

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2002-2003



*Aaranyak*

*A Society for Biodiversity Conservation*



*Aaranyak*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Large scale destruction of primary forest, loss of habitat, unabated poaching of precious wildlife, lack of people's awareness and initiatives in northeast India obliged few young minds to initiate the inception of Aaranyak in September 1989. Since then Aaranyak has never looked back. Aaranyak has emerged as one of the leading conservation and research organization in the field of biodiversity and other important environmental aspects relevant to northeast India. It is run by young professionals dedicated and committed to the cause of conservation. Thanks to all wellwishers of Aaranyak for the continued support and cooperation that has enabled Aaranyak to be what it is today.

During 2002-03, Aaranyak initiated few more projects to address the conservation need of the northeast India. One of the salient projects is the 10 years Wireless Communication Support project to Kaziranga National Park (World Heritage Site) in Assam in association with the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF) of United Kingdom. During the period the Netherland Committee of IUCN (NCIUCN) has also come forward to assist Aaranyak for a community based wetland conservation project in Deepor Beel, a Ramsar Site. The human-elephant conflict study and awareness project in Darrang and Sonitpur district of Assam was completed in March 2003 with a year long support provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Assam Science Technology and Environment Council (ASTECC) has also supported Aaranyak in the awareness and motivation project for the Deepor Beel fringe villagers to conserve the wetland. The Wildlife Protection Society of India donated a Canon Photocopier to Aaranyak that has

become an important asset for conservation education projects.

During 2002-03, Hillol Jyoti Singha, Publicity Secretary of Aaranyak visited USA for a month to take part in a training on field mammalogy in the School of Biological Science, University of Michigan, USA. Programme Secretary, M. Firoz Ahmed spent about 5 months in different parts of USA to work with the New York Turtle and Tortoises Society, Gopher Tortoise Council and Chelonian Research Institute as a visiting biologist. He also visited the Natural History Museum in London, United Kingdom for taxonomic study. Dilip Chetry, Primatologist and Research Coordinator, attended the 19th Congress of International Primatological Society in Beijing, China. He also attended the International Conference on Himalayan Biodiversity in Kathmandu, Nepal. These capacity building opportunities will further strengthen Aaranyak to work scientifically to conserve biodiversity and improve the environmental quality in northeast India in the coming years.

Notable visitors to Aaranyak office during 2002-03 included the US Consul General from Kolkata, Mr. George N. Sibley and Mrs. Debjani Roychowdhury, Economic Section of US Consulate, Kolkata. Other visitors included Dr. Robert Horwich of Community Conservation Inc, USA. The Secretary General and the Vice President was invited for a breakfast meeting with the US Ambassador, Mr. Robert Blackwill held in Guwahati to discuss about the conservation and environmental issues in northeast India. Dr. Karl Stromayer of US Fish and Wildlife Service visited the elephant project sites of Aaranyak in Sonitpur district to assess the progress of the project.

