

The Rhino Foundation

for nature in NE India

Newsletter

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**THE RHINO FOUNDATION
FOR NATURE IN NE INDIA**
Newsletter No. 6 December 2004

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Publications of The Rhino Foundation:

Survey of wildlife in Bherjan, Borajan & Podumoni RFs with a proposal for a wildlife sanctuary.
Survey of White-winged wood duck and the Bengal florican in Tinsukia district & adjacent areas.
Dhansiri Tiger Reserve. Revised proposal. Birds of Nongkhyllem. Survey of Mrs Hume's Pheasant in NE India. Birds of
Kaziranga national park a checklist. A pocket guide to the birds of Nagaland Newsletters, No.1 (1996), No.2 (1998), No.3
(2001), No.4 (2002), No.5 (2003). Two posters on conservation.

COVER: Phayre's leaf monkey *Presbytis (=Trachypithecus) phayrei* in Putni, Karimganj district. The entire population of this rare
primate in Assam is outside the protected areas (also see p.32).

(Photo : ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY)

A decade of conservation:

REPORT

The Rhino Foundation for nature in NE India, 1994 - 2004

ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY, *Honorary Chief Executive*

The Rhino Foundation for Nature in North East India, a leading non-governmental organisation (NGO) of the country continued its conservation activities. The Foundation has completed 10 years of existence (founded in 1994) and during this decade this NGO has worked for the conservation of wildlife in north-east India. The organisation stuck to its objective of maintaining sustainable use of natural resources for a healthy development of future generations. The Foundation continued its appeal for support for this important cause from all concerned.

Projects

The projects undertaken and completed since its inception were explained and listed

in details in the previous issues of this newsletter (No.3, June 2001; pp. 1-5. No.4, June 2002; pp. 1-4; No.5, June 2003; pp. 1-4) and are also summarised here in Table 1. During the last year, the Rhino Foundation had undertaken conservation projects in the protected areas and their fringes in Assam and a survey project in Arunachal Pradesh. Elsewhere in the region, the network, which was established with other NGOs as well as governmental agencies, has been maintained through regular contact.

Treatment of patrolling elephants in the protected areas

One of the main projects that are nearing completion was veterinary care for the patrolling elephants of different protected areas of Assam. It was supported by US Fish & Wild-

Table 1: Major Projects completed/ongoing

Sl No.	Name	Year	Remarks
1.	Field staff equipment	1995-96	Funding: Own sources. Completed.
2.	Eco-development	1995-96	Funding: Own sources. Completed.
3.	Repairing of wireless, Reward, etc	1995-96	Funding: Own sources. Completed.
4.	Forest Guard Equipment	1997-98	With support from Rhino & Tiger Conservation Fund (RTCF) of United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). Completed.
5.	Post-flood emergency assistance	1998	Supported by Rhino Rescue Trust, UK. Completed.
6.	Aid to Kaziranga (repairing of countryboats)	1998	Supported by WWF-Tiger Conservation Programme (TCP). Completed.
7.	Wireless Systems	1998-2001	With support from RTCF of USFWS. Completed.
8.	Motorcycles	1999-2000	Supported by Fauna & Flora International, UK. Completed.
9.	Support to Orang national park	1999-2001	Supported by WWF-Tiger Conservation Programme (TCP). Completed.
10.	Support to Nameri national park	1999-2001	Supported by WWF-TCP. Completed.
11.	Veterinary camp for patrolling elephants	2001-02	With support from Assian Elephant Conservation Fund (AECF) of USFWS. Nearing completion.
12.	Survey of birds and mammals of Dibang-Dihang Biosphere Reserve	2002-05	Supported by Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India. Ongoing.
13.	Anti-poaching support to Nongkhyiem sanctuary, Meghalaya	2004-05	With support from Assian Elephant Conservation Fund (AECF) of USFWS. To start soon.

Table 2: Veterinary Care Camps for Patrol Elephants

Protected Area	Date of Camp	No of Elephants Treated/Examined
2001-02		
Manas national park	3-5 February 2002	26
Nameri national park	19-21 January 2002	13*
Orang national park	5-7 January 2002	13
Pabitora wildlife sanctuary	29-30 December 2001	7
Total	4	59
2002-03		
Kaziranga national park	2 February and 1-2 March 2003	8, 6
Manas national park	29-30 March 2003	20
Nameri national park	13-15 July 2002; 22-24 February 2003	11, 12
Orang national park	16-18 June 2002	15
Pabitora wildlife sanctuary	25-26 May 2002	7
Total	7	79
2003-04		
Kaziranga national park	20-21 July; 16-17 August; 1-2 and 14-16 November 2003	31, 34, 46, 28
Manas national park	28-29 June and 25-26 October 2003	27, 4
Nameri national park	3 May 2003	12
Orang national park	1 May 2003; 24-26 January and 21-22 February 2004	18, 14, 2
Pabitora wildlife sanctuary	26-27 April, 8 June and 6 September 2003	7, 6, 3
Total	12	232
GRAND TOTAL	23	370

