with an aim to generate awareness.



Aaranyak's presence during waterbird census in Assam and Meghalaya



On February 6, Aaranyak in collaboration with Assam Forest Department (Guwahati Wildlife Division) conducted the third "Annual Waterbird Census 2022" at Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam. The main objective of the census was to count waterbird species in order to generate data on birds and monitoring these species for long term conservation. With active participation from Forest Department staff, members and colleagues of Aaranyak and other volunteers, a total of 56 bird species, comprising around 8, 200 individuals of both migratory and residential birds were recorded.

Aaranyak participated during the waterfowl census on February 19 organised by the Meghalaya Biodiversity Board at Lum Nehru Park, Umiyam Lake, Ri-Bhoi District. Dr. Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, Udayan Borthakur, Dr. Pranjal Das and Dr. Leons Mathew Abraham of Aaranyak took part in the census.

Hoolock Gibbon Conservation Training - Nagaland's first of its kind

The Hoolock Gibbon- an Endangered primate known to occur in Northeast India is primarily threatened by habitat fragmentation and hunting. To strengthen the conservation actions of this species, we have collaborated with the Nagaland Forest Department, Assam Forest Department and State Forestry & Environment Training Institute (SEFTI) to conduct the first of its kind Hoolock Gibbon conservation training programme for Nagaland Forest Department's frontline staff. So far we have trained 63 frontline staff in two batches respectively from February 7–12, and February 21–26. During the training programme, a wide range of subjects ranging from concepts on biodiversity of NE-India and its conservation, primate conservation with special reference to Hoolock gibbons, ecological techniques for population estimation, habitat use, vegetation sampling, habitat restoration, gibbon rescue and rehabilitation, use of tools such as global positioning system (GPS) and legal orientation (Wildlife Laws and its application) were introduced to them. A field study tour was conducted at the Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam. The training programme are supported by US Fish & Wildlife Service.



"Nature and Culture" - an environmental education event

An environmental education event was conducted by Jayanta Kumar Pathak, an environmental educator of Aaranyak on "Nature and Culture" at Faculty Higher Secondary School, Guwahati. During the event interactive sessions were conducted which highlighted different aspects on how culture and nature are intertwined and how culture is simply a way of life integrating nature.



Educating the next generation on rhinos – "Rhino Goes to School (RGTS)"

One of the flagship outreach initiatives of Aaranyak to promote rhino conservation by educating students and creating a conservation-sensitive generation, "Rhino goes to School (RGTS)" was organized across the rhino-bearing areas in Assam.

The first event was organised at Bortol LP School, Bonkual, Golaghat on February 21 which included audio-

visual presentation on rhino, open interaction and an art competition. The ten best paintings were awarded. A total of 70 students participated in the programme.

On February 24, adding another outreach event in its series, RGTS was organised at the Nikori Bortol LP School and Bonkual Senior Basic School in collaboration with Bonkual Chitrakala Vidyalaya. An art competition was held which attracted 220 students. Following this, a prize distribution ceremony was organised on February 27 at Bonkual Chitrakala Vidyalaya and 20 winners were awarded.

Again on March 5, we carried out the event at Bohikhuwa Ganakati LP School, Bokakhat, in collaboration with No. 2 Bohikuwa Ganakati VDP. The programme too included audio-visual presentations on rhino ecology and conservation needs, open interaction and quiz competition among the students. A total of 120 participants joined in the initiative, and 15 students were selected and awarded for the competition.



Multiple Initiatives to supplement livelihood of local communities



In February, the Conservation and Livelihood Division (CLD) of Aaranyak hosted different events to supplement the livelihood of fringe villagers. Two workshops were conducted in Baksa district to build capacity of local weavers on Jacquard looms. Jacquard refers to a new modern weaving technique used to produce fabric. From 21-25 February, around 25 local women took part in the workshop conducted at Majrabari, while 28 weavers

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participated in the workshop held at Kokilabari from 25-28 February.

Another workshop on organic farming was organized at Thobgang Jungle Camp, Maozigendri, Baksa on 27 and 28 February for the local farmers. During the workshop the farmers were encouraged for mixed/intercropping, crop rotation system, and the use of organic manure to maintain soil fertility. The capacity building workshops were supported by Wildlife Conservation Society, US Fish and Wildlife Service and IBIS Rice.

