

# Aaramyak

ANNUAL REPORT 2013 - 2014



*Nourishing Nature to Secure Our Future*

# OUR MISSION

To foster conservation of biodiversity in North East India through research, environmental education, capacity building and advocacy for legal and policy reform to usher a new era of ecological security.



#### **Photo credit:**

Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Udayan Borthakur, M. Firoz Ahmed, Bibhuti Lahkar, Abdul Wakid, Dilip Chettri, Manas Kr. Bhattacharjya, Jyoti P. Das, Niranjan Bhuyan, Namita Brahma, Partha Jyoti Das, Purnima Devi Barman, Pranjal Das, Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Shikha Hazarika, Bijay Basumatary, Dipul Saikia, Dipmoni Nath, Alolika Sinha, Sanjay Das and Aaranyak.

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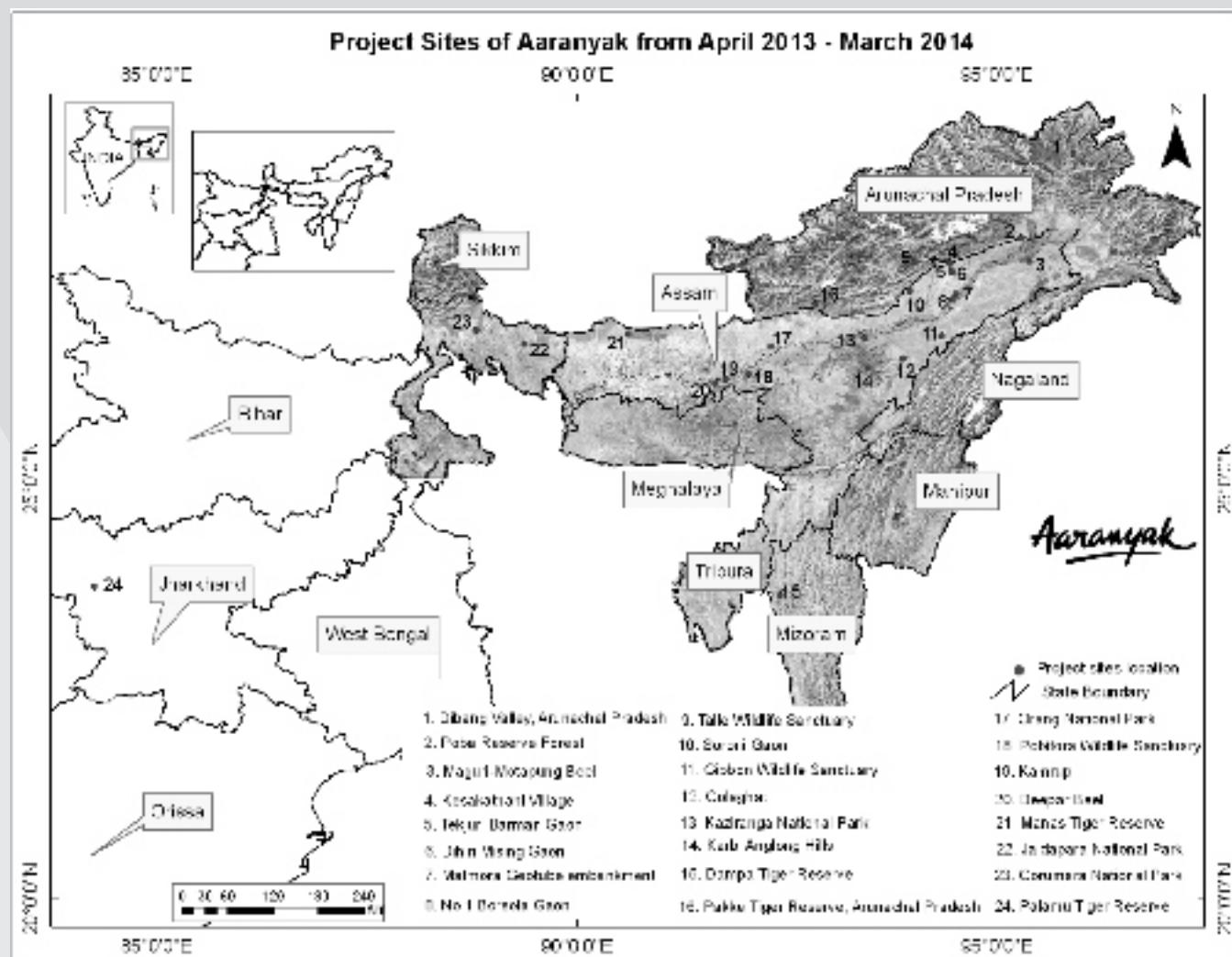
## 2013-2014

*Aaranyak*

*Nourishing Nature to Secure Our Future*



# AARANYAK'S FOOTPRINT



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## BACKGROUND



A quarter century of work has brought major changes in the nature conservation sector of Northeast India and Aaranyak still looks forward to secure the rich biodiversity resources in better ways. It firmly believes that effective conservation of wildlife and ecology will remain a far cry sans cooperation from the masses.

The efforts nature conservation can be traced back to 1989 when a group of young environment enthusiasts, deeply motivated to protect the rich bio-diversity of the region, gave shape to a green concept called 'Aaranyak' in Guwahati, Assam and set the sail on an unrelenting journey that has transcended many barriers so far. With the small beginning since Aaranyak has been established, this group of young environment enthusiasts realised the need to usher a new era of environmental consciousness among the masses and unearth new information on wildlife and their habitats to promote conservation decided to contribute towards building much needed environmental awareness among the masses.

Initially Aaranyak targeted in generating mass awareness on the wildlife heritage of Assam and the need for their conservation. However in 1989, Aaranyak had to file a Public Interest Litigation in the Gauhati High Court challenging the decision of the Assam Government to lease out fisheries inside the Dibru Saikhowa WLS in Assam which is one of the potential conservation sites of critically endangered White Winged Wood Duck, which is currently the 'State Bird of Assam' and also the symbol of Aaranyak. The Government had to withdraw this destructive decision to ensure and secure the future of wildlife and its habitat in Dibru-Saikhowa WLS including the White Winged Wood Duck. Gradually, Aaranyak got involved in bird watching, which attracted a bunch of young students and created an emerging group of birders in Assam. In the meantime, the organization got involved in other key conservation aspects of wild fauna and flora in North East India, which is now the major work area of Aaranyak.

The primary thrust areas of Aaranyak are-

- To conduct quality research on biodiversity, water resources, hydrology, climate, sustainable development, natural disasters and environmental impact assessment in NE India viz. floods, erosion, revival of traditional water harvesting systems, water shed management, climate variability, deforestation and climate change, rainfall-runoff modelling, application of remote sensing and GIS in environmental research and share the information for conservation and management.
- To create awareness among populace about the need of biodiversity conservation through environmental education and capacity building.
- To curtail and eliminate wildlife trade in the region.
- To explore and access the legal and judiciary provisions for protection of biodiversity.

- To compliment and support the Government agencies working for protection of the rich biodiversity of the region.
- To assist the fringe villagers of the protected areas to diversify their livelihood options and minimize their direct dependence on forest resources.
- To foster scientific applied research in the field of biodiversity and environment that would provide new avenues for sustainable livelihood generation

Over the years, Aaranyak has carved a niche for itself in the field of biodiversity conservation not only in the Northeast India where it is based, but also all over the country as a leading environment and bio-diversity conservation organisation. It has established itself as a prominent player in the global network of institutions involved in nature conservation and its resources. Aaranyak is on a mission to contribute towards protection of nature by providing key inputs to biodiversity management based on quality research on ecosystems, environmental education, capacity building, legal and policy research.

Aaranyak is a closely knit team of environmental scientists, researchers, community workers, educators and environmental legal specialists who have excelled in their respective fields by virtue of team spirit, dedication, commitment, integrity, transparency and accountability. Our team spirit is focused on facilitating enough leg room for individuals to emerge as leaders through skill development. Aaranyak is anchored on a firm research and development base that is supplemented by toiling in the field by our teams working to achieve conservation goals. It has formulated a number of conservation strategies or programmes specific to the Northeast India to address crucial environment issues. The programmes blend science and technology resources with involvement of stakeholders to rediscover the traditional peaceful co-existence of man and wildlife in this region. Eight major programmes form the core of Aaranyak's conservation strategy. Currently group of conservation professionals at Aaranyak are working with eight conservation programmes to contribute towards narrowing down the gap between research and adaptive management of wildlife and forests.

In 2011, Aaranyak received the prestigious RBS 'Earth Guardian Award, 2011' in function held at New Delhi organized by the Royal Bank of Scotland. Secretary General of Aaranyak Received the RBS Earth Guardian Award 2011 at New Dehi on 31 October 2011.

Aaranyak is focused on ensuring ecological security of the North East India, a biodiversity hotspot. The organization, therefore, is keen to establish a chain of professionals in the region to sustain various conservation initiatives to address diverse ecological issues, sustainable development and climate change. The Team Aaranyak believes that its strength lies in dedication, commitment and result-oriented approach in carrying out the task assigned to it. Aaranyak aspires to enter into collaboration with frontline institutions and universities in coming years to consolidate its research and conservation activities. It is a creation of a formidable pool of database on various aspects of ecology of North East India not only for experts in the field but also for the people in general is one of the priorities of Aaranyak.



# North East Threatened Species Conservation Programme (NETSCOP)



School students in Guwahati during 'Rhino Goes to school'

## Rhino Research and Conservation Initiative (RRCI)

The Rhino Research and Conservation Initiative has been actively contributing towards rhino conservation in Assam by supporting equipments like wireless communication, motorbikes, speedboat, floating boat camp etc. To strengthen rhino conservation in the field sites, Aaranyak sponsored over 300 wireless equipments over the years to enhance wireless communication network within the rhino bearing areas in Assam including Kaziranga National Park, Orang National Park and Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary. It has also provided two well-equipped anti-poaching boats to Kaziranga NP, vehicles, motorcycles to the forest department in order to gear up rhino protection measures.

### KEY ACTIVITIES :

- During 2013-14, we have provided 130 rain coats to frontline staffs of Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam to enhance patrol and vigil during the rainy season and also to boost up their morale. Aaranyak also organised a tourist guide orientation workshop in Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary in partnership with Guwahati Wildlife Division and Jeep Safari Association of Pabitora on 26-27 October 2013. Some birds and mammals identification guide books were sponsored for use by the Jeep Safari Association to boost eco-tourism and further popularise the Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary as key habitat for greater one horned rhino.
- The RRCI in association with Environmental Education team of Aaranyak launched another initiative named 'Rhino Goes to School' in order to strengthen rhino conservation awareness among students and teachers. About eight different rhino posters were developed for dissemination in schools.
- Bhogali Jalpan to Kaziranga Frontline Staff: During 14-15 January 2014, RRCI and TRCI of Aaranyak jointly distributed Bhogali Jalpan (Assamese traditional delicacies) on the occasion of Bhogali Bihu. This was a unique event to convey our gratitude to the frontline staff of the park for their contribution towards protection of the park and its wild denizens.

## FUTURE PLANS

- Keeping in mind the increase in rhino poaching in Assam since 2012, especially in Kaziranga National park, 'Rhino Goes to School' aims to cover more schools in fringe areas of rhino-bearing areas in Assam and also in key township and cities where rhino conservation awareness could play positive impact in securing the future of rhinos from increasing attempts of poaching. In 2014-15, the target is to cover about 60-100 schools in Assam.
- Further, livelihood support to some reformed poachers shall be given priority.
- Again, a consolidated rhino estimation method based on key physical features of rhino shall be prepared to estimate rhinos using photographic tools.



