

## Press Release

### **ZSL-Aaranyak facilitates Nepal team's exposure trip to Kaziranga, Manas landscapes**

Guwahati, Feb 12: A team of Protected Area managers and community leaders from Nepal recently visited Kaziranga and Manas Landscape in Assam during February 4 to 9 this year as part of an exposure trip experience best practices related to the protected area management (species and habitat), community-livelihood work and human-wildlife conflict mitigation in and around both the renowned wildlife protection areas.

This exposure trip to Kaziranga Landscape and Manas Landscape were supported by Zoological Society of London-Nepal in assistance from Aaranyak which facilitated the team's trips with local logistic arrangements besides enabling them to have interactions with park managers and communities in Kaziranga and Manas landscapes.

During their visit to Kaziranga landscape on February 5 and 6, the team from Nepal had an interaction with Aaranyak team followed by an interactive session with senior forest officials of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve at the conventional center there.

Dr. Sonali Ghosh, Field Director of Kaziranga Tiger Reserve, briefed the team about the protected area of Kaziranga, the landscape and the protected area management activities. Two documentaries on Kaziranga National Park were screening during the session to enlighten the visitors further about the Kaziranga landscape and its resources.

A village walk-cum-trekking was arranged for the visitors in the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape by a team of Aaranyak. During the trek Dr. Firoz Ahmed, Dr. Jayanta Kr. Sarma and Dr. Jayanta Kr. Roy briefed the team about the landscape, the Karbi indigenous community and their culture and tradition as well as the role of community in the conservation efforts.

The team enjoyed the Karbi ethnic food during the trek and interacted with the local community there. The team also visited the PIRBI store, an indigenous community-owned business venture, which markets naturally grown produce from forest fringe villages, handmade items by indigenous forest dependent communities of Kohora river basin, Kaziranga, in the Karbi hills of Assam.

The visitors team undertook two jeep safaris in Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve to have the feel of rich biodiversity of the National Park.

## **In Manas Landscape**

During their visit to Manas landscape during February 7 to 9, the team from Nepal attended an interactive session in Manas Conservation and Outreach Centre (MCOOC) of Aaranyak in Bhuyanpara , with senior forest officials who have worked in Manas Landscape, Aaranyak officials and the local NGOs. The interaction was focused on protected area management, community-livelihood work and human-wildlife conflict mitigation in and around Manas Landscape.

Hiranya Kr. Sarma, retired IFS and ex Field Director of Manas National Park, gave an introductory speech and described a brief history of his work in conserving Manas National Park. Sarma also spoke about the importance of involving local communities, NGOs and other law enforcement agencies in achieving a common goal in conservation of protected areas.

During that interactive session Binita Baruwati of Aaranyak described the ongoing activities of Aaranyak in Manas Landscape and spoke about the indigenous Bodo community, their culture and tradition, the role of various stake holders including forest department, NGOs, local communities and other law enforcement agencies, in conserving MNP.

She also underscored the role and impacts of Aaranyak in providing training, capacity building and technical support to the forest department in strengthening the protection measures in the Manas Landscape.

Dr. Partha Sarathi Ghose of Aaranyak described the role of Aaranyak in engaging with the local communities to identify and provide alternative livelihood in the fringe villages of the protected areas of Manas Landscape.

Rustam Basumatary, Secretary of Manas Mouzigendri Eco-Tourism Society (MMES) spoke about their effort in influencing the local communities towards developing a sense of ownership in conserving the wildlife of Manas National Park. He also spoke about MMES and their effort to support the Forest Department in protecting the park.

Retired Deputy Field Director of Manas Tiger Reserve and presently OSD to Tourism Department of Bodoland Territorial Council, Dharanidhar Boro spoke about the importance of exposure visits to protected areas. He mentioned about his enriching experience during his exposure visit to Nepal and how he later incorporated them in protection of Kaziranga National Park where he had worked for a long period.

Dr. Ashok Ram, Senior Conservation Officer, Forest Department of Nepal shared his experiences and spoke about community-based conservation and the importance of community forest.

The team embarked on jeep safaris to witness the rich biodiversity of the Manas Park and the contiguity of Manas National Park with Royal National Park across the border in Bhutan.

Dr. Dipankar Lahkar , conservation biologist of Aaranyak accompanied the team during the jeep safari and shown ongoing habitat management work and also organised an interactive session with Bhutan Forest Officials and discussed the transboundary conservation work.

At the end of this programme, a village walk was organised in the fringe areas of Manas Park to facilitate the team from Nepal to interact with indigenous Bodo tribe people and learn about the community-owned homestays and self-help groups (SHGs) which are supported by Aaranyak. The team also had the experience of ongoing other skill development activities organised for the community.

The whole programme was coordinated by Dr. M Firoz Ahmed, Binita Baruwati of Aaranyak and Dinesh Neupane, Sunjeep Pun of Zoological Society of London-Nepal.

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