Outreach Initiative for Bengal Florican Conservation

The Bengal Florican (*Houbaropsis bengalensis*) - a Critically Endangered species, with a global population of fewer than 1000 individuals use the Kokilabari seed farm of Baksa district as a potential breeding ground, with presence of more than 11 floricans' territory. To generate awareness to help protect the species, an outreach programme was conducted for farmers and artisans living in the vicinity of the farm.



Vital initiative of GDRCD

The state of Assam is a stronghold of the Ganges dolphins - which is the national aquatic animal of India. Aaranyak has been on the forefront of working towards dolphin conservation in Assam. To build capacity a crucial training on population estimation techniques of this dolphins was conducted at Dibru Saikhowa, Assam on February 28, by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India, in collaboration with Wildlife Institute of India, Assam Forest Department and Aaranyak.



World Wildlife Day Observed



On the occasion of World Wildlife Day which is observed on March 3 annually, several events were organised. The EECBD and LAD of Aaranyak, jointly with WCCB, Guwahati Wildlife Division, Pobitora Eco-Tourism Development Society, Mayang Anchalik College and its alumni association conducted a sensitization programme on "Prevention of wildlife crime and duties of citizens" at Mayang Anchalik College. The attendees of the events comprised of students, faculty members, community leaders, villagers and media personnel.

The Central Assam Zone of Aaranyak observed the day with Prajanma at Kamargaon Regional Journalist Association office. Swapan Nath, a journalist from Kaziranga addressed on the subject related to wildlife conservation and responsibilities we have towards it as a society. While, OC of Kamargaon Police Station talked on the importance of wildlife protection.

Yet another Aaranyak's team, led by acclaimed conservationist Dr Purnima Devi Barman, held various events promoting common women and girl child contributing to wildlife conservation in and around Hajo, Singimari, and adjacent areas in Kamrup district of Assam.

We celebrated the day in Karbi Anglong by collaborating with the village school at Hemai Lekthe, Kohora, with the theme- "Recovering key species for ecosystem restoration". An art competition was also organised for the school students which were divided into two groups- Group 1 (Class K.G - 3) and Group 2 (Class 4-7). A total of 35 students participated in the competition from four villages- Phumen Engti, Chandrasing Rongpi and Hemai-Lekthe of the Kohora river basin.

Keeping the continuity in celebrating the day, Aaranyak joined hands with WWF India, MEWS and Salbari College to organise an outreach event at Salbari College, in Baksa district. The students were given talks on- "Purpose and objective of the World Wildlife Day" by Kartik Sarkar of MEWS, "Recovering heritage of Manas and Rhino conservation" by Deba Kumar Dutta of WWF-India, "Culture and conservation- how traditional practices contribute in conservation of nature" by

Dharanidhar Boro who was recently honored with Asom Gourav award, and "Role and contributions of women in conservation of nature" by Gayatri Dutta of Aaranyak. Around 150 students, teachers, and other staff members of the college attended the event.

The celebration concluded with a radio programme broadcasted on All India Radio Guwahati on combating wildlife crime. Senior officials from WCCB, and Aaranyak took part in the discussion.



Aaranyak signs MoU with Arya Vidyapeeth

In an important academic partnership, Aaranyak on March 7, signed an MoU with Guwahati's reputed academic institution - Arya Vidyapeeth. The MoU will facilitate the work of both the organisation in the field of wildlife, biodiversity and environmental research and conservation to help students acquire diverse knowledge and skill to promote conservation and human wellbeing.



International Women's Day Celebration



We have been encouraging and empowering the women-folk of local communities through capacity building trainings and developing entrepreneurship skills. This International Women's Day on March 8, we partnered with Karju-Langso SHG, C.R.M.H. and PIRBI to organise a women meet at Chandrasing Rongpi village, Kohora, Karbi Anglong. A total of 120 women from six villages attended the event and participated in various socio-cultural activities. An ethnic food competition was also organised, where the contestants displayed their traditional breakfast items, besides participating in sports, and cultural events and holding exhibition on handmade crafts, jewellery and traditional attire. We appreciate and acknowledge the hard work that our female colleagues put in and contribute to conservation of the species and ecosystem they live.