*Tourist guide orientation workshop at Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary*



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*Rhino awareness campaign in Orang National Park*



Students during a drawing competition on man-elephant conflict at Golaghat

## Elephant Research and Conservation Initiative (ERCI)

The Elephant Research and Conservation Initiative (ERCI) is one of the key initiatives of Aaranyak that started in 2002. Since inception, ERCI actively engaged in applied research and conservation of Asian elephant and its habitat.

The goal of ERCI is long-term conservation of Asian Elephant and its habitat across different landscapes. Some of the activities involve, a) ecological research on elephants and its habitats, b) mitigation of human elephant conflict through action based research, restoring habitat and strengthening community guarding, c) capacity building of biologists, conservationists and forest staff, d) promoting community-led elephant and habitat conservation and f) establishing collaborations to sustain elephant conservation efforts.

### KEY ACTIVITIES :

#### A. Red Cap Project, Manas:

Red Cap project was started in January 2009 around fringe villages of Manas National Park with support from Awely- a France based organization working for biodiversity conservation in Asia and Africa. Through Red Cap project we are working to resolve conflicts between humans and wildlife to harmonize their cohabitation. The number and extent of all kinds of Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) is being assessed by the Red Caps, community workers originating from conflict villages.

To strengthening the traditional community-based crop guarding system, 54 earthen watchtowers have been constructed till date. After each monsoon season, the earth mounds are repaired and maintained and broken materials are replaced. Around 10 watchtowers have been repaired during this period.

The Red Caps hold around 300 meetings with topics ranging from technical support in conflict mitigation to general awareness creation including celebration of World Environment Day. During this period, one three-day residential teacher training was organized on HEC for teachers around Manas National Park, where 29 teachers participated. The training was supported by Awely. Further, Red Caps participated in "Raising and Management of Horticultural Nursery" organized by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Howly as master trainers and now they are providing training to farmers on lemon cutting, rooting.

As cattle grazing is a major threat to the park, we have started to get in touch with herders, who are taking their cattle inside the park for grazing. Young boys of 13 to 18 years are mostly badly educated. Understandably, they firstly were very reluctant and careful with giving information, after some meetings however our team was able to build up a basis of trust.



*Teacher training at Bansbari range focusing on elephant conservation*

#### **B. Save Asian elephants by empowering community (SEEC): an initiative in the eastern part of Chirang Ripu Elephant Reserve- phase II**

Aaranyak and Manas Chouki Ecotourism Society (MCES) jointly launched SEEC project to strengthen the protection of Asian elephants and its habitat in 2010.

The existing nursery was revived by cleaning and de-weeding with installation of 90 beds, with a capacity of 60000 sampling. Seeds of native plants species were collected from nearby forest and villages. Some of the species that were raised in the nursery are Terminalia belliraca, Spondias pinnata, Ficus bengalensis, Dillenia indica and Emblica officinalis.

Solar power fencing has been installed at a stretch of 9 km covering 4 villages to mitigate HEC. About 50000 people living in four villages are benefitted from the fence.

To self-sustain the conservation activity in the area, a flower nursery and an eco-camp have been setup with the help of MCES. The flower nursery is entirely for commercial purpose and the money generated has been used for conservation purposes in the area.

On the occasion of Wildlife Week, we celebrated, Elephant Day on 3rd October among children, where a rally and an art competition were organized. In addition, seven awareness programmes have also been organized on elephant conservation in the area.

#### **C. Improving the protection of Asian elephants in Kachugaon Forest Division**



*Flower nursery initiated by Aaranyak and Manas Chouki Ecotourism Society (MCES)*

The Kachugaon Forest Division forms the western most part of Chirang Ripu Elephant Reserve. As number of anti-poaching camps and frontline staff in buffer areas are limited, government of Bodoland Territorial Council has involved local NGOs in protection of the rich biodiversity of the area. The objectives of this project are to strengthen the protection of Asian elephant

& its habitats through setting up GPS based patrolling and encourage members of Green Forest Society for active involvement in protection purpose through partial support.

Till now 55 grids were surveyed, particularly at Central, Sanfan, Athiabari and Raimona Range of Ripu RF simultaneously. Preliminary results shows that Elephant (naïve occupancy = 0.72) occupied a large area followed by Barking deer (0.52), Sambar (0.36), Wild Boar (0.27), Gaur (0.13), Spotted deer (0.11), Wild Buffalo (0.07). From December 2013, conservation volunteers did extensive patrolling in Ripu R.F with a total 1260 hrs. of night patrolling. Approximately, 250 km of bike patrolling was also carried out in the Athiabari Range. In last five months, conservation volunteers seized 99 Sal (Shorea robusta) logs, 2 guns, 9 bullock carts and 21 bicycles; and handed over two poachers to Forest Department; located and damaged 5 poacher camps. Furthermore, to engage and strengthen the protection, GPS training was given in all the ranges of Ripu R.F. In Kachugaon division 100 conservation volunteers with 40 Forest officials were trained in GPS handling. Further they were supported with field uniform, jackets, shoes etc. Awareness camps & art competition were carried out in the fringe villages of Ripu R.F. to involve local community to enhance a greater support for elephant conservation in the region.



Forest officials and volunteers during the GPS training

#### **D. Community based conservation approach for management of elephants in Golaghat district of Assam:**

Human elephant conflict is a major issue in Golaghat district of Assam and it is one of the most affected areas in entire India. The district has witnessed loss of enormous forest cover owing to deforestation, encroachment, tea-cultivation, construction of oil refinery in last two decades. The activities that were carried out during last one year vary from ecological research on elephants to participation of local community and forest department in conserving the elephants.

- Population status - Estimation of a population of  $125 \pm 32.4$  numbers of elephants with a CV of 17.4 % in the study area.
- Status of existing corridors – There is one designated elephant corridor named Kalaphar-Doigurung in Golaghat district while another four corridors are still by and large used by elephants for their movement. These five corridors are under tremendous pressure of human. Hence, the field team is presently monitoring the actual status of these corridors.
- Collection of HEC data in the entire Golaghat district, which will assist in identifying the localities of high, moderate and low conflict areas of the district.
- Education outreach – under the theme 'Éléphant Goes to School' –
  - The team has arranged drawing competitions in eight different schools located in HEC conflict prone areas. Winners of the drawing competitions were later provided an exposure trip to Kaziranga National Park in April 13.
  - 18 no of education outreach program have been organized in different villages.
- 2 watch towers constructed at Nahorchola village.

## FUTURE PLANS

Aaranyak plans to initiate conservation based activities in the new conflict areas in near future as well as to fill the gaps of information on elephants in elephant reserves through ecological research, community participation and advocacy. The team also plans to upgrade the information on existing corridors in NE India and develop conservation plan for each corridor. In regard to the project in Golaghat, ERCI team will:

- a. Carry out study on movement pattern of elephant herds across the landscape
- b. Carry out study on people's perception towards elephant and compare with other landscape in Assam
- c. Investigate potential for various alternate cash crop for farmers
- d. Produce a pictorial guide of conflict elephants in the landscape



Exposure trip for school students to KNP

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*Team installing a camera trap in Kaziranga National Park*

## **TIGER RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION INITIATIVES (TRCI)**

Initiated in the year 2005, the Tiger Research and Conservation Initiative (TRCI) is one of the flagship Initiatives of Aaranyak actively engaged in applied research and conservation of tiger, prey animals and their habitat.

Activities of this initiative are tuned to complement effective tiger conservation efforts in the region through government and other non-government agencies. Major objectives are a) ecological research on tigers and prey animals b) creating a GIS-based database on tiger and its ecosystem c) capacity building of local biologists, conservationists and forest staff d) promoting community-led tiger and habitat conservation through awareness and capacity building.

### **KEY ACTIVITIES :**

A. Tiger and Prey Monitoring: The TRCI of Aaranyak has been assisting Assam Forest Department for conducting long term ecological monitoring of tigers and prey animals in different tiger inhabiting areas in northeast India. The major activities and achievements are-

#### **1. Kaziranga National Park:**

Camera trapped study identified 108 individual tigers including 97 adults and 11 cubs in about 394 sq km area. Gaur was captured on camera trap in the park. WWF India and ATREE were partners in the 2013 exercise.

- Subsequently, in 2014, around 430 sq km of the Park was covered using cameras in 217 locations. Population result of 2014 shall be declared as part of the All India Tiger Monitoring later this year. WWF India and Wildlife Institute of India were partners in the 2014 exercise.
- We also estimated the prey animals of the park in 2013.

## **2. Manas National Park:**

- In 2013, 14 individuals (12 adults and 2 cubs) tigers were identified in about 300 sq km in the park involving a total effort of 4920 trap-days.
- In 2014, only Bhuyanpara and Bansbari ranges approximately 300 sq km were covered and 133 trap locations were established for the monitoring. Manas National Park, ATREE, Wildlife Institute of India and Royal Manas National Park were partners in this exercise.
- In 2013, an estimation of prey animals in the park was also carried out.



*Camera trapped tiger with two cubs*

## **3. Orang National Park:**

- In 2013, total 24 individual tigers were identified including 3 males, 17 females and 4 cubs.
- In 2013, estimation of the prey animals in the park was also done.

## **B. Other Salient Research activities:**

- Workshop on Data Analysis: The TRCI in collaboration with Gangetic Dolphin Research and Conservation Initiative of Aaranyak conducted a week-long data analysis workshop from 1-5 August 2013 with participation from 15 persons from the region working on population ecology. Prof. Qamar Qureshi, Wildlife Institute of India led the workshop to teach the participants on use of different population and occupancy estimation software and theory and field techniques behind those.

- C. Conservation education and awareness activities: The TRCI in collaboration with the Environment Education and Capacity Building Program of Aaranyak carries out comprehensive awareness drive around the Kaziranga and Orang National Park. Some major activities are-

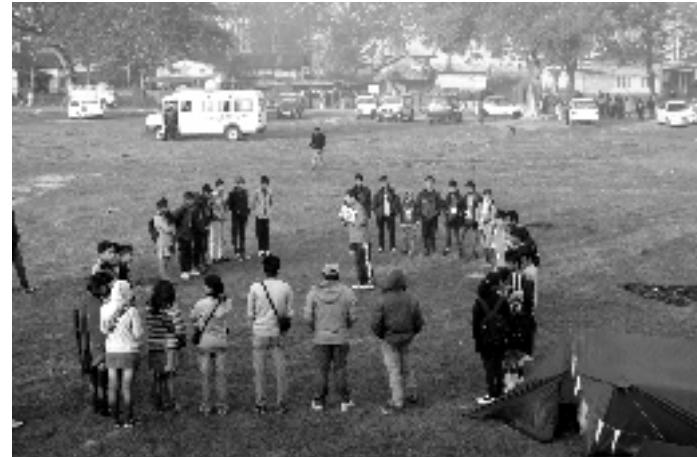


*Cycle Rally by young nature lovers to create awareness among villagers.*

- Cycle Rally for Awareness: On 26 July 2013, a 25 km cycle rally moved through several villages in the Buhrapahar-Jakhalabandha area on the western part of the Kaziranga National Park reaching approximately 3-5 thousand

audiences with messages to save rhino, stop poaching and poachers. Simultaneously, a street play team also performed wildlife conservation thematic drama at gatherings on the route of the cycle rally.

- Awareness Campaign, Orang: During 2-7 September 2013, a series of awareness campaign was carried out in the fringe villages of Orang National Park covering six villages. The theme of the campaign was save rhino, save tiger and awareness was created with an aim to eliminate the threat of retaliatory killing of tigers by poisoning and poaching of rhino. We reached about 7000 villages (students and youth) directly.
- NOI Alumni Meet: A meet of the alumni participants of the Nature Orientation Initiative (NOI), a flagship awareness event for the students of the fringe areas of Kaziranga NP, was held on 16 June 2013. About 50 alumni students over six years of NOIs participated in the event and shared their experiences.
- Pre-flood Awareness-Kaziranga: To minimize human-animal conflict and save distressed animals during flood, we organized a series of pre-flood awareness campaign on the southern fringe of the Kaziranga NP. Altogether 38 events, largest ever in a series, were organized in schools, villages, and in market places reaching over 10,000 audiences directly.
- 59th Wildlife Week Celebration: On 7th October 2013, an art exhibition and quiz competition was organized with participation of around 500 students. Twenty one students from eleven schools participated in the quiz competition. Audiovisual motivational talk to conserve wildlife was organized for the participants.



