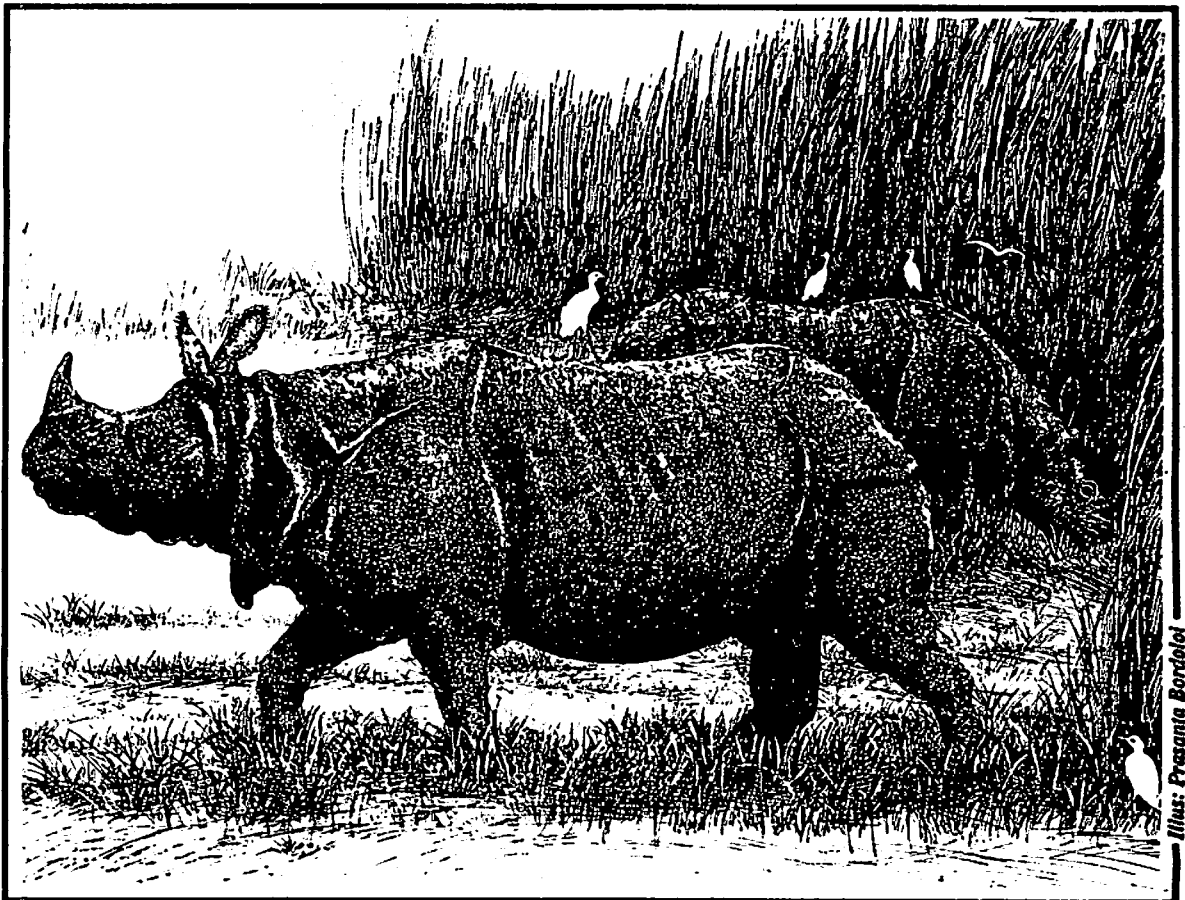


# THE RHINO FOUNDATION

FOR NATURE IN  
NORTH EAST INDIA

Newsletter Vol. 1, No. 1 October, 1996



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# The Rhino Foundation in the Field

Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhury  
Chief Executive

**T**he Rhino Foundation for Nature in North East India was established in 1994 as a non-governmental organisation to help preserve the Great Indian one-horned rhinoceros and other endangered wildlife species and their habitat in North East India in collaboration with the Forest Department and local NGOs. The Foundation started functioning actively in May, 1995, when a full time Chief Executive joined the organisation.