An exposure trip to western Assam



A 5-day exposure trip to the Manas Landscape and Bhairabkunda was organised by Aaranyak from March 10 for the local communities of various villages across Kohora River Basin (KRB). At Bhairabkunda, the KRB team visited the two man-made forests- Dhansiri Sikaridanga and Gethsemene that covers an area of about 1100 hectares, which is managed by the Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC). The KRB team had a fruitful interaction with the JFMC members where they learned the technique of bee-keeping. On 2nd day, the team had an interaction with the Dong Committee at the Angrajuli Village Church premises of Bhairabkunda, regarding the traditional water harvesting, irrigation and management system of the villages located in the area. The team travelled to the Indo- Bhutan border, to understand the trans boundary relations between the two countries and later, they visited a poultry farm, and a dragon fruit farm to understand about animal husbandry practices and farm system. Around Bhuyanpara range of Manas National Park, the team visited a number of SHGs in the fringe villages such as- Serji Suli SHG, Sonali SHG who are engaged in handloom and weaving, along with Purnima SHG which is involved in natural dyeing. They also visited Mrs. Krishna Basumatary, who demonstrated the pickle making process. On March 13, the team went for a safari in the park and visited our Manas Conservation and Outreach Centre (MCOC) at Bhuyanpara. While returning, they visited NEDFi Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Centre at Khetri. The exposure trip was conducted with an aim to show the KRB team the good practices being carried out by other local communities in western Assam.

Nature Orientation Initiatives

The “Nature Orientation Initiative” (NOI), which is an outdoor nature camp organized every year for the high school students in order to inculcate a conservation sensitive behaviour. This year the first NOI was organised around Orang Tiger Reserve from 11-14 March collaboratively by Aaranyak, Orang Tiger Reserve Authority and Wild Wings. During this four-day programme the students interacted with the leading conservationists of the region, who presented about their diverse conservation work. A total of 27 students and three teachers from Bechimari ME School, Silamari High School, Sirajul Haque High School and Dokhin Borsola High School participated in the camp.

The second event was conducted in the campus of Bagori range office of Kaziranga National Park from March 15-17. This marked the 14th NOI camp in Kaziranga, with participation from 35 students from the fringe villages of Kaziranga. The camp was jointly organized by Kaziranga National Park Authority, Aaranyak, WWF-India, WTI, Bhumi and TCF. During the camp various activities were held among the students such as nature trail, Jeep safari inside the park, bird watching, environmental games and audio-visual classes on various subjects. Many leading conservationists from different fields and organisations interacted with the kids to motivate them towards wildlife conservation. Both the outreach events were supported by Davis Shepherd Wildlife Foundation.



Programme promoting waterbody, wildlife, and human interaction



On March 13, a sensitization programme on "Waterbody, Wildlife and Human" was organised by Aaranyak and Goalpara Forest Division at Amtola L.P. School premises of Goalpara District. At the launch, Anjan Baruah of Aaranyak facilitated the formation of an Elephant Conservation Network (ECN), which comprises members from local communities to aid in mitigating Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) by adopting multi-pronged approaches under the guidance of Aaranyak. The DFO of Goalpara Forest Division addressed the gathering on various conservation issues related to the water-bodies, nature and elephants. Jayanta Kumar Pathak of Aaranyak discussed the conservation importance of aquatic biodiversity as well as wetlands. He also emphasised on responsible eco-tourism focusing elephants, Ganges dolphins by protecting these species and their habitat. Around 50 people from Amtola, Mamakata, Patipara and Dakurbhita villages along with forest staff attended the awareness meeting. The programme was supported by NABU International and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Aaranyak's expert speaks on 'Know Your Species, Know Your Zoo'

MOEFCC hosted a virtual event titled "Know all about the species" and "Know all about the Zoo" at which a number of our experts were invited to speak.

By keeping special feature on the Northern Pig-tailed Macaques and the Aizawl Zoological Park, a talk was held on the Republic Day where the keynote address was delivered by Dr. Dilip Chetry, a senior scientist of Aaranyak who heads the Primate Research and Conservation Division (PRCD). The session also educated the audience about the Aizawl Zoological Park, the first and only zoo in Mizoram.

On March 16, Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, a renowned conservationist, and head of the organization, who is an authority on Asian rhino species spoke on the greater one-horned rhinos and the centre for wildlife rehabilitation and conservation during his talk.