A scene from NOI VII in Bagori Range, Kaziranga NP

- Nature Orientation Initiative (NOI): The 7th NOI event was held from 31st January to 3rd February 2014 at Bagori Range, Kaziranga NP. More details on this flagship awareness event is reported under the Environment Education and Capacity Building Program (EECBP) of this report.

#### **D. Community Conservation Activities:**

- Piggery as Alternative Income: The piggery as an alternative source of income to poor villagers in the fringe areas of Kaziranga was initiated in 2012. With lessons learned we have improved the model to distribute piglets to 10 more beneficiaries in the Agoratoli Range of Kaziranga NP. Past beneficiaries have already got financial benefit from the piglet given.
- Resource Identification for Community Entrepreneurships: We have carried out a study in five fringe villages of KNP to identify local resources that can be used to develop entrepreneurship in those villages. A plan is being prepared to implement the new schemes in coming years.

#### **E. Other Activities:**

- Aaranyak is actively participating and coordinating the Indo-Bhutan transboundary coordination meeting in collaboration with the Manas National Park Authority and WWF India. Our team participated in two transboundary coordination meeting that resulted in joint monitoring of tigers in the Transboundary Manas Conservation Area

(TrAMCA) in 2014. We also supported the Royal Manas National Park with 50 camera traps and batteries.

- Dr. M Firoz Ahmed, Head, TRCI was filmed by three international documentary producers from Belgium, France and Germany during the year focusing on the tiger monitoring exercise and tiger conservation work Aaranyak carries out in the region.
- A team of Panthera, USA visited MNP to take stock of situation and evaluate tiger monitoring activities supported by it. With the successful field visit Panthera has agreed to list Manas as a Tiger Forever site and support long term research and conservation activities in the park through Aaranyak and its local partners.



*Researchers in Manas National Park.*

## FUTURE PLANS

- Continuous monitoring of the tiger, co-predators and prey in Kaziranga, Manas and Orang National Park to understand population dynamics.
- Study on the carrying capacity of the tigers and co-predators in Kaziranga, Manas and Orang National Park.
- Joint Tiger Monitoring in the Transboundary Manas Conservation Area (TrAMCA) covering 500 sq km of the Indian part of the Manas National park and 900 sq Km by Bhutan counterpart of Royal Manas National Park.
- To understand tiger ecology, home range, territories and dispersal using radio-telemetry techniques.



*A scene from street play as a media to create awareness.*

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Aaranyak team during the first ever dolphin survey in Indian Sundarban.

## Gangetic Dolphin Research and Conservation Initiative (GDRCI)

Gangetic Dolphin Research and Conservation Initiative (GDRCI) was established in 2005 with an aim of long term conservation of the Gangetic dolphin in Assam. There are currently 3 biologists, 3 educators, 4 boat staff (all full time) and about 60 trained community youths (all part time) from 30 most important dolphin inhabited river stretches across Assam in GDRCI team. This highly motivated team is well-equipped with scientific equipments and required training for river dolphin and river ecosystem research and conservation.

### KEY ACTIVITIES :

- Dolphin survey:** Conducted dolphin survey in Sundarban Biosphere Reserve of West Bengal in February-March, 2014. This was the first ever dolphin survey in Indian Sundarban. Altogether 33 channels / rivers were surveyed with a total transects of 776 km length. This survey recorded two dolphin species – Irrawaddy dolphin and Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin. No Gangetic dolphin was recorded. Data analysis and report preparation is ongoing.
- Assessment of community awareness on dolphin and river ecosystem conservation:** In order to assess the impact of dolphin conservation activities by GDRCI among the river side communities of the Brahmaputra river system, GDRCI conducted a questionnaire -based survey among the local communities in and around 30 most important dolphin habitats across Assam. Total 855 people were interviewed. This study shows that the dolphin conservation awareness level is more in Lower Assam than in Upper Assam, which was a result of constant effort of GDRCI to increase the awareness level more in Lower Assam due to high anthropogenic pressures in dolphin habitats. Detailed report of this survey is in preparation.

- **Capacity building of local communities:** Conducted capacity building training on 21st-24th January, 2014 for interested and motivated community youths residing in and around important dolphin habitats of Assam. The aim was to conserve dolphins and their habitats through increased local community participation. Total 36 participants from 19 river side areas participated in this training camp, where the participants were trained on dolphin and river ecosystem monitoring, use of equipments on these monitoring processes and community engagement and awareness activities.



Training programme for DCN members in Guwahati



Fish and Fishery Conservation Awareness campaign, a joint event of Aaranyak and Fishery Department, Assam

- **Fishery awareness campaign:** As an attempt to create awareness among the fishermen of in and around important dolphin habitats of Brahmaputra river system, GDRCI in collaboration with the State Fishery Department conducted total 28 fishery awareness campaigns in 28 fishermen villages during the reported period. The campaign started on 1st June and completed on 21st July 2013. Total 67 fishery officers from 13 District Fishery Development Offices and 1841 fishermen participated in these awareness programmes.
- **Dolphin conservation awareness campaign:** Total 46 dolphin conservation awareness campaign were conducted in 45 river side villages of Kulsu and Subansiri River, where total 6769 local community people were participated. The pre and post evaluation of each of the awareness campaign clearly indicated significant learning on dolphin and river ecosystem conservation by local community people in those awareness campaign sites.

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## **Avifauna Research And Conservation Initiative (ARCI)**

Assam is home to more than 800 varieties of avifauna recorded in the Indian subcontinent harbouring several endangered species. Meanwhile, ornithologists of Aaranyak have been involved in conservation and research of avifauna since 1990 under the title of 'Avifauna Research and Conservation Initiative'. Researchers carried out status survey of threatened species of birds in Assam and in some parts of North east India including identifying Important Bird Area. This initiative has been carrying out long-term research in critically endangered Bengal Florican and Greater Adjutant Stork.

### **BENGAL FLORICAN PROJECT**

Bengal florican is a critically endangered grassland bird found in India, Nepal and Cambodia with an estimated global population around 1000 individuals. As a result of habitat destruction, declining grassland areas due to encroachment and spread of invasive species in the grassland areas, opportunistic hunting and egg collection, this grassland obligate species are fast disappearing. However, in order to strengthen the conservation of this critically endangered bird, the population of Bengal florican in Manas is being monitored on an annual basis involving communities on different conservation based activities.

#### **KEY ACTIVITIES :**

- Monitoring of identified Bengal florican territories and assessment of impact of encroachment in Manas.
- Comparative study of association of Bengal florican with other bird species in two different habitats, one is natural (Kuribee) and other is human intervened habitat outside the park (Koklabari Agriculture Farm) was carried out within Bengal florican territories in both the blocks.

- The insect diversity was studied in the four blocks within Bengal florican habitats to know the presence of insect.
- Assessment of the major threats to Bengal florican habitat in MNP was done.
- In order to empower local women for alternate livelihood to minimize dependency on grassland habitat, 4 women Self Help Groups is being supported to undertake weaving as alternative livelihood. One of the major activities are weaving traditional cloths with adding wildlife values by incorporating Bengal florican as designs.

## FUTURE PLANS

- Survey and population monitoring of Bengal florican in Arunachal Pradesh to gather baseline info to prepare the future conservation action plans.
- Use satellite telemetry to study migration use of habitat and other behaviour of Bengal Florican. Emphasis will be given in carrying out research work targeting the non-breeding ecology of Bengal florican.
- Study is being proposed to determine effect of pesticide in agriculture ecosystem at Koklabari seed farm vis a vis on Bengal Florican that co-exist in the farm area.



Bengal Florican embroidery in Gamusa



Survey of Bengal Florican in Manas

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# GREATER ADJUTANT STORK PROJECT

Endangered Greater Adjutant (*Leptoptilos dubius*) is distributed in Assam and Bihar in India and in Cambodia with less than 1000 global populations. Concerned over the rapid decline in the population globally, Aaranyak initiated a community based conservation project in 2009 to protect the population of this stork species. Currently Assam harbours about 700-800 individuals of this bird which is about 80% of its global population. Greater Adjutant makes nesting colonies in privately owned trees in thickly populated villages. So, support of nest tree owners and local villagers are crucial for conservation of this bird.

## KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Status and Distribution Survey:** A status and distribution survey was carried out in Assam in two consecutive breeding and non breeding seasons in 2012-13 and 2013-14.
- Ecology and behaviour study:** An ecology and behaviour study for this bird was initiated in 2009. As a part of this study in 2013, breeding and non breeding behaviour were studied at Dadara Pasariya Singimari Nesting colony, which happens to be the largest breeding colony of this bird in the world. This study was to lead a PhD in “Foraging ecology, breeding success and genetic status of Greater Adjutant” from Gauhati University, Assam under the guidance of Prof. D.K. Sharma. A 75 feet tall bamboo platform (machan) was constructed to observe and study the bird.
- Rescue and rehabilitation:** Aaranyak actively participated in rescue and rehabilitation of several nest-fall Greater Adjutant in collaboration with Assam State Zoo, Bombay Natural History Society, Assam (Kamrup) Police, College of Veterinary Science, Khanapara and local villagers.
- Awareness programmes in Nagaon and Morigaon District:** Conducted street plays in nesting colonies of Greater Adjutant in Nagaon and Morigaon District in association with Green Guard Nature Organization, a fellow NGO working for the cause of wildlife conservation.



Dr Samshul Ali, Veterinary Doctor, while releasing a Greater Adjutant stork.



Purnima Devi Barman with students during a drawing competition held on World Wildlife Day 2014

- Awareness campaign In Lakshmi Puja:** Aaranyak took advantage of mass gathering during the auspicious festival of Lakshmi Puja and similar other religious occasions in the greater adjutant nesting colony villages. We conducted street plays during these festivals to let the people know about this endangered stork and its need for conservation efforts.
- Signature Campaign:** A signature campaign on Greater Adjutant conservation was carried out in Dadara Pasariya Singimari and other nesting colonies as well.
- Celebration of World Wildlife day:** To observe World Wildlife Day on 3rd March 2013 significantly, we conducted an awareness program with ragpicking children at Boragaon garbage dump in Guwahati city.
- World Wetland Day:** On the occasion of World Wetland Day, 2 February 2013, a drawing and clay modeling competition on Greater Adjutant was organised at Sankardev Sisu Niketan, Dadara in Guwahati.
- Initiatives for Species Recovery Plan:** Aaranyak in collaboration with BNHS and other fellow NGOs initiated a programme to prepare a Species recovery plan for Greater Adjutant, where two workshops were conducted in the premises of Pygmy Hog Conservation Breeding center..
- Hargilla Sangrakshan Pariyal, a self help group:** A self-help group named 'Hargilla Sangrakshan Pariyal' was formed among women communities of Dadara, Pasariya and Singimari villages and was trained on livelihood options Weaving, farming etc.



Stall set up by a local SHG named 'Hargilla Sangrakshan Pariyal'

## FUTURE PLANS

- To expand extensive awareness campaigns throughout Assam.
- To continue the community conservation activities in Dadara, Pasariya and Singimari villages
- To do a plantation program in order to increase resting trees of the bird.
- To design well-planned incentive programme for the communities, especially for the tree owners.
- To do sufficient research on different aspects of ecology, molecular biology, food toxicity of the bird.
- To design well-planned rescue and rehabilitation for the nest-fall chick of this bird.

