

PRESS RELEASE

Rising concern over HWC situation in Majuli river island in Assam: Study

Guwahati, March 4: A six-day survey on human-wildlife conflict (HWC) was conducted recently in Majuli River Island district of Assam by biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak with the primary objective to explore ways secure the growing population of one-horned rhinos that have strayed onto the river island from Kaziranga National Park.

The study engaged more than 110 households, local communities, Satradhikars (head priests of Vaishnavite monasteries), forest officials and law enforcement agencies to assess the escalating challenges of human-wildlife conflict in the area.

The initial three days of the survey concentrated on Namoni Majuli, encompassing areas such as Sesuguri, Lobak Khutar, and Ahotoguri Island. The subsequent phase extended to Ujoni Majuli, covering the area from Kamalabari Ghat to Gejera.

This survey was conducted by Researchers Ujjal Bayan and Kakali Baishya of the Rhino Research and Conservation Division (RRCD) of Aaranyak.

The findings revealed a concerning increase in human-wildlife conflict compared to previous years, with rhinos, wild buffaloes, wild boars, elephants, and even tigers frequently causing damage to crops and livestock in the areas covered under the study.

Given that nearly 90% of the local population relies on agriculture, these conflicts pose substantial threats to community livelihoods. During the survey, our researchers from RRCD also met Range Officer Abhijit Dolley and Additional Superintendent of Police Bitul Chetia, and discussed various aspects of human and wildlife behaviours.

Besides these challenges, the survey also identified a positive trend -- Majuli's wetlands are currently flourishing with migratory birds. Glossy ibis, black-headed ibis, Indian spot-billed ducks, Greylag geese, bar-headed geese, purple swamp hens, and other avian species have arrived this winter for roosting, breeding and feeding. These

observations highlight Majuli's ecological significance as a unique river island with rich biodiversity.

In light of Majuli's distinct geographic and ecological characteristics, conservation actions and management plans must be specifically tailored to address the region's challenges.

Aaranyak emphasises the necessity for sustainable human-wildlife conflict mitigation strategies, enhanced community awareness, and conservation-oriented policy interventions to safeguard both the livelihoods of local residents and the island's rich biodiversity.

(For more information, please contact Dr. Deba Kumar Dutta (7002689366/ deba@aaranyak.org), Sr. Manager, Rhino Research and Conservation Division, Aaranyak

***Press statement issued by Bijay Sankar Bora, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.
Contact No. 9476692003, Email ID: pr@aaranyak.org***