



# STORK

A Media Publication To Save & Conserve Our Mother Nature  
for Members General People and Organisations

## Nature's Foster

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### **Human –Elephant Conflict in Goalpara District**

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Goalpara, The lower Assam district in the geographic location of 25°33' N to 26 °12' N and 90°07' E to 91° 05' E with an area of 2693 Sq.Km is surrounded by continuous hill ranges of Meghalaya in South and the mighty Brahmaputra in the north. The other two sides are surrounded by the Kamrup district and Dhubri District on the East and west respectively.

The natural beauty of Goalpara district has been attracting the saints and scholars since ancient times is now facing severe green crisis, which has affected the very survival of the giant mammal, the Asiatic elephant (*Elephas maximus*), locally known as Hati and also Ganesh Thakur. Contraction of Reserve forest area due to encroachment and large scale clearance of forest in Assam as well as in Meghalaya in the last two decades due to various reason has compelled the jumbos to come out of the forests and depend on the paddy fields and human habitats in the area has not only lowered its significance in the Goalparia folk culture but also lost its respect among the villagers. This has developed an undeclared war between the Elephant and the human population of the area and as a result at least 18 persons has lost their lives during last few years and affected the agriculture in around 3100 ha during last year.



### **AMPHIBIANS IN NORTH – EAST INDIA**

The Amphibians, are also known as Tetrapods, because of their four foot.They are vertebrate pioneer of land. **They are in the transitional habitat between land and water.**The transition from water to land was an extremely difficult step because the physical condition on the land are very different from those in water.So the succesfull adaptation to the terrestrial environment neccessitated the change throughout the body.During the evolution of the terrestrial vertebrate or tetrapods, there has been a continual improvement in their adjustment to their terrestrial condition.The first step in these transition was made by Crossopterygians.The amphibians acquired additional terrestrial features and reptile still more.But the pinnacle of terrestrial adaptation is acieved only by reptiles descendants the birds and the mamals.

The amphibians are typically cold blooded animals or biologically poikiothermic.**Their body temperature adapt with the external environment and change according to the homeostasis.**They are unable to maintain very high temperature.Change in the environmental temperature have direct effect over their metabolic activities.Thus the amphibians always avoid low temperature and drought.To pass the chilling temperature of winter amphibians moves to those regions that do not freeze and enter a dormant state.This period of inactivity in winter is called winter sleep or HYBERNATION.

2 Megophrys parva  
district and Kaziranga

Kamrup

The program on conservation of the golden langur was initiated with Margot Marsh Biodiversity Foundation funds in 1997 by Community Conservation, Inc. under the auspices of the Indo-US Primate Project (IUSPP) with the general intention of carrying forward some of the regional goals of that project which was completed in 2001-2. Due to internal complications in the Indo-US Primate Project which effected the Golden Langur Conservation project, it was necessary to realign this project with an organization which had the necessary requirements to receive the foreign currency grant according to the laws of India (Foreign Contributions Regulation Act, FCRA). These complications led to Community Conservation, Inc. unsuccessfully applying for a liaison office in Bongaigaon, unsuccessfully finding a partner NGO, and then working with a partner NGO, Nature's Foster to help them apply for FCRA status. Since Nature's Foster had not received the required status by February 2003 and since there was no guarantee of their receiving it, I began searching for some other possibilities to resolve the problem. At the suggestion of Dave Ferguson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who had been an advisor to the Indo-US Primate Project, I contacted Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, President of Aaranyak who showed interest both in acting as the project sponsor and in jointly pursuing the goals of the project.

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While the political ramifications of the Indo-US Primate Project led to many stressful social interactions between participating NGOs and slowed the project's processes by not being able to directly disperse project funds, my visits were able to maintain project continuity during this unfortunate hiatus. However, with the support of Aaranyak, based in Guwahati and with an office in Bongaigaon, the Golden Langur Conservation Project can initiate a new start with the remaining Margot Marsh Biodiversity foundation funds. This report is as much a report on the proposed action of the newly formed coalition of NGOs as it is a report on recent past activities.

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## II. Revised Program

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Prior to my visit to Assam, I carried out correspondence with Dr. Talukdar and Dr. Dilip Chetry, a recent graduate of Gauhati University graduate program and a field researcher from the Indo-US Primate Project, who is creating a primate conservation plan for Aaranyak. On arrival in Guwahati I conferred with both Chetry and Talukdar and arrived at an agreement to work jointly with Aaranyak. Aaranyak will function as the financial coordinator of the Golden Langur Conservation project and Dr. Chetry, who is carrying out research on the golden langur agreed to function as a part time project coordinator jointly under Community Conservation, Inc. and Aaranyak. In this role, Chetry will function in place