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Dr Dilip Chetry interacting with participants during a field course in Gibbon Conservation Centre, Mariani

## Primates Research and Conservation Initiatives (PRCI)

Non-human Primate constitutes one of the important components of the bio diversity of Northeast India. This region has the highest primate diversity in the country. Out of the total 25 species known from India, 11 species are available in the seven Northeast Indian states. Therefore, aiming at spreading awareness, research, training and conservation of these nonhuman primates of Northeast India, Aaranyak in the year 2002 launched Primate Research and Conservation Initiatives (PRCI).

### KEY ACTIVITIES:

#### A. Field Study:

A field study was initiated to find out the primate diversity in Tale Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh, India. During the study period, occurrence of 4 primate species in the sanctuary was recorded. Out of these 4 species Rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*), Assamese macaque (*Macaca assamensis*), Capped langur (*Trachypithecus pileatus*) were sighted directly. Presence of Slow loris (*Nycticebus bengalensis*) was also recorded from the secondary information. Apart from a survey, the study also emphasized on education and awareness of the local communities about primate conservation for which school students were selected as the target groups. Around 1000 students participated in the education and awareness programmes held at three schools in Arunachal Pradesh with an aim to introduce Primate as a species and grow interest for its conservation in the minds of the kids.

## B. Training on Conservation Biology:

Aaranyak and Jorhat Division of Assam Forest Department with support from American Society of Primatology, University of Washington organized a 5-days training programme for students, teachers and NGO workers of Northeast India at Gibbon Conservation Centre in the Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam, India. Prof. Randell C. Kyes of University of Washington and Prof. Mustafa Feeroz of Jahangir University of Bangladesh and Dr. Dilip Chetry of Aaranyak were the instructors of the training. A total of 12 trainees from four Universities of northeast region had participated in the training, where the course focused on Conservation Biology including field study methods, population assessment, primate behaviour and ecology, management and conservation strategies, tiger conservation, vulture conservation, avian influenza, human-primate interaction, emerging infectious disease, conservation medicine, and biodiversity of Assam.



Field study in Tale Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh

## C. Education and Awareness Programme to save Eastern Hoolock gibbon:

The Sadiya forest range is the lone habitat of Eastern Hoolock gibbon in the state of Assam. Hence, considering the conservation scenario of eastern Hoolock gibbon and its habitats in Sadiya sub-division of Assam, an education and awareness programme has been initiated for its conservation in the state. This is instrumental in bringing the species to the masses and will thereby ensure its long term conservation through the involvement of students, teachers, forest staff, district administration and local community of the Sadiya sub division.



Participants of the 4th Field course in 'Conservation Biology and Global Health' at Gibbon Conservation Centre

## FUTURE PLANS

- To conduct a study on the reassessment distribution and current status of Hoolock gibbon along its distribution range, genetical and parasitical studies on Hoolock gibbon and ecological studies on eastern Hoolock gibbon.
- Identification of potential habitat for conservation of Primates in Northeast India.
- Publication of book on Primates of Northeast India.
- Genetic study of Hoolock gibbon in India in collaboration with Wildlife Genetic Programme.

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Participants of NOI-VI with education kits in Kaziranga NP

## Environment Education and Capacity Building Programme (EECBP)

Ecological literacy of all sections of the society is crucial for conservation of nature and natural resources. The Environment Education and Capacity Building Programme (EECBP) of Aaranyak have been actively involved in creating environmental awareness and new generation of educators and conservationist in Northeast India since the inception of Aaranyak in 1989.

EECBP also aims to capacitate its multiple target groups to ensure the conservation of environment and wildlife of the region. Based on the issues and target audiences the team EE has been utilizing different EE tools, modules and media for different areas; and trying hard to keep constant communication with our multiple target audiences. The ECBP is always keen to work in collaboration with different institutions and individuals for the wellbeing of nature and environment.

### KEY ACTIVITIES :

- During April, 2013 to March, 2014, over 40 day-long environmental orientation programmes were effectively conducted in the State. During these activities, minimum 7000 school children and secondary level students were involved directly.
- The ECBP team also took part in various exhibitions that were organized by different institutions such as Cotton College State University, Water Resource Department, Govt. of Assam, etc.
- Various events like Wildlife Week, World Environment Day, International Biodiversity Day, etc. were celebrated in different districts of the state in collaboration with local organizations and institutions.
- Four-day residential training programme, namely 'Nature Orientation Initiative-VII' was successfully organized at Kaziranga National Park. A total of 29 students from 24 fringe villages covering all the 5 ranges of the Park and Chaporai actively participated in the event.

## Capacity building:

- Five numbers of day-long trainings for teachers were organized at different part of the state. Altogether 210 teachers were trained in these trainings on appropriate use of media and messages for conservation of nature.
- Two residential teachers' training programme, 'Teachers for Conservation' (TFC) were held at Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park on May-June, 2013 and March, 2014 respectively. In Kaziranga, teachers from 23 schools of Karbi Anglong district actively participated. Schools were selected from the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape. On the other hand, 26 dedicated teachers representing 17 schools from the periphery of Manas National Park took part, where the focus was on mitigation of human-elephant conflict.
- 15 youths from different parts of the State were trained up as future conservation educator of the state by engaging them in nature orientation of children, a four-days residential training held on 31 January- 3 February, 2014 in Kaziranga National Park.



*Aaranyak's stall during exhibition in Cotton College State University, Guwahati*

## Other Key Activities:

- One of the conservation educators of EECBP, Jayanta Kr. Pathak has shared expertise in the international training programme i.e. 'Behavior Change Conservation Campaigns: a new tool for species conservation with a focus on the Tiger in India' as Assistant Instructor during a three-week-long course held in Amravati University, Maharashtra, from November 9th to 30th, 2013.



*Namita Brahma interacting with teachers during TFC event at Manas NP.*

## FUTURE PLANS

- Will guide to setup resource centre on wildlife and environment in one school around MNP.
- Reach over one lakh target audience to create general awareness about wildlife, nature and environment.
- Develop effective education materials, conservation education programmes to disseminate knowledge and conservation messages.

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Bee-keeping training at Bhuyanpara under BTC livelihood project

## COMMUNITY BASED CONSERVATION PROGRAMME (CBCP)

Communities living in the fringe areas of protected areas are often highly dependent on forest resources for their livelihood, least developed and mostly affected by conflict with animals. Keeping this in mind, Aaranyak has been implementing different conservation livelihood projects around a number of protected areas in Assam.

### KEY ACTIVITIES:

**A. In the fringe areas of Manas National Park :** Remoteness of the area being a key reason, the people living at the vicinity of Manas National Park have incomes lower than the comparable groups of semi-urban area and also have less access to education, health care and developmental opportunities. This situation compels the communities in the southern boundary of Manas to bank heavily on forest resources. However, in order to show the way for an alternative sustainable livelihood option, Aaranyak has been working with the communities in the fringe areas, especially with the women folk of the area since 2009.

- Currently, 116 women Self Help Groups from 53 fringe villages are being selected, motivated, consulted and trained on different livelihood interventions of their interest to make them self sustainable.
- A consultation workshop cum training was organized on fishery farming. 7 SHGs are currently involved in fish farming and have started earning their livelihood.

- Three-day training was organized on dairy farming and 8 cross breed stall fed cows were distributed in the fringe villages under Panbari and Bansbari Range of MNP
- A day-long training was organized on goat farming and 100 number of cross breed goats were distributed to 25 SHGs.
- A day-long training was organized on piggery farming and 124 piglets were distributed among 31 SGHs under Bansbari and Bhuyanpara Range.
- Four-days training on bee-keeping was organized for 82 women folks and bee-boxes were also provided to all the trainees after the training.
- Weaving is an integral part of tradition and culture of the local communities around Manas. The women of these areas are skilled in weaving and currently we are supporting 8 SHGs in this sector. So, they were provided with yarns and looms for better support.
- Training to 6 SHGs on vermicomposting were given and 3 groups are now constructing the unit to start production.
- 12 SHGs were trained on Mushroom Farming and currently they have started farming.
- In addition to Maidangshri, 4 new SHGs on Food processing were trained and supported with materials like hand juicers, bottles and food grade containers.
- Currently, a ware-house is being constructed in Majrabari village under Bhuyanpara Range of MNP for a food processing and preservation unit which Aaranyak will be using as training and capacity building centre for local women folks.



*Neelam Dutta interacting with Self Help groups working on Fishery*



*Mushroom Farming Training for women SHGs*

- As part of the exposure trip, two SHGs had participated in the “1st International North East Agri Fair” 2014 which was organised by Assam Agriculture University and Department of Agriculture, Govt. of Assam. Moreover, a regular monitoring of all the SHGs’ activities and their progress takes place. Even though all these women groups resides close to Manas National Park most of them have never visit the park. So, in order to show them the pristine beauty of the park and to motivate them to contribute in its conservation, 100 women were taken on a trip to Mathunguri in MNP.

**B. In the fringe areas of Kaziranga National Park:** Aaranyak has started a model community livelihood project on the eastern fringe of the Kaziranga National Park where people are most dependant on forest resources that mostly include fishing, cattle grazing and poaching. Under this activity, selected beneficiaries were given a pair of piglet to raise, who are mostly dependant on forest resources. A number of other alternative livelihood options are under consideration for some other beneficiaries from the area.

## FUTURE PLANS

- Exhibition cum sale of SHG products: With an aim to raise awareness about the scope and benefits of adopting forest-free livelihoods, a local livelihood exhibition cum sale will be organized at a central location in the project site to exhibit the various types of products prepared by different SHGs supported under the project.
- Replicate the successful livelihood models in other fringe areas of Manas Landscape and engage more women groups.
- Market linkage: Aaranyak will facilitate the targeted SHGs to participate in events like trade fairs, agriculture shows and exhibitions organized by the state government, Bodoland Territorial Council and other private agencies round year in Guwahati and other cities.



*Distribution of piglets to beneficiaries at Kaziranga NP*

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*Jorba with forest and police officials during field activity*

## **LEGAL AND ADVOCACY PROGRAMME (LAP)**

This programme has been working to check crime against wildlife, specially poaching and illegal smuggling of wildlife and its products. It runs legal orientation workshops for forest and police officials in Assam to enhance the rate of conviction of poachers and illegal wildlife smugglers as per existing laws. Trainings are done by the experienced lawyers of the Hon'ble Gauhati High Court headed by Advocate Gautam Uzir. The programme also takes selected matters to the Courts through Public Interest Litigations to secure the future of forests and wildlife in North East India.

So as to strengthen the investigation and to unearth more clues for enforcement agencies, for the first time in Eastern India Aaranyak launched K-9 sniffer dog unit in August 2011 with support received from UK based organization the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation.

### **KEY ACTIVITIES :**

- On the occasion of the World Environment Day, 5th June in 2013, a special 'Environmental Orientation to Police Personnel' was organized, where in the police personnel were briefed about various existing laws in India that could be used against wildlife crime offenders to curb wildlife crime. More than 250 police personnel attended this special orientation at Guwahati.
- Legal orientation workshop for forest officials of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was organized on 21 and 22 September 2013 by Aaranyak in association with BTC Forest Department in Manas National Park cum World Heritage Site.
- During 2013-14, the K-9 Sniffer dog unit of Aaranyak provided service in Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary from October until mid January and from mid-January onwards in Kaziranga National park. During the period, the K-9 unit assisted forest and police officials to nab three suspects involved in rhino poaching in Kaziranga National Park.

- A workshop on 'Legal care to be taken while rescuing a wild animal' was organized by Aaranyak in Abhayapuri College on 28th April, 2013.
- The lawyers of the programme are currently pursuing a PIL bearing no. 66/2012, for and behalf of Aaranyak which is an impleading party in the mentioned case. The matter has been taken suo moto by Hon'ble Gauhati High Court owing to rampant poaching in Kaziranga National Park.

