

## Press Release

### Students stage drama to highlight Human Leopard Conflict in Guwahati

Guwahati, October 14 : In a bid to raise awareness about consequences of Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) students of Natun Fatasil Town High School of Guwahati performed a drama as part of Wildlife Week highlighting the plight of the Indian Leopards in Gotanagar and Fatasil Reserve Forest in the city as well as the consequences of Human-Leopard Conflict (HLC) faced by the local people.

Indian Leopard is found in 2 Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLS) and 7 Reserve Forests (RF) and its peripheral areas of Kamrup (Metro) District. In the last few years there is an increase in Human-Leopard Conflict (HLC) in several populous localities of Guwahati city. Such increasing conflicts can be attributed to increasing human population in the city that has decreased traditional habitat for the large carnivores. Density of large carnivores in an area is also dependent on its prey base.

The HLC in Guwahati arises out of urban settlement in the fringes of the forests as well as presence of stray leopards in the human habitation in search for livestock as easy prey. However, studies suggests that leopards can live near human inhabited areas with low levels of conflict depending on the goodwill of the people and communities (Source : Bharali et al., 2021 : Nowhere to Live: Squeezing Habitat and Human-leopard Conflicts in Maligaon, Guwahati, Assam in Applied Ecology and Environmental Sciences).

The Wildlife Week conceptualized in 1952 is observed annually from October 2 – 8 with the objective of raising awareness to serve the long-term goal of safeguarding the lives of wildlife through critical action. This year the observance is based on the theme, “Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation”. As compared to wildlife in the Protected Areas (PA) the wildlife habitat outside the PAs are prone to anthropogenic activities due to tussle for space leading to encroachment in the forest areas and degradation of wildlife habitat due to human intervention. Such is the plight of Panthera pardus fusca (Indian Leopard), a Scheduled I species under Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, in Assam and particularly in Guwahati city.

Banashri Phukan, Assistant Teacher of the school conceptualized and executed the drama with the students. Aaranyak Officials, Kakali Baishya and Wasima Begum attended the programme and interacted with the students and spoke about the importance of wildlife conservation emphasising coexisting with harmony.

*Press statement issued by Bijay Sankar Bora, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.  
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