Know all about the Species

The Great One-horned Rhino is also called Indian Rhinoceros, Great Indian Rhinoceros, Greater Indian one-horned rhinoceros. They are characterized by the presence of a single nasal horn and thick grey-brown skin with pinkish folds. Their hooves are large and three-toed. The horn (made of keratin) is present in both sexes. They inhabit the riverine grasslands of the Terai and Brahmaputra basins. They have been observed to show a preference for alluvial, plain grasslands but also occur in areas that are adjacent to swamps and forests and in the riverine forest-grassland mosaics.

Males are slightly larger and have thicker neck musculature and marginally longer horns. The lower mandibular incisors are also longer as compared to females. The bulls (males) are usually solitary with overlapping territories while the cows (females) are solitary unless they are with a calf. They breed throughout the year and their gestation period is about 16 months. The age of sexual maturity is estimated to be 5 to 7 years and the calves develop horns by the age of 6. The calf remains with the mother for about 3-4 years.

They feed on grasses, fruit, leaves, shrub, tree branches, and cultivated crops. Communication is done by auditory and olfactory cues.

The species is threatened by habitat loss, poaching, and invasive plant species. It has been accorded the highest protection at the national level (Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972). 37 individuals are housed in 12 zoos across India.



Mr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Ph.D.,
Chief Executive Officer,
Aaranyak



Dr. Bhaskar Choudhury,
Wildlife Veterinarian and Head of Rescue,
Wildlife Trust of India



Week 53

Greater One-Horned Rhino *Rhinoceros unicornis*

Know all about the Zoo

The Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation was established by the Assam Forest Department, Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) for rescue and rehabilitation of wild animals from Kaziranga National Park. This initiative has been further augmented by establishing satellite stations of the centre in the form of Mobile Veterinary Service units in three regions of Assam (Central, Eastern and Western). The mission of the rescue centre is to conserve wildlife and its habitat and to work for the welfare of individual wild animals in partnership with communities and governments.

Watch Live!
CZA's YouTube Channel

16th
March
2022
at
04:00 pm



Observing World Sparrow Day

Conservationists having been flagging the issue of sparrow population decline, which is a common bird species mostly found near human habitation. To raise awareness, an event was organized on the occasion of World Sparrow Day. Hiren Dutta, coordinator of Aaranyak's Eastern Assam Zone along with school students undertook an initiative in documenting house sparrows through questionnaire survey at Rupahimukh Kumargaon and Rupahimukh Mishing Gaon village on March 19. A total of 38 students took part in the survey who were guided by their teachers, and locals. This was followed by an awareness session which highlighted the species ecology and threats. The students were provided with artificial nest-box for the sparrows along with Aaranyak's educational materials.



Rhino census

Aaranyak had a strong presence during the Rhino census conducted at Orang National Park in Assam on March 20-21. The census estimated a total population of 125 rhinos, with 43 males, 49 females, and 23 calves. Sex of 10 rhino individuals couldn't be ascertained. This is an encouraging population growth, and one of the factors contributing to this is zero poaching incidents in the park in the last four years.



An event to mark World Water Day

At Badulipara High School in Golaghat district, we celebrated World Water Day on March 22 with the school students. The outreach programme was attended by more than 100 students and their teachers.

Dr. Partha Jyoti Das, who is a senior scientist with Aaranyak was invited in a webinae where he spoke on 'Engaging Youth in Water Resources Conservation and Management'. The webinar was organised by the Mekong Institute, Bangkok in collaboration with the Embassy of India to Thailand.



Developing district administrations' capacity to act on climate change



Two key workshops were conducted on climate action capacity building for the district administrations by the Assam Climate Change Management Society (ACCMS) and Aaranyak, on March 23 and 25 for Kamrup and Nagaon District administrations respectively. The workshop in Kamrup on March 23 was inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Kailash Kartik N, IAS. While Smt. Santana Bora, ACS, ADC (Forest), addressed during the Nagaon's programme on March 25 with a brief statement on climate change and some examples of its effects in local settings. Dr. Partha Jyoti Das, a senior scientist with Aaranyak gave an overview of climate change and its effects in global and regional perspectives with particular reference to Kamrup and Nagaon districts. During the event in Kamrup, crucial issues such as- climate change and its effect on farmers and agricultural products in Assam, impact of climate change on biodiversity in Assam were highlighted. Whereas, in Nagaon talks on biodiversity and climate change issues with a focus on Assam, initiatives of ACCMS and climate change & food security were delivered by the resource persons. Interaction with the resource persons and participants led to many suggestions that the competent authorities might consider to deal with climate change in their local areas. Representatives from various departments attended the event to emphasize the importance of policy making to alleviate climate change problems in Assam.