### **Lectures made by the lawyers of the programme:**

- i. Lecture on Land and Livelihood Rights with Special Reference to Forest Rights Act (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, and Wildlife Protection Act [Specifically, Section 38V (5) -of The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006] organized by The Foundation for Integrated Community Development (FICOD), Diphu in association with ActionAid India on 26-27 September 2013.
- ii. Lecture on 'Dealing with wildlife crime by enforcement agencies" during a three-day training programme on Awareness Building on Wildlife Trade and Trafficking for Officers of Police, Customs and Excise, Border Security Force and Sashastra Seema Bal on 26-28 November, 2013 at Eastern Forest rangers' College Kurseong, Darjeeling, West Bengal.



*'Environmental Orientation to Police Personnel' on World Environment Day' 2013*



*Moral boosting orientation of frontline forest personnel in Pabitora WLS*

### **FUTURE PLANS**

- The K-9 sniffer dog unit will have one more trained female Belgian Malinois by October 2014 which will help us to place one K-9 unit dog squad in Kaziranga and the another one in Pabitora WLS which could act as deterrent to rhino poaching.
- A pocket guide on steps needed from arrest to conviction of poachers and wildlife offenders shall be prepared and distributed to enforcement agencies.
- Further, existing intelligence gathering network shall be strengthened keeping in view the recent rise in rhino poaching in Assam which will be complimented by series of legal orientation workshops targeting enforcement and judicial officials.

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16th one-week training on Remote sensing, GIS and GPS in collaboration with University of Davis, California.

## Geo-Spatial Technology Application Programme (GTAP)

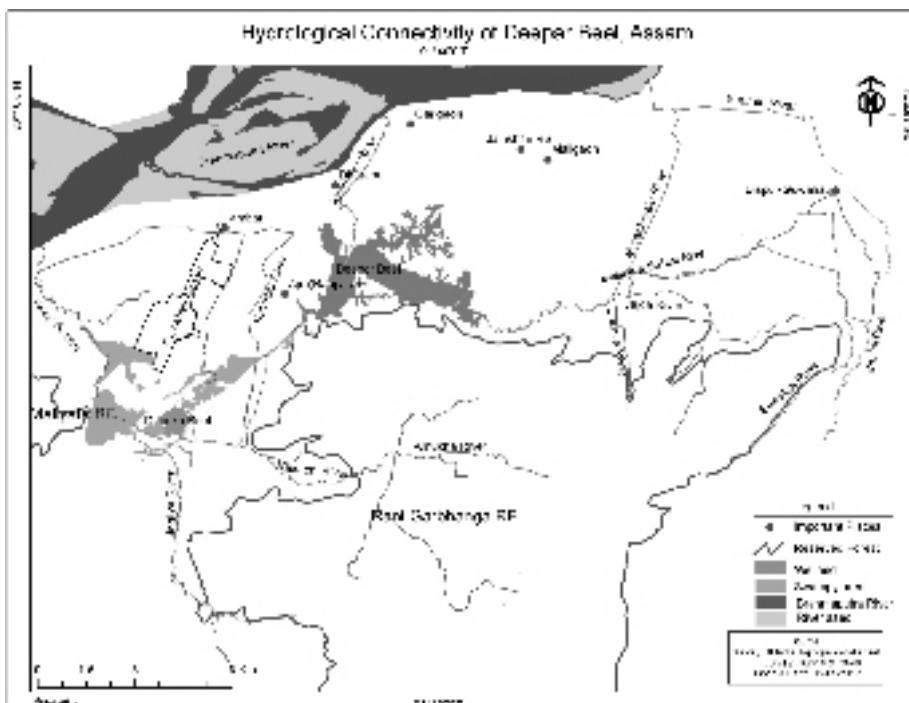
The Geospatial Technology and Application Programme (GTAP) of Aaranyak primarily deal with Remote Sensing (RS), Geographical Information System (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS).

Since its inception in December 2004, GTAP has been playing a pivotal role and contributing towards the conservation and management of biodiversity in North East India through the extensive applications. It has been providing service to different research and conservation project undertaken by Aaranyak as well as other government/ non-government organizations and academic institutions

### KEY ACTIVITIES :

- Generated RS/GIS database (Hydrological connectivity and land use/ land cover) on Deepar Beel Catchment area in the state of Assam.
- Human-wildlife conflict mapping of the fringe villages of Manas National Park from 2008 onwards.
- Generated database on Land use/ Land cover analysis of Chirang Forest Division, BTC, Assam.
- Mapping of Invasive species distribution in Manas National Park.
- RS/GIS database creation of Poba Reserved Forest, Dhemaji district, Assam.
- Mapping of Land use/ Land cover of Doigurung WLS and Human-Elephant conflict distribution, Golaghat district, Assam.
- RS/GIS database creation using Google earth in the four animal corridors of Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape.

- Organized the 16th one-week training on Remote sensing, GIS and GPS. This time the training programme was in collaboration of University of Davis, California.
- Supported the Assam forest department of Amchang WLS, Manas NP, Golaghat Forest Division and Kaziranga NP authority with GIS maps to complement informed decision making.
- Co-supervise the -Post Graduate students of Amity University Noida and Symbiosis University, Pune for their Masters Dissertation study.



Map on Hydrological connectivity on Deepar Beel, Assam

## FUTURE PLANS

- To support Aaranyak programmes and Initiatives through Geo-spatial technology.
- To impart short term RS/GIS training to the students and Researchers.
- To support other NGO's, Stakeholders and the concerned government departments.
- To generate RS/GIS database on wildlife habitat conservation planning and management

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Training at ICIMOD, Kathmandu, Nepal



*Petra Tschakert, University of Pennsylvania during Flexible Flood Management Planning activity in Lakhimpur*

## **WATER, CLIMATE AND HAZARD (WATCH) PROGRAMME**

The Water, Climate and Hazard (WATCH) Programme of Aaranyak deals mainly with interdisciplinary action research, awareness, advocacy, and policy intervention in the core areas of water resources, climate change and water induced hazards and risk using methodologies of both natural and social sciences. Founded in the year 2000 as the 'Water Resources Division' and later renamed as 'Water and Climate Division' in 2005, the WATCH Programme has conducted a major chunk of its activities in the Eastern Brahmaputra Basin comprising districts of eastern and central Assam of India and eastern Arunachal Pradesh. WATCH Programme is also involved in collaborative research in Bangladesh, West Bengal, Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

### **KEY ACTIVITIES :**

**Collaboration with International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu, Nepal for HICAP**  
The WATCH Programme carried out the following activities in the Eastern Brahmaputra River Basin (EBRB) during 2013-2014 as part of the Himalayan Climate Change Adaptation Programme (HICAP) of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu.

- Enhancing community resilience to floods by facilitating integrated flood management and providing flood early warning systems in selected rivers in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Building adaptive capacity through collective learning and flexible planning in Assam
- A Case study on the role of labour migration and remittance as an adaptation strategy in Assam

- Understanding ecosystems change and ecosystem-livelihoods interface to support policy on incentive based mechanism for better management of ecosystem services.

**The following events were organised under different components of HICAP:**

- 'Discussion Forum on Analysing and Mitigating Flood and Erosion Problems of the Jiadhal River in Dhemaji District, Assam' at West Dhemaji College on 19 August 2013.
- 'Training Workshop on Community based Envisioning and Flexible Flood Management Planning with Field Validation' with support from Centre for International Climate and Environmental Research- Oslo (CICERO) (Norway) on July 28-August 6, 2013 at Lakhimpur, Assam
- 'Consultation Workshop on Flexible Flood Management Planning' at Lakhimpur on 21st December, 2014 in collaboration with CICERO (Norway) and District Disaster Management Authority-Lakhimpur.
- 'Community workshop on conservation and sustainable utilisation of the Maguri-Motapung Beel, Tinsukia, Assam', in collaboration with Bobosa (Tinsukia, Assam) on April 7, 2013 at Rangagara Kaliapani Primary School, Natun Rangagara Gaon, Rangagara, Tinsukia District
- 'Training programme on methodology of field research for assessing wetland ecosystems and livelihoods of wetland dependent communities (with reference to Maguri-Motapung beel, Tinsukia)' on April 08, 2013 at, Tinsukia.
- 'Stakeholder consultation on conservation of Poba reserve forest ecosystems in the context of climate change impacts and local livelihoods', at Jonai on July 17, 2013
- 'One day consultation workshop on integrated river basin management for mitigation of flood and erosion disasters in interstate rivers of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam: Perspectives in the context of climate change, with support from India Water Partnership (New Delhi) and in collaboration with Arunachal Citizens Rights (Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh), on December 9, 2013 at Itanagar
- HICAP Training Workshop for Journalists in Northeast India in collaboration with GRID-Arendal during 17–22 February, 2014, at Tinsukia, Assam
- 'HICAP Conference on Climate Change Adaptation: Priorities for Research, Policy, and Practices in Northeast India', in collaboration with GIZ (Germany) and National Institute of Administrative Research (Mossurrie) on 25–26 February 2014, at Guwahati.



*Installation of FEWS on Singora River in Lakhimpur District.*



*During the one-day consultation workshop at Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh*

## Collaboration with IUCN

WATCH Programme is carrying out a study on 'Status and trends in wetlands with reference to hydrological connectivity, climate change impacts and implications for biodiversity and community livelihood: a joint research in selected wetlands of India and Bangladesh' for the IUCN under the Ecosystems for Life: Bangladesh and India Initiative. The first phase of the research was started in November 2012 and completed in October 2013 with two wetlands of Assam the Maguri-Motapung Beel of Tinsukia District and the Deepar Beel of Kamrup (Metro) District as study sites. The second phase of the project was started in December 2013 with focus on only the Deepar Beel 2013 and would continue for nine months.



*Participants during 'HICAP Conference on Climate Change Adaptation: Priorities for Research, Policy, and Practices in Northeast India'*

## FUTURE PLANS

- Start working on the water & sanitation sector promoting public awareness from the rights perspective and facilitating marginalised communities of both rural and urban areas with basic minimum water-sanitation infrastructure.
- Work for mitigation of water quality hazards with focus on arsenic and fluoride contamination in collaboration with Government agencies and civil society groups
- Initiate a study on 'Developing a framework for assessment of environmental flows in selected rivers of northeast India'
- Research based documentation of ecosystem services from selected ecologically important landscapes/waterscapes of Assam in the context of climate change impacts