life Service under its Asian Elephant Conservation Fund. Although the project was meant for one year only, it continued for four years. The camps organised so far and other details are given in Table 2. Since further support for this important project has not been received, it will end by 2004. The patrol elephants are essential for protected areas such as Kaziranga, Manas, Nameri, Orang and Pabitora. They not only provide the Forest Guards a vantage position but can also take them anywhere in the park. These elephants have become very effective against the poachers in tall grassland habitat. The veterinarians who had participated in the camps were members of Early Birds, a Guwahati-based NGO with experience of similar activities and individual experts such as Dr K.K.Sharma for specialised treatment.

Survey of birds and mammals in Dibang-Dihang Biosphere Reserve

Due to non-release of second instalment, this survey could not be done throughout the winter. A brief survey was done in Dibang Valley and Upper Dibang Valley districts in Arunachal Pradesh in March 2004. The main focus of this survey was documentation of birds and mammals of this poorly known biosphere reserve. The most important find of this brief fieldwork was the record of the recently discovered leaf muntjac *Muntiacus putaoensis*. Dibang Valley is a new site for this species, which is also the northernmost in its range (also see 'Briefly'). Takin *Budorcas taxicolor*, Slater's Monal *Lophophorus slateri* and Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (on passage) were also recorded. The survey was interrupted by heavy rain followed by landslides.



Ranger Mr L. Ramchiary on patrol in Bhuyanpara, Manas national park with motorcycle provided by the Rhino Foundation. Photo: Anwaruddin Choudhury

Manas – World Heritage Site in danger

The Rhino Foundation has donated a motorcycle to this famous national park for use by the Ranger of Bhuyanpara Range. Till now, this bike remains the only mode of transportation in this remote range of Manas national park. Pigmy hog *Sus salvaninus*, tiger *Panthera tigris*, clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*, Asiatic or Himalayan black bear *Ursus thibetanus*, elephant *Elephas maximus*, gaur *Bos gaurus*, wild water buffalo *Bubalus arnee* and Bengal Florican *Honbaropsis bengalensis* still occur in Bhuyanpara Range, which also includes Koklabari area. A couple of stray rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* were also reported.

Book release

Mark Shand, the well known British author had released a book entitled 'Birds of Kaziranga: a checklist', written and illustrated by the honorary Chief Executive (C.E.) and published by the Rhino Foundation during the Elephant festival at Kaziranga on 1 February 2004. Pradyut Bordoloi, Assam's

Minister for Environment & Forest and late Indira Miri, noted litterateur and wife of one of the pioneer Forest Officers of Kaziranga, late Mahi Miri were also present.

New wildlife sanctuaries in Assam

Three new wildlife sanctuaries have been notified in Assam in June 2004. All these were initially surveyed and proposed by the honorary C.E. of the Rhino Foundation in 1980s.

AMCHANG wildlife sanctuary, 79 km², is located near Guwahati, the capital city of Assam. This area was recommended for the first time for protection of its isolated elephant population in 1985 and then for its gaur and proximity to Guwahati city (see *Newsletter of the Rhino Foundation* No. 4).

BARAIL wildlife sanctuary, 326 km², is located in Cachar district of southern Assam. This area was recommended for protection of its overall biodiversity with special focus on primates in 1988 and 1989. Seven species of primates are found. Among threatened birds, there are Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis* and Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta formosa*.

DIHING-PATKAI wildlife sanctuary, 111 km², is located in Tinsukia and Dibrugarh districts of eastern Assam. This area was recommended for protection of its primates in 1989 and for significant population of White-winged Wood Duck *Cairina scutulata* in 1996. The well-known rainforests of Upper Dihing and Joypur forms part of this sanctuary.



Table 3: Poaching of Rhinoceros in key P.A.s since 1998 compared to 1990, 1992, 1993

Protected Area	1990	1992	1993	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004*
Kaziranga NP	34	48	40	8	4	4	8	4	0	1
Orang NP	0	2	1	12	7	8	1	0	0	0
Pabitora WS	2	3	4	4	6	2	0	1	2	1
TOTAL	36	53	45	24	17	14	9	5	2	2

* up to 30 November 2004; some poaching did take place elsewhere, e.g., 4 in 2003 and 2 in 2004.