The foundation is supported by nine Tea Companies, and is a registered charitable Trust with its headquarters at Guwahati, Assam.

**The aims and objectives of the Foundation are:-**

- ❊ To promote and assist environment and wildlife conservation in the North East India.
- ❊ To assist the Forest Department by donating wireless systems, protective arms, welfare incentives and other equipment needed by the staff of parks and sanctuaries.
- ❊ To carry out conservation schemes including education, and welfare for inhabitants of villages on the fringe of the National Parks.

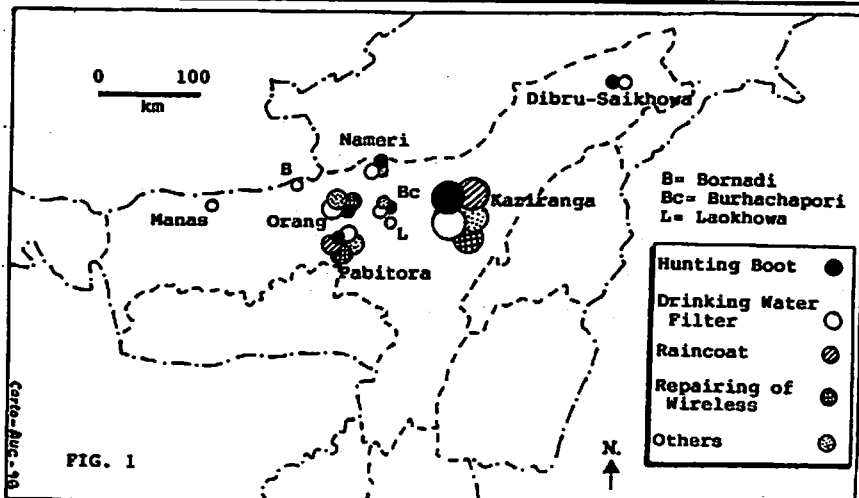
- ❊ To establish a network among villagers living around wildlife sanctuaries, aimed at stopping poaching and reducing activities which harm the natural habitat and to fund reward schemes for informers on poaching, particularly of the rhino.
- ❊ To support other non-governmental organisations with similar objectives.
- ❊ To assist Forest Departments, NGOs and individuals in research programmes and management techniques.
- ❊ To assist with the publication of conservation literature, for distribution among the local population.