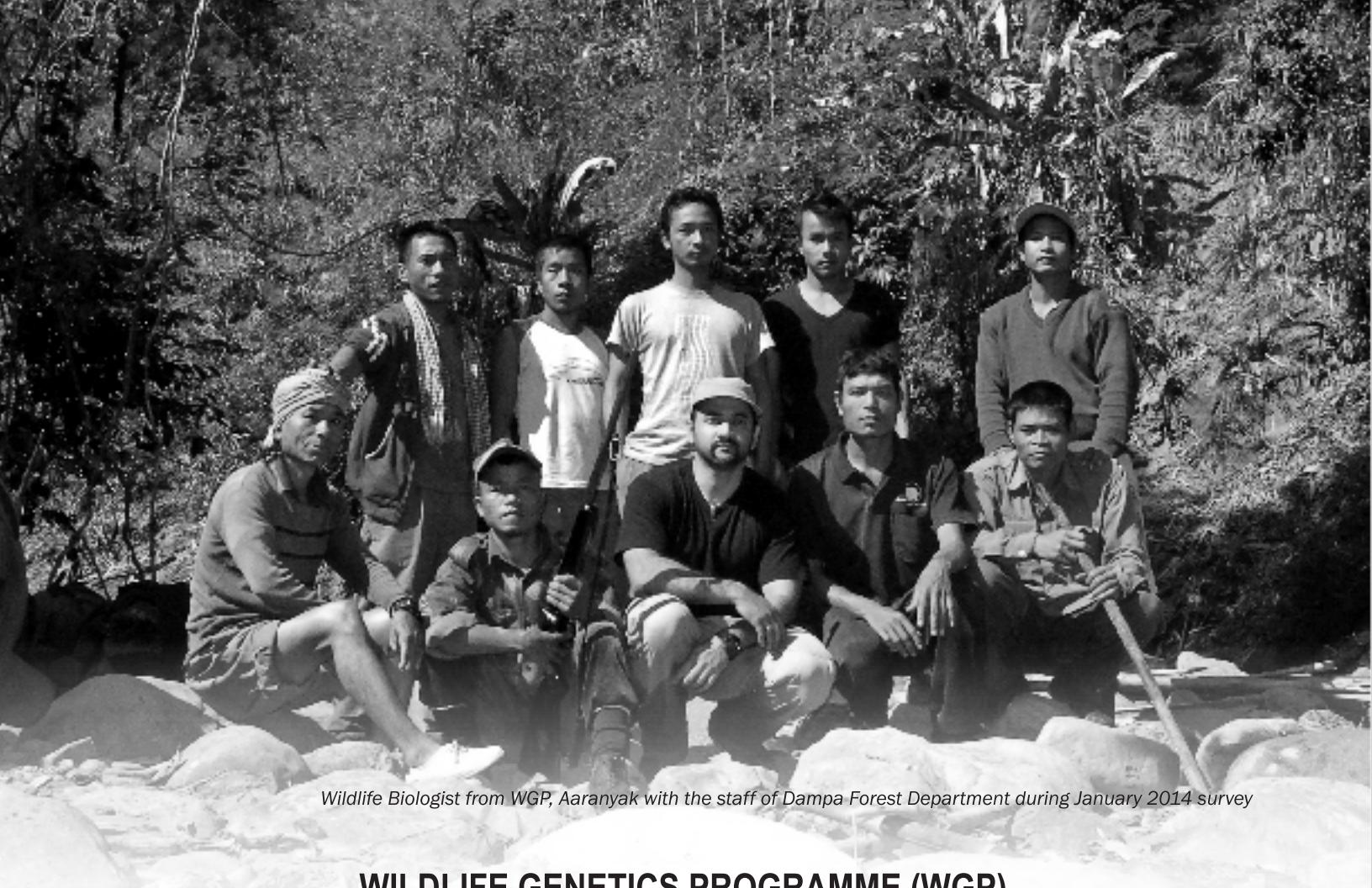


*Participatory Flood Mapping in Dihiri Village, Dharangi*

## CONTACT:

### **Partha Jyoti Das, PhD**

Head, Water, Climate and Hazard Programme  
[partha@aaranyak.org](mailto:partha@aaranyak.org)



*Wildlife Biologist from WGP, Aaranyak with the staff of Dampa Forest Department during January 2014 survey*

## **WILDLIFE GENETICS PROGRAMME (WGP)**

Wildlife Genetics Programme (WGP) of Aaranyak with its principle mandate of undertaking population genetic research in India has been offering its contributions to science and conservation for past six years, through its state of the art Wildlife Genetic Laboratory at Guwahati. The major objectives of the programme are to (i) build up a reference genetic database of the rich biodiversity of Northeast India, (ii) standardize DNA based techniques for the identification of species, gender and individuals from wildlife samples and (iii) undertake priority genetic research to answer pressing wildlife management questions. WGP has been offering support to various State Forest Departments of Northeast India in genetic monitoring of threatened mammalian species.

Apart from its work in India, WGP has been offering consultancy and technical support to conservation genetic projects undertaken internationally, including countries like Indonesia and Bhutan. Office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Govt. of Assam has recognized the Wildlife Genetics Laboratory as a facility for wildlife genetic and forensic DNA analysis in the state of Assam, vide letter no. WL/FG/FORENSIC/2014 dated 28 April 2014.

### **KEY ACTIVITIES :**

#### **A. Population monitoring of Greater one-horned rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) in India**

WGP has been conducting population genetic monitoring of greater one-horned rhinos (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) in India for past five years, through assessment of contemporary levels and spatial distribution of genetic diversity in the rhino bearing protected areas of Assam and West Bengal. Current work in this area includes quantification of the impact of various anthropogenic and geographic factors on the extent of gene flow observed among these rhino populations in India.

**B. Population monitoring of tiger and other carnivores in Northeast India**

- To identify minimum number of tigers in the Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh, a field survey to collect carnivore faecal sample was carried out during January to February 2014. Field work was carried out jointly with the Forest Department. Laboratory work is in progress to ascertain the minimum number of tigers and their sex ratio in the Tiger Reserve.
- WGP undertook tiger genetic monitoring of tigers in Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram for the second time after 2012. Joint field survey with Dampa Forest Department was undertaken during January 2014 for collection of tiger faecal samples as genetic material and has confirmed the presence of two male tigers in the area.



A view of the Wildlife Genetics Laboratory of Aaranyak at Guwahati

**C. Evaluation of genetic diversity of White-bellied Heron in Bhutan**

WGP has collaborated with Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN), Bhutan to work on Critically Endangered White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) population in Bhutan. Work has been initiated on preliminary assessment of mitochondrial genetic diversity of the species from various nesting colonies in Bhutan. Samples used in this study were collected by RSPN Biologists during nest monitoring of this species in some of the known localities within Bhutan.

**D. Genetic monitoring of Snow Leopard in Wangchuck Centennial Park, Bhutan**

WGP is offering support to Wangchuck Centennial Park, Bhutan in genetic analysis of Snow Leopard (*Uncia uncia*) faecal samples, in order to estimate minimum number of individual present in the area. This is the largest National Park of Bhutan, bordering Tibet to the North and with an altitudinal range of 2,500 - 5,100 metres. It is worth mentioning that the snow leopard faecal samples collected by the Park authority comes from a high altitudinal range of 3,100 - 4,700 metres.

## FUTURE PLANS

- To undertake genetic research on understanding the importance of the wildlife corridors for various species.
- To undertake molecular phylogeny and taxonomic work on various cryptic mammalian and avian species in Northeast India.
- To provide technical support to various Forest Departments and Research Institutions in genetic analysis based population monitoring of various threatened wildlife species.
- To provide support towards forensic DNA analysis of rhino poaching cases in Assam.



Researcher from WGP Aaranyak with the staff of Pakke Forest Department during field survey in January-February 2014

### CONTACT:

#### **Udayan Borthakur**

Head, Wildlife Genetics Programme  
[udayan@aaranyak.org](mailto:udayan@aaranyak.org)



# HOG DEER CONSERVATION PROJECT

The hog deer conservation project is the youngest project in Aaranyak, initiated in 2013. Due to pseudo appearance of its abundance in south Asia; the hog deer was not even listed as threatened previously (IUCN, 2013). But in recent years due to extinction of hog deer population from most of its ranges coupled with other threats, the species has been listed as endangered. The main activities targeted under this project are a) ecological research on hog deer and its grassland habitat, b) raise awareness among the mass on the conservation needs of the species.

## KEY ACTIVITIES :

### A. Hog deer Survey in Manas

To determine the status and distribution of hog deer in Manas Tiger Reserve, various methods are employed. To estimate the abundance both from direct sighting and pellets; line transects and plot methods are used. Transects using elephants, vehicle and on foot are surveyed in the regular size grid cells. Abundance estimation using indirect evidence like pellet is also being carried out. At the end of the project both the method will be evaluated so as to know which is the most feasible one to estimate hog deer abundance in this landscape.

### B. Habitat Use Pattern

At present data is collected on how various factors influence the habitat use pattern of hog deer in Manas.

### C. Awareness Campaign

Outreach programmes are conducted to sensitize the local communities. At the same time, message on the upgradation of hog deer to Schedule I from Schedule III of Indian Wildlife Protection Act (1972) is also conveyed during these campaigns.

#### D. Capacity Building of frontline staff

The team gave hands-on training on GPS, range finder etc. to the frontline staff of the anti-poaching camps in Manas National Park as and when possible.



Alolika Sinha during field survey of Hog deer

#### FUTURE PLANS

- Determine hog deer status and assess its conservation threats in northeast India.
- Study the influence of anthropogenic activities on hog deer population in northeast India.
- Use radio telemetry technique to understand the resource utilization pattern.
- Continue the outreach activities to generate awareness regarding hog deer conservation.
- Develop a hog deer conservation plan for the region.



Hog deer awareness campaign around Manas NP

#### CONTACT:

**Alolika Sinha, MSc**

alolika@aaranyak.org

# GLOBE TROTTERS



## Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar

- Attended Sumatran Rhino Crisis Meeting at Singapore from 1-4 April 2013 organized by the Species Survival Commission of IUCN – the International Union for Conservation of Nature.
- Attended the 1st Asian Rhino Range Country meeting at Lampung, Indonesia from 2-3 October 2014 and delivered a presentation on Regional Synthesis and Review of conservation needs and priorities for Asian Rhino.
- Attended a planning meeting of wildlife survey in Myanmar-Thailand border organized by Karen Environmental and Social Action Network meeting and Wildlife 1 organization in Chiang Mai, Thailand on 14-15 October 2013
- Attended the annual Board meeting of International Rhino Foundation at Busch Gardens, Tampa, Florida, USA from 20-22 November 2013.
- Attended the 2nd Rhino Monitoring and Security meeting in Mopani, Kruger National Park in South Africa from 29-31 March 2014 organized by Save the Rhino International, SANParks and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and delivered a presentation on pros and cons of dehorning of rhinos in Assam, India.



## Dr. Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar

- Visited Awely office for review of Awely Red Cap Project, Manas and develop strategy for future from 13-20 June 2013 in Paris, France.
- Presented on the project "Status and trends in wetlands with reference to hydrological connectivity, climate change impacts and implications for biodiversity and community

livelihood: a joint research in selected wetlands of India and Bangladesh" during 25-27 October 2013 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



## Dr. Dilip Chetry

- Attended a workshop on Gibbon Translocation & other best practices in Gibbon Conservation at Phnom Phen in Cambodia.



## Dr. M Firoz Ahmed

- Visited USA during August-October 2013 and presented talk at the UC Davis, California.
- Worked with Dr John Goodrich, Director, Tiger Program, Panthera to prepare a work plan for conservation of Manas National Park and its tigers involving smart patrol and long term tiger, prey and habitat monitoring during the visit in August-October 2013.



## Dr. Partha Jyoti Das

- 'Himalayan Climate Change Adaptation Programme (HICAP) Meeting with AARANYAK' on 17 April 2013; Delivered a presentation on Collaboration of ICIMOD and Aaranyak for action research in northeast India
- Participated in the 'Himalayan Climate Change Adaptation Programme (HICAP) Review and Planning Workshop with Regional Partners' organized by ICIMOD and the Kunming Institute of

Botany on 26□28 August 2013 at Kunming, China; delivered a presentation on HICAP in the Eastern Brahmaputra River Basin(EBRB): A Progress Report

- ‘The Third Pole Expert Workshop: Building cooperation in the Brahmaputra River Basin’ on 19-20 September, 2013, organized by the Third Pole at the Park Village Resort Hotel, Budhanilkantha, Kathmandu, Nepal; delivered a presentation on Resolving conflicts and fostering cooperation in transboundary water management in the Brahmaputra river basin by promoting collaborative scientific research for knowledge building and information sharing.
- ‘Joint research consultation workshop on wetland connectivity’ organized by IUCN-Bangladesh held on 26 October, 2013 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Presented on Status and trends in wetlands with reference to hydrological connectivity, climate change impacts and implications for biodiversity and community livelihood: a case study in Deepar Beel and Maguri Motapung Beel in Assam
- ‘Water Futures: A Dialogue For Young Scholars and Professionals’ organised by the Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, Jamia Millia Islamia, Dhaka University and IUCN held during 21-26 November 2013 at BRAC-CDM, Bangladesh; delivered a presentation on Water conflicts in NE India: Context and Contests
- ‘Consultations on Multi-stakeholders Discussion: Focusing on Lives and Livelihoods in Chars’ on 11 December, 2013, Organised by IUCN under the Ecosystems for Life: A Bangladesh-India Initiative at Imperial Queens Park Hotel Bangkok, Thailand; made a presentation on Ecosystem services and environment security to populations in riverine islands in the Brahmaputra river, Assam, India: A case study in two chars
- ‘Technical Round Table: Dimensions of River Morphology in the GBM Region’ Organised by IUCN, at Imperial Queens Park Hotel, Bangkok on 13 December 2013; delivered a presentation on Linking river morphology to wetland connectivity and livelihoods: A case study in Assam.