Aaranyak's experts talks on conservation

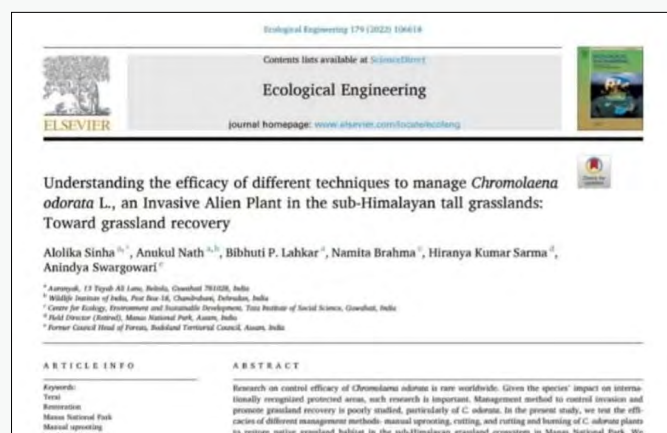
DA News Plus- a news channel from Assam streams a conservation awareness programme called "Aranyam". During one of their programmes, Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Secretary General & CEO, Aaranyak and a leading conservationist, alongwith Abhijit Baruah- a young wildlife biologist of Aaranyak talked about the ecology and conservation needs of the state bird of Assam- the white winged wood duck.

On February 27, Dr. Talukdar and Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar of Aaranyak addressed on "Elephants & Rhino-Common conservation concerns" in a programme organised by-Friends of Elephants in collaboration with Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). Both the senior scientists discussed and highlighted the conservation crisis faced by both the species.

During an interview on March 24 with the All India Radio, Dr. Jayanta Kr Sarma and Mr. Jayanta Kumar Pathak of Aaranyak discussed indigenous technology and its importance towards sustainable society.



Aaranyak's study on invasive alien plant management to revive native grasslands



Grasslands provide ecological, cultural and social services. The sub-Himalayan tall grasslands of Manas National Park are not exceptions. But these are on spatial decline and negatively impacted by the invasive alien plants (IAPs). Recognizing the threat imposed by

the IAPs, a study was conducted in Manas National Park by Dr. Bibhuti P Lahkar, Dr. Alolika Sinha and Dr. Anukul Nath - a former colleague to understand and identify the best measure to manage the invasive plants to revive the native grass-communities. We are delighted to share that the study could identify the best control measure that can aid park managers. The study was recently published in a peer-reviewed journal. A video-documentation of the process is currently underway.

Initiatives of Wildlife Genetics Team

The team comprising of senior scientist and Head of Wildlife Genetics Division, Udayan Borthakur, Dr. Pranjal Kumar Das, and Munmita Boruah surveyed high altitude elephant habitat in Arunachal Pradesh along the Bugun community village in Tenga Valley. This is a part of a new initiative where wildlife genetics lab of Aaranyak will use dung samples to understand elephant movement patterns and identify source populations in northeast India. The team could confirm elephant presence at an altitude of 1175m.



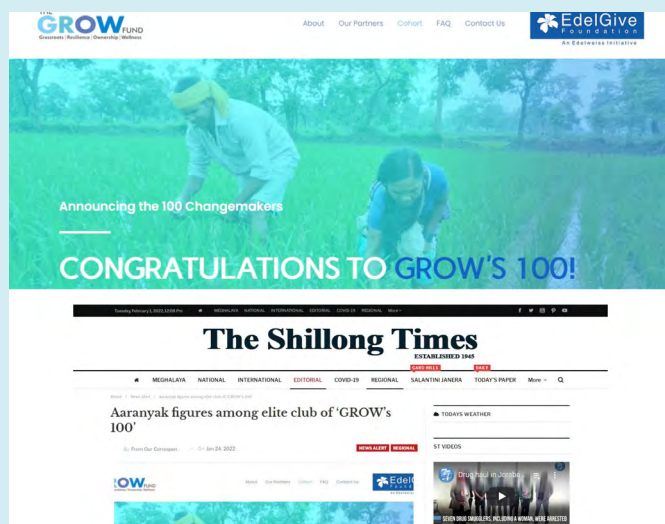
Aaranyak's experts at Assam Forest School