Other activities

Other activities included maintenance of a network of informers around the key protected areas. These informers, who may never get open recognition, have played an important role in checking poaching, especially of rhinoceros. This along with continued governmental effort as well as input from other NGOs had yielded excellent results. The poaching figures of rhinoceros in Orang and Kaziranga national parks and Pabitora sanctuary indicate the scenario (Table 3).

Appendix 1 and 2 list some of the main items donated and also construction works by this foundation for a quick reference.

Assam Forest Policy

The government of Assam has accepted with some modifications the State Forest Policy, which was drafted by a committee that included the honorary Chief Executive (C.E.) of this foundation. The committee was headed by Dr Anil Goswami.

Networking

The foundation has maintained its network with different governmental agencies, NGOs and individuals across the NE India as well as outside. Moreover, the foundation has also maintained links with its network of informers in different parts of the region.

Awareness, motivation, etc.

The honorary C.E. had delivered a number of popular talks with slide-shows and also distributed posters across the northeast. Informal meetings with villagers as part of awareness campaign were also held in some

remote areas such as Hunli in Arunachal Pradesh, and Tuensang, Noklak, Baghty, Chongtongya, Khonoma, Poilwa and Pangsha in Nagaland. A booklet entitled *A pocket guide to the birds of Nagaland* was released by the Head Gaon Burha of Kohima in February 2004.

Meetings, workshops, etc.

The honorary C.E. had participated in the World Parks Congress at Durban, in Republic of South Africa in September 2003. In February 2004, he attended a summit meeting on vultures at Kathmandu. In March 2004, he visited Andamans as a member of an 'Expert Committee' on domestic elephants set up by the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India. In April 2004, he participated in the International Galliform Symposium held at Dehra Dun where he presented a status report on the galliformes of NE India.



Awareness drive: the honorary C.E. talking to a Chang Naga villager at Tuensang village, Nagaland.

Census of Wild buffalo

The honorary C. E. had participated in a census operation for the endangered wild water buffalo in Manas national park in March 2004.

Repairing of equipments

The following items vital for anti-poaching activities in Pabitora wildlife sanctuary were repaired: motorcycle (1), wireless hand sets (8), adaptor (5) and battery charger (3).

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Like previous issues, this issue has also maintained high standard with a number of distinguished contributors from India and abroad, who are well known in their respective field of activities.

Acknowledgements

The Trustees of the Rhino Foundation for their continuing support. The US Fish & Wildlife Service and the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India for their support, which enabled project activities in the field.

We are grateful to David Fergusson, Fred Bagley and Carl Stromeyer of US Fish & Wildlife Service; Bob Risebrough (expert on vulture disease); S. S. Bist, Director, Project Elephant, Government of India; and S.S.Samant of G.B.Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment & Development.

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For their continued support, we thank: in *Assam*, Anil Goswami of WWF, Bikul Goswami of Green Heritage, Moloy Baruah of Early Birds, Bibhab Talukdar, Firoz Ahmed, Rathin Barman and Bibhuti Lahkar of Aaranyak, Kulojyoti Lahkar, Bhargav Das of Green Society, Tridib Phukan, H. P. Agarwala and Atul Borgohain (last three of Assam Bhoreli Angler's Association), Joynal Abedin of Dibru-Saikhwa Wildlife Society, Lutfur Rahman and others of Assam Co.; in *Nagaland*, Neisatuo Kreditsu, Tsile Sakhire, Tsangchingla Imlong, H. Shou, Khekiho Sohe, and Thomas Kent of Nagaland, late Abdul Rashid of Orang, Montu Nath, Dilwar Husain, and Belinda Wright of Wildlife Protection Society of India, New Delhi.

Lastly, the small staff of the Rhino Foundation based at Guwahati and Kolkata whose untiring efforts ensured that the works are being completed with success.

Appendix 1: Donation and construction of some major items since 1995

Protected Area	Motor-cycle	Motor-boat	Country-boat	AP Camp	P. Path	Wireless Mainset	Wireless Handset	Solar Charger	Battery Charger	TL
Kaziranga NP	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5
Nameri NP	1	—	—	1	27 km	—	—	—	—	—
Orang NP	2	2	5	4	—	3	16	10	8	—
Pabitora WS	2	—	—	—	—	2	9	5	5	3
Manas NP	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	7	2	5	5	27 km	5	24	15	13	8

AP Camp= construction of anti-poaching camp; P. Path= lying of patrolling path; TL= tarpaulin (50'x12' sheets).