**Arup Kr. Das**

Attended Regional training on integrated hydrological modeling on “HIMALA: Climate impacts on snow, glacier and hydrology of the HKH region” at ICIMOD, Kathmandu, Nepal from 18-21 February 2014.



**Alolika Sinha**

- Attended the Darwin Scholarship Programme-Monitoring and communicating biodiversity Programme, held from 20-30 August 2013 in Shrewsbury and Dorking, UK. During the programme she presented a talk on hog deer conservation in Manas.



**Bipul Das**

- Attended the Annual Darwin Scholarship Programme held from 20-30th August, 2013 at Preston-Montford Field Centre, Shrewsbury & Juniper Hall Field Centre, Dorking, London.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## RECEIPTS PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2014

RECEIPTS	AMOUNT(₹)	PAYMENTS	AMOUNT(₹)
To <u>Opening Balance</u>		By Project Expenses against Foreign Contribution	461,06,761.19
Fixed Deposits with BOB 22,85,415.00 UCI 4,18,940.00 Bank of Baroda 36,23,072.77 Panjab and Sind Bank, Dispur 13,896.00 State Bank of India Dispur 54,874.44 Union Bank of India 8,25,731.00	72,21,929.21	By Advance for Project Expenses	36,36,836.80
		By Audit Fees	44,045.00
		By Accounting charge	9,500.00
To Donation received 6,01,400.00		By Salaries	2,29,406.00
To Membership fees 6,700.00		By Bank Charges	14,580.00
To Foreign Contribution Received 602,79,449.78		By Misc Expenses	595.00
To Bank Interest 4,26,481.00		By Loan from Bank of Baroda repaid	5,00,000.00
To Interest on Bank Fixed Deposits 4,74,243.00		By Tax Deducted at Source	2,14,367.00
To Recovery of Project Advances 49,17,406.56		By Closing Balance	
To Royalty from Publication 42,947.00		Fixed Deposits with BO 127,33,233.00 UCI 6,29,586.00 Bank of Baroda 59,83,961.12 SBI (TRCI Account) 93,159.00 Punjab National bank 2,03,433.00 Punjab & Sind Bank, Di 2,03,433.00 State Bank of India, Dis 2,03,433.00 UTI 2,03,433.00 Union Bank of India 2,03,433.00	204,57,104.12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>739,70,556.55</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>712,13,185.11</b>

Place: Guwahati  
Date: 22/03/2014

For & on Behalf of  
AAHANYAK

As per our report of even date  
BISHWAJIT RARUJAI & ASSOCIATES  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Sd/-  
(Banjan Bhuyan)  
PRESIDENT, AAHANYAK

Sd/-  
(CA. BISWAJIT RARUJAI)  
PARINIR  
M. No.003038  
FRN.013817C

<u>Receipts as on 31.03.2014</u>		
	Royalty from Publication	42,947.00
	Recovery of Project Advances	49,17,406.56
	Interest on Bank Fixed Deposits	4,74,243.00
	Bank Interest	4,26,481.00
	Interest on Bank Fixed Deposits	4,74,243.00
	Recovery of Project Advances	49,17,406.56
Donation received	Royalty from Publication	42,947.00
Membership fees		6,700.00
Foreign Contribution Received		602,79,449.78
Bank Interest		4,26,481.00
Interest on Bank Fixed Deposits		4,74,243.00
Recovery of Project Advances		49,17,406.56
Donation received	Foreign Contribution Received	602,79,449.78
	Membership fees	6,700.00
	Donation received	6,01,400.00

<u>Payments as on 31.03.2014</u>		
	Tax Deducted at Source	2,14,367.00
	Loan from Bank of Baroda repaid	5,00,000.00
	Misc Expenses	585.00
	Bank Charges	14,580.00
	Salaries	2,29,406.00
	Accounting charge	9,500.00
	Audit Fees	44,045.00
	Advance for Project Expenses	36,36,836.80
	Project Expenses	461,06,761.19
Project Expenses		461,06,761.19
Advance for Project Expenses		36,36,836.80
Audit Fees		44,045.00
Bank Charges		14,580.00
Salaries		2,29,406.00
Misc. Expenses		585.00
Accounting charge		9,500.00

## INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2014

EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT(₹)	INCOME	AMOUNT(₹)
To Audit Fees	44,045.00	By Bank Interest	4,26,481.00
To Bank Charges	14,580.00	By Interest on Bank Fixed Deposits	4,74,243.00
To Salaries	2,29,406.00	By Royalty from Publication	42,947.00
To Misc. Expenses	585.00	By Membership fees	6,700.00
To Accounting charge	9,500.00	By Donation received	6,01,400.00
<b>To Surplus of Income over Expenditure</b>	<b>12,53,655.00</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,51,771.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15,51,771.00</b>

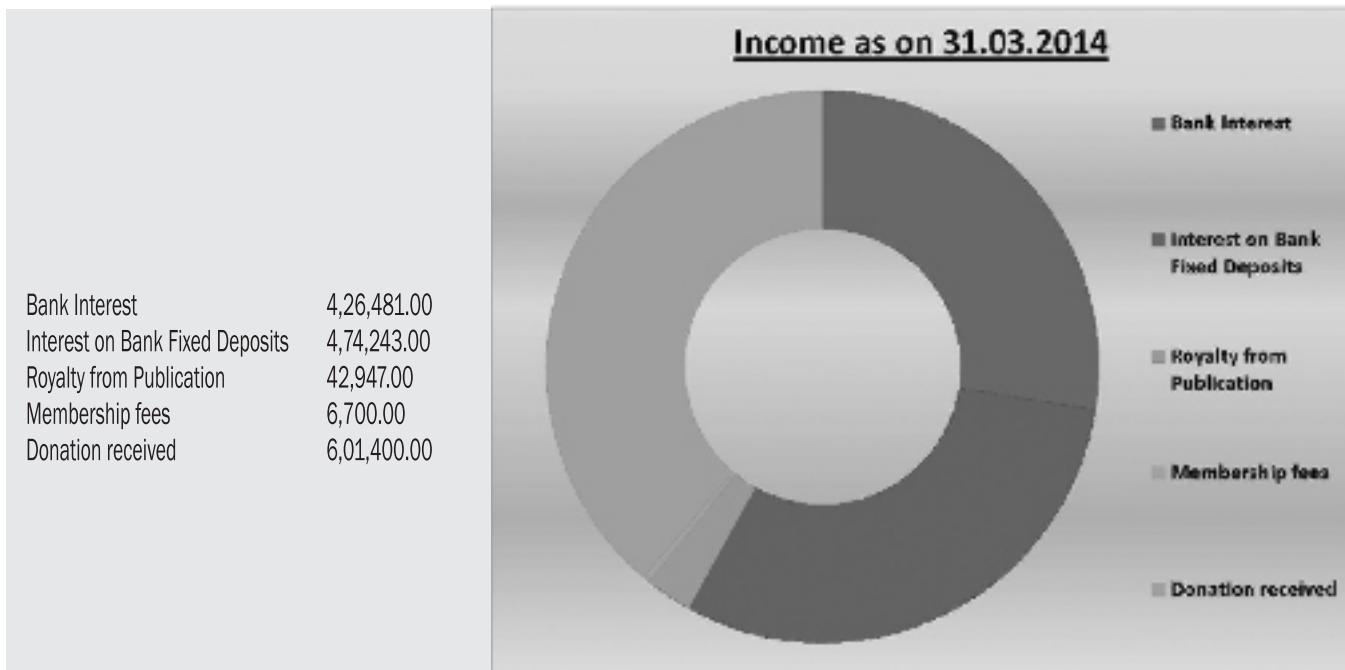
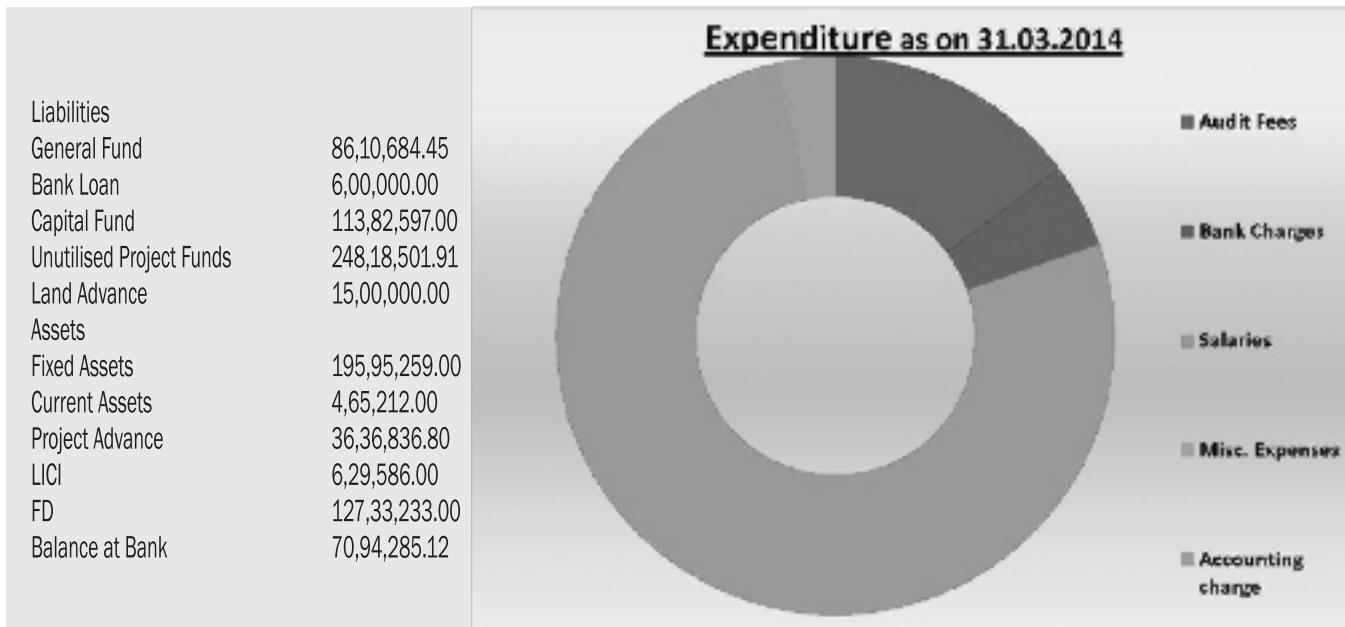
Place: Guwahati  
Date: 22/09/2014

For & on Behalf of  
AARANYAK

As per our report of even date  
FCR DHAWAN PANDEY & ASSOCIATES  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Sd/-  
(Ranjan Bhuyan)  
PRESIDENT, AARANYAK