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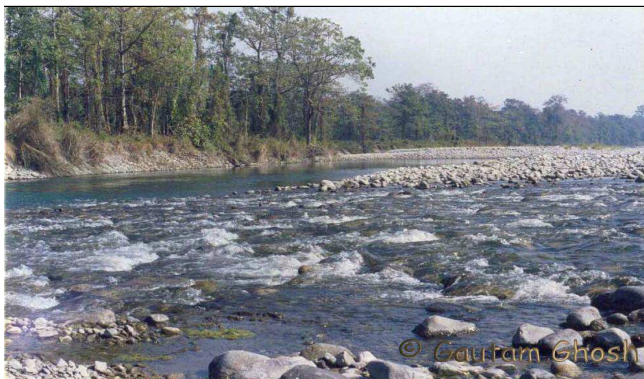
of the original concept of a full time office and coordinator in Bongaigaon. Dr. Chetry will make visits as needed to western Assam to coordinate project activities and act as an in-country contact to the Community Conservation office.

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In regard to the new project beginning, I preceded Chetry to Bongaigaon and called a meeting of participating NGOs which included members of the Bongaigaon Aaranyak office, Nature's Foster, Green Heart Nature Club, New Horizons and Green Forest Conservation as well as Chetry and Dr. Jihosuo Biswas, another recent Ph.D graduate and past IUSPP field researcher who is currently carrying out research on golden langurs. Due to a series of almost continuous bandhs for two weeks, a full participant meeting was initially not able to be held due to the bandhs' curtailment of travel in the area, but all invited participants were individually met with by myself and Chetry or by me alone. (A bandh is an unofficial stoppage of daily travel activities by any of the many militant political groups, to exercise their political power. Bandhs are enforced by the threat of bodily harm and property damage to vehicles). These bandhs were so intense at this time due to the fact that the Bodo Liberation Tigers, the largest militant group pushing for Bodo rights has just signed an accord with the Central Government. The second

group, the National Bodo Liberation Front seems to be moving in a similar direction. This has worried the non-Bodo groups which have been publicly agitating and calling bandhs. Despite this extra political turmoil we feel that this accord will lead to a calmer political situation in the future and bodes well for future forest protection (see Appendix 1).

Thus, a series of individual meetings of various composition were carried out by myself and Chetry on February 13, the only day Chetry was available during my visit, due to the short notice of my engaging him as the project coordinator. Together we met with all participants except Green Heart Nature Club and Green Forest Conservation. Collectively the mini-meetings resulted in an explanation of the project's current status and the prospective roles that each of the organizations will play in the project. Then, with an easing of the bandh restrictions we were able to hold a meeting of all groups with the exception of Aaranyak, at the Kokrajhar office of Green Heart. It was especially successful in bringing the groups together to discuss individual intergroup projects. What was most important was the formation of an umbrella group for these western Assam NGOs called Manas Biosphere Conservation Forum. Some simple agreements were made with a schedule for quarterly meetings. The group felt that this forum would collectively give them more power to get their conservation efforts accomplished. The Forum agreed on the following points: 1. All would respect areas of current on-going work; others wishing to work in those areas would inform those groups already carrying out programs in those areas, 2. An Executive Committee composed of 2 representatives from each group would meet quarterly, 3. The meetings would be hosted by groups on a rotational basis with the next to be held in Koila Moila on April 26, 2003, 4. There would be one annual meeting with all members invited, 5. While meetings would be held by the Executive Committee they would be open to all including individuals working in the western Assam areas, 6. Mr. S.N Sen of Nature's Foster agreed to create a draft of a Forum constitution of potential rules and regulations which would be discussed at the next meeting; 7. Dr. Robert Horwich, Community Conservation, Inc. would be adviser to the group.



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**Golden Langur Information Poster** - Green Heart Nature Club has created a beautiful rendition of a golden langur mother and infant which will be the basis for the first joint action of the new coalition of NGOs under the Golden Langur Conservation project. We will publish a total of 6000 posters with all participating NGOs listed under the langur picture. On the back will be text in either Bodo or Assamese telling about the golden langurs. Each NGO partner will get a share of posters to distribute to the villages they are working with.

**Joint Golden Langur Censusing** - I have distributed a GPS unit each to Aaranyak, Nature's Foster and Green Heart Nature Club. With these and with the help of the NGOs and primate researchers Drs. Dilip Chetry and Jihosuo Biswas, we hope to get more complete and accurate censuses in the following areas, Chakrashila, Nayekgaon, Kakoijana, Koila Moila area along the Bhutan border and Kanamakra River, Ultapani area in the Chirrang Reserve Forest and eventually in other areas of the Kachugaon and Ripu Reserve Forests and other fragmented forests in the Chakrashila and Kakoijana-Naketi areas. Two methods of langur censusing will be used: 1) forest transects similar to those carried out by IUSPP previously; 2) more intensive surveys of the various areas will be carried out for 2-3 weeks. We expect that the latter will yield 85-100 % of the area groups. After the surveys are complete we will expect to have comparable densities, a comparison of the two censusing methods, and population data for each

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