Appendix 2: Donation of some other items since 1995

Protected Area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Bamadi WS	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Burhachapori WS	90	90	-	-	90	30	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dibru-Saikhowa NP	-	-	-	-	25	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kaziranga NP	800	550	-	-	1090	250	171	50	130	-	4187	-	-
Laokhowa WS	60	60	-	-	60	30	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Manas NP	300	300	-	-	300	90	20	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nameri NP	-	-	-	-	111*	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Orang NP	100	100	90	90	300	60	25	-	-	71	-	3	3
Pabitara WS	165	100	-	-	183	60	30	13	25	4	1102	3	-
TOTAL	1515	1200	90	90	2159	520	266	63	155	75	5289	6	3

1= raincoat; 2= warm jersey; 3=jacket; 4=uniform (pairs); 5= huntingboot (pairs); 6= haversack; 7= drinking water-filter; 8= water-filter candle; 9= hurricane lantern; 10= torchlight; 11= torch battery; 12= wireless antennae; 13= extra wireless battery. * = shared between Nameri and Burhachapori; Fire-crackers were also donated to Pabitara for anti-depredation.

THE RHINO FOUNDATION FOR NATURE IN NE INDIA AT A GLANCE

1994. Founded by some like-minded conservationists and tea companies. Concerned about the endangered wild life species in north east India with the Indian rhinoceros as its flagship species.

1995. Started functioning with Mrs **Anne Wright**, MBE as the founder Chairperson, Dr **Anwaruddin Choudhury** as the founder Chief Executive (C.E.), and R. Adige, K. S. David, R. L. Rikhye and M. P. S. Sidhu as the founder Trustees. The proposed site for mega-cement plant near Balpakram national park in Meghalaya surveyed. The campaign that followed resulted in shelving of the project. Field staff equipments donated to Kaziranga and other protected areas in Assam. Veterinary care and awareness camps organised. Two posters on endangered species and a report entitled, *Survey of wildlife in Bherjan, Borajan & Podumoni RFs with a proposal for a wildlife sanctuary produced.*

1996. The first issue of *Newsletter* published. Invited Dave Fergusson of the US Fish & Wildlife Service and organised meeting with late **Nagen Sharma**, then Forest Minister of Assam. The result was the beginning of a long-term conservation programme which benefited government of Assam and other NGOs. Organised World Environment Day function at Guwahati in collaboration with Explorers (NGO). Field staff equipments donated to protected areas in Assam. Veterinary care and awareness camps organized. By the end of the year, Anwaruddin Choudhury left the post of C.E. but continued as the honorary C. E.

1997. Provided equipments to Forest Guards in Kaziranga and other protected areas.

1998. Emergency assistance to Kaziranga after a deva-

slating flood. The 2nd issue of *Newsletter* published.

1999. Provided new wireless sets to Orang and Pabitara. The government of Assam notified **Bherjan-Borajan-Podumoni Wildlife Sanctuary**, the proposal for which was published by the Foundation.

2000. Four anti-poaching camps constructed in Orang. Motorcycles donated to Orang and Pabitara.

2001. Inducted as member of the **Indian Board for Wild Life**, the highest body in the country, chaired by the Prime Minister. Provided motorcycles to Nameri and Kaziranga. The 3rd issue of *Newsletter* published.

2002. Petitioned before the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, govt of India for permanent **rumble strips** near Kaziranga to reduce death of animals. The Ministry vide its letter No. NH-12037/59/2002-AS/NH-10 dated May 27, 2002 agreed. The 4th issue of *Newsletter* published. Veterinary care camps for patrol elephants. Faunal survey in Dibang-Dihang biosphere reserve, Arunachal Pradesh. The honorary C. E. joined Environment & Forest department, Assam as Joint Secretary.

2003. The veterinary care for patrol elephants and faunal survey in Dibang-Dihang in Arunachal Pradesh continued. The 5th issue of *Newsletter* published. The government of Assam notified a new wildlife sanctuary, **Nambor-Dolgrung**, identified as potential site and then proposed in 1980s by the honorary C. E.

2004. The government of Assam notified three new wildlife sanctuaries, **Amchang, Barail and Dihing-Patkai**, identified as potential sites and then proposed in 1980s by the honorary C. E. A conservation project (anti-poaching support) in Nongkhyllam wildlife sanctuary in Meghalaya initiated. □