Sd/-  
(CA. BISWAJIT BARUAH)  
PARTNER  
M.No. 063538  
FRN.013617C



## BALANCE SHEET AS ON 31ST MARCH 2014

LIABILITIES	AMOUNT(₹)	ASSETS	AMOUNT(₹)
<b>FUND ACCOUNT</b>			
<b>General Fund</b>			
Opening Balance	73,57,029.45	Fixed Assets	105,95,259.00
Add: Surplus of Income and Expenditure	12,53,655.00	Current Assets	
	86,10,684.45	Tax Deducted at Source	4,65,212.00
Loan from Bank	6,00,000.00	Advance for Project Expenses	36,36,836.80
Capital Fund out of Project Expenses		LICL	6,29,586.00
Opening Balance	113,79,093.00	Fixed Deposites with BOB	127,33,233.00
Add: Additions during the year	3,504.00	Punjab & Sind Bank, Dibrugarh	2,03,433.00
Unutilised Project Funds	248,18,501.81	State Bank of India, Dibrugarh	2,03,433.00
Advance against Land	15,00,000.00	Bank of Baroda	59,83,861.12
		Union Bank of India	2,03,433.00
		SBI (TRCL Account)	93,159.00
		Punjab National bank	2,03,433.00
		UTI	2,03,433.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>469,11,783.36</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>441,54,411.92</b>

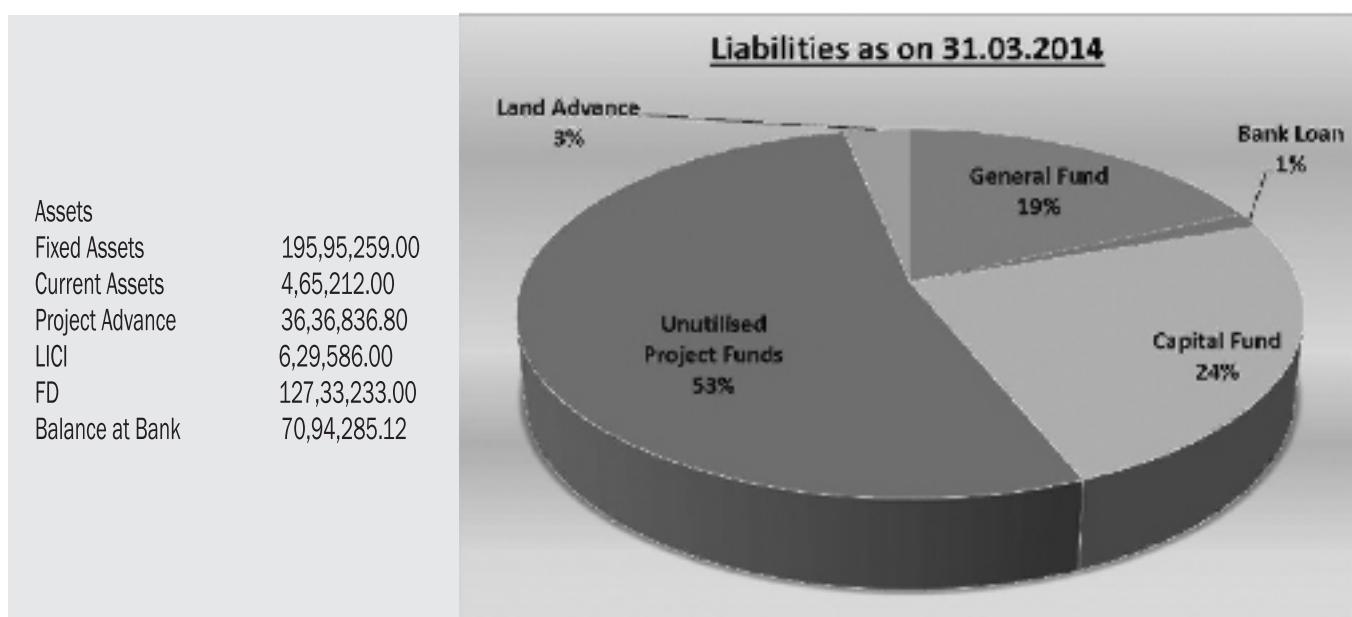
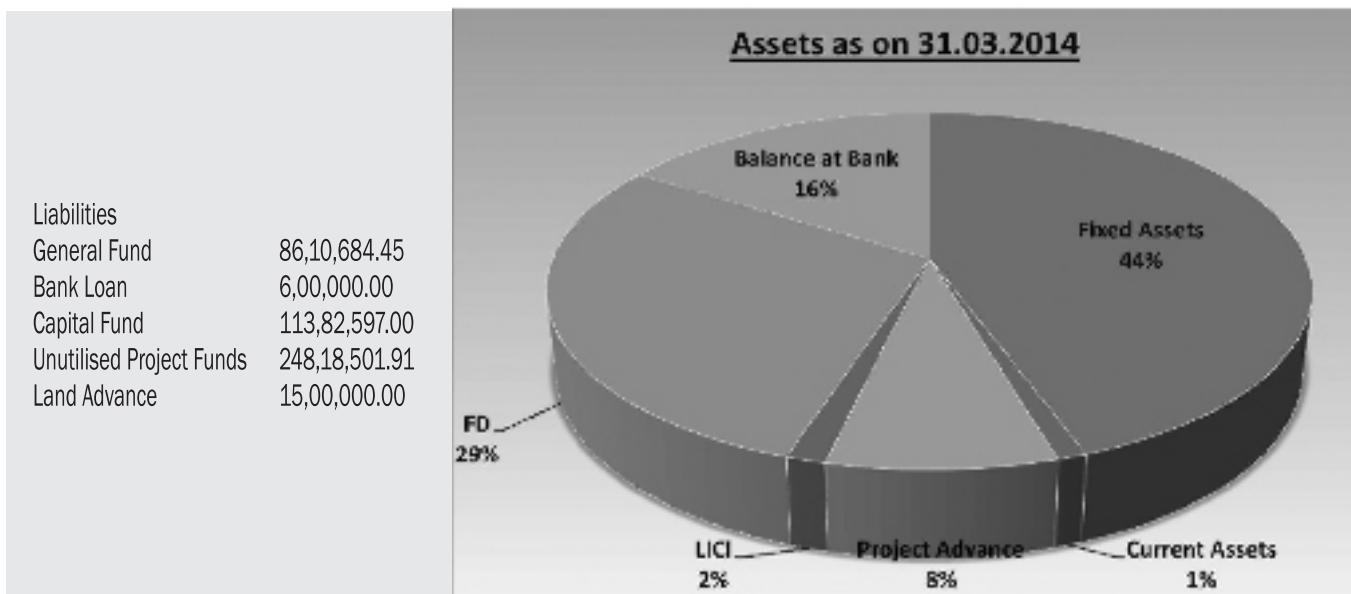
Place: Guwahati  
Date: 22/08/2014

For & on Behalf of  
AARANYAK

Sd/-  
(Ranjan Bhuyan:  
PRESIDENT, AARANYAK)

As per our report of even date  
FOR DHAWAN PANDEY & ASSOCIATES  
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Sd/-  
(CA. BISWAJIT BARUAH:  
PARTNER  
M.No.063538  
FRN.013617C)



# OUR GRATITUDE



FELD Entertainment Inc.

# FIND US

## Registered Office:

Aaranyak  
50 Samanwoy Path (survey)  
PO: Beltola, Guwahati - 781028  
Assam :: INDIA  
Email: info@aaranyak.org  
Tel: +91-361-2230250/2228418  
Fax: +91-361-2228418  
website: [www.aaranyak.org](http://www.aaranyak.org)

## FIELD RESEARCH STATIONS OF AARANYAK:

### Kaziranga National Park

C/o M Firoz Ahmed,  
Pilkhana, Kohora-785609, Assam  
Contact Person: Arif Hussain  
Mobile: 9854797419  
Email: arif@aaranyak.org , arif.aaranyak@gmail.com

### Golaghat District

C/o Girish Lahon,  
Near LIC office, Bokakhat- 785612, Assam  
Contact Person: Jyoti P Das  
Mobile: +919435121752  
Email: jyoti@aaranyak.org

### Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary and Jorhat District

Gibbon Conservation Centre, Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary  
PO: Mariani Pin- 785634, Assam  
Contact Person: Dilip Chetry  
Mobile: +91 9435043892  
Email: dilip@aaranyak.org

### Manas National Park

C/o Biraj Das  
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Mobile: +919401650463  
Email: anukul@aaranyak.org

# AARANYAK IN ACTION









**Regional Coordinators**

Eastern Assam Zone-  
Sailendra Mohan Das, M.Sc.  
Rajib Rudra Tariang, M.Sc.

**Western Assam Zone-**

Ashoke Kumar Das, Ph.D.

**Legal Advisors-**

Gautam Uzir, Advocate-Gauhati High Court  
Bhaben Narzary, Advocate-Gauhati High Court

**Executive Committee**

for 2012-2014

**President**

Mr Ranjan Bhuyan

**Vice President**

Dr Dilip Chetry

**Secretary General**

Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar

**Programme Secretary**

Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar

**Publicity Secretary**

Dr M Firoz Ahmed

**Organizing Secretary**

Dr Abdul Wakid (I/C)

**Finance Secretary**

Mr Jimut Sarma

**Executive Members**

Mr Shyamal Datta

Dr Ranu Roy

Dr Pranjit Sarmah

Mr Udayan Borthakur

**Research Advisory Board**

1. Prof. S.K. Dutta
2. Prof. Qamar Qureshi
3. Prof. D.C. Goswami
4. Dr. Anwaruddin Chodhury, D.Sc.
5. Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam
6. Secretary General of Aaranyak as member Secretary of RAB

**STAFF LIST - 1st April, 2013-1st March, 2014**

1	Bibhab Kumar Talukdar	Ph. D
2	Partha Jyoti Das	Ph. D
3	Abdul Wakid	Ph. D
4	Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar	Ph. D
5	M. Firoz Ahmed	Ph. D
6	Udayan Borthakur	M. Sc
7	Pranjali Kumar Das	M. Sc
8	Dipul Saikia	HS
9	Dipankar Lahkar	M. Sc

10	Siddhartha Sarmah	M. Com
11	Sunny Deory	M.Sc
12	Jayanta Kumar Pathak	MSW
13	Anukul Nath	M. Sc
14	Ajoy Kumar Das	LLB
15	Arif Hussain	B.A
16	Madhumita Borthakur	B.A, B. Ed
17	Manoj Kumar Das	HS
18	Nripen Kumar Nath	HS
19	Anil Kumar Das	
20	Pradeep Barman	
21	Jyoti Prasad Das	Ph. D
22	Arun Basfor	
23	Kabita Bezbarua	
24	Tridip Saikia	
25	Alolika Sinha	M.Sc
26	Masfiq Alam Hazarika	MBA
27	Mandira Buragohain	M.A
28	Manas Kr. Bhattacharjya	M.Sc
29	Ashok Dey	B.Com
30	Purnima Devi Barman	M.Sc
31	Namita Brahma	M.Sc
32	Kamal Machary	B.A
33	Munjaali Tokbipi	B.A, PGNRM
34	Bhaskor Barukial	B.A
35	Kumar Brahma	B.A
36	Kripananda Ray	HS
37	Uttam Saikia	
38	Moni Kumar Haloi	
39	Abdul Motaleb Ahmed	
40	Koutuk Talukdar	
41	Pranjit Sarma	M.A
42	Jayanta Kumar Roy	M.Sc
43	Ratul Phukan	
44	Gaurav Neog	
45	Bipul Dolay	
46	Diganta Bora	
47	Jatin Buraagohain	
48	Shikha Jyoti Hazarika	M.A
49	Gauranga Mandal	
50	Niranjan Bhuyan	B.A
51	Bipul Kumar Das	B.A, LLB
52	Anumita Phukan	M.Sc
53	Zakir Islam Bora	MBA
54	Anjan Talukdar	M.Sc
55	Pronob Jyoti Bori	B.A
56	Dipmoni Nath	
57	Rizawana Tasmin Hazarika	MSW
58	Arup Kumar Das	M.Sc, M. Phil
59	Chandan Ri	M.Sc
60	Bhaskar Jyoti Bora	M.Sc
61	Pooja Kakoty	M.Sc