In a training programme organised by Assam Forest School, Guwahati for officials of Assam Forest Department many experts from Aaranyak were invited as resource persons to share their expertise. Dr. Purnima Devi Barman and a team of her interns and volunteers led a case study class demonstrating community involvement in conservation. Udayan Borthakur delivered a talk on wildlife forensics & genetics, while Arup Kumar Das conducted field trainings on the use of GPS and its application in forest and wildlife.



Aaranyak figures among elite club of 'GROW's 100'

We are delighted to share with our well-wishers that we have been selected as one of GROW's 100– a collection of stellar grassroots organisations from across India. The Grassroots Resilience Ownership and Wellness (GROW) Fund is a first-of-its-kind initiative by EdelGive Foundation aiming towards building a resilient civil society and strengthening 100 grassroots organisations from across India over a period of 24 months.



Initiatives by our zones



Our Central Assam Zone, in collaboration with Golaghat (T) Forest Division and NSS Unit of Debraj Roy College, Golaghat jointly organised a nature trail and bird watching programme in Nambor-Doigurung Wildlife Sanctuary on January 8. The main aim of the programme was to develop interest on native birds among the students and teach them the basics of bird watching. A total of 45 participants took part from the NSS unit of the college. In its second outreach event, the team jointly with Burapahar Forest Range officials and Friends of Nature Group organised a cleanliness drive in Chirang animal corridor in Burapahar Range of Kaziranga Tiger Reserve on January 26 on the occasion of the Republic Day. The drive covered a stretch of 2-kilometre area of NH-37 from Gajaraj viewpoint to the western part. All the non-biodegradable wastes such as disposable water bottles, polythene, plastic packets were cleaned from the area as this is an important animal corridor. During the afternoon, another programme was carried out in Natundanga village, Burapahar. Various activities such as drawing competition and outdoor games were conducted among the children and women of the village. Another cleanliness drive was carried out at Trishuldhari area of Silghat on February 28, collaboratively with the Kaziranga National Park Authority, Nagaon Police, Trishuldhari Mandir Managing Committee, Kaliabor Journalist Association, VDP, Friends of Nature and Silghat Eco development committee.



Efforts taken by our members

Our member Niranjan Nayak, along with his team from Art For Nature painted beautiful artwork on the bank of Deepor Beel at Pamohi on January 18. The team is known for its awareness generating initiatives through their beautiful nature-based artwork. We applaud their initiative and hope they keep up their good work.



Honours and Awards

We are delighted to share that Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, a senior conservationist at Aaranyak, was recently honoured with the "Juba Byabasayi Bota" (Youth Entrepreneur Award) for her outstanding contribution to Greater Adjutant Stork conservation through community participation in Assam. Dr. Barman, was also invited and felicitated as Chief Guest in the inaugural event of Asomi SARAS fare 2022 organised by Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM) at Ganesh Mandir Indoor Stadium Field, Khanapara on February 25. In the month of March, WWF-India have recognised Dr Purnima Devi Barman of Aaranyak as one of the 'Earth Hour Conservation Heroes' for 2022 for her inspiring work in protecting the Endangered greater adjutant storks by involving local communities.



Aaranyak reacts to the rhino poaching in KNP



Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar of Aaranyak who is the Chair, IUCN SSC Asian Rhino specialist group communicated with the senior officials of Kaziranga Tiger Reserve regarding the unfortunate incident of rhino poaching on January 20. He through his communication expressed that "While every rhino killed is indeed bad news for all of us, but we do appreciate the efforts of the KNP team put together to safeguard the rhinos and other species of the reserve. Despite this set back, the fight against poachers must continue by re-strengthening the morale of team KNP. Let's keep positive spirit. We will always value your sincere efforts."

See you in next quarter...



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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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