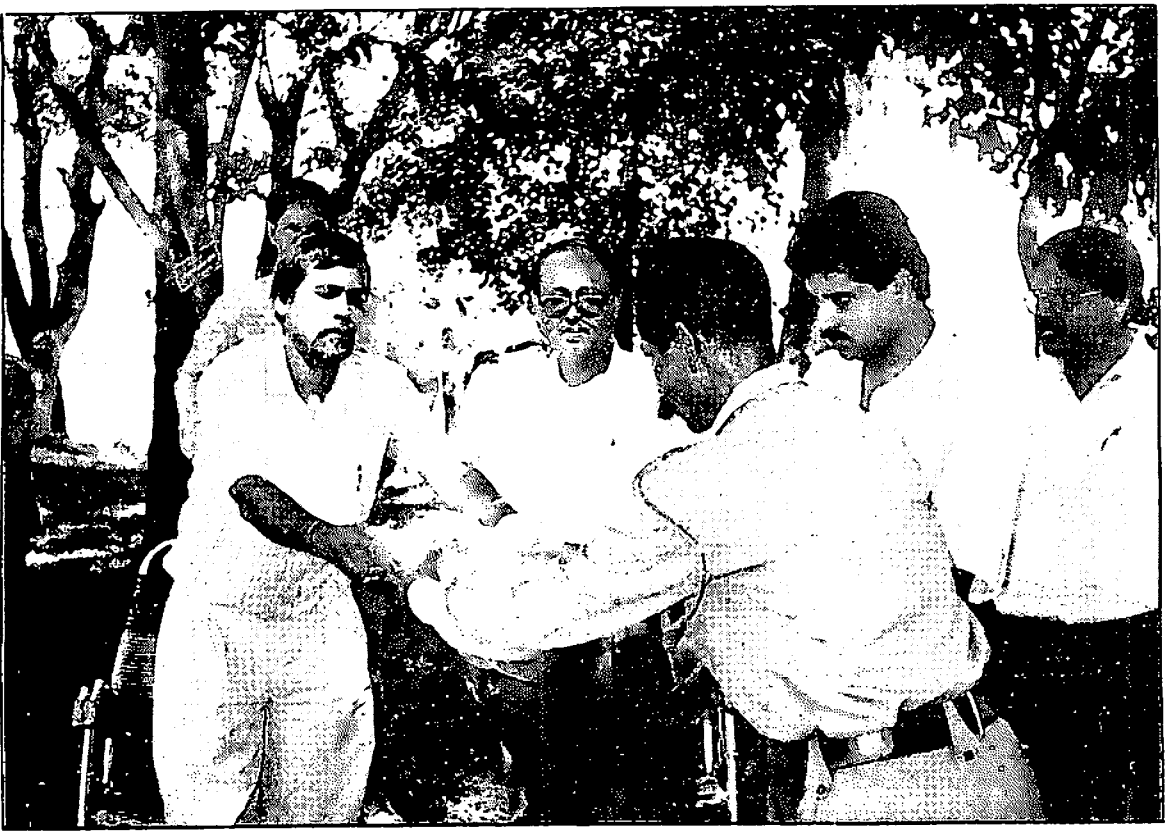
With this background, the following projects were undertaken in 1995-96.

## 1. Requirement of Field Staff.

**i) Hunting boots:** These are essential for the staff who have to patrol on foot in the Parks and Sanctuaries. A total of 859 pairs were distributed as follows:-

Kaziranga National Park	540 pairs
Western Assam Wildlife Division	111 "
(Burhachapori & Nameri Sanctuaries)	





**Mr. Nagen Sharma, hon'ble Forest Minister of Assam distributing raincoats to the Forest staff at Pabitora. The Chief Executive and the DFO (Wildlife), Nagaon, are also seen in the picture.**

*Photo : Kulojyoti Lahkar.*

Orang (Rajiv Gandhi) Sanctuary	100 "
Pabitora Sanctuary	83 "
Dibru-Saikhowa Sanctuary	25 "

ii) **Raincoats** : Extremely important for the patrolling staff during the monsoon months (May to October); 250 raincoats were given to Kaziranga National Park and 65 to Pabitora Sanctuary. However, more are needed for the other important Rhino areas such as Manas, Orang, etc.

iii) **Drinking water filters** : The Forest staff stationed at different camps (mostly in remote areas) often have to drink water from unhygienic open wells and shallow tubewells. Most staff suffer from water borne disease which hampers efficient performance in the field.

The Foundation has provided 200 portable drinking water filters (aluminium) to different reserves, the break -up being :

<i>Kaziranga National Park</i>	...	<i>120Nos</i>
<i>Manas National Park</i>	...	<i>20 "</i>
<i>Pabitora Sanctuary</i>	...	<i>16 "</i>
<i>Orang Sanctuary</i>	...	<i>20 "</i>
<i>Burhachapori Sanctuary</i>	...	<i>5 "</i>
<i>Nameri Sanctuary</i>	...	<i>5 "</i>
<i>Bornadi Sanctuary</i>	...	<i>4 "</i>
<i>Laokhowa Sanctuary</i>	...	<i>5 "</i>
<i>Dibru-Saikhowa Sanctuary</i>	...	<i>5 "</i>

(iv) **Medical facilities** : Mr. Rustam Ali, a temporary member of the Forest staff of Orang Sanctuary who was injured during an encounter with poachers was provided better treatment at Guwahati for his gun shot injury. This has acted as a morale booster for the entire staff of Orang (Rajiv Gandhi) Sanctuary.

## **2. Reward Scheme:**

i) **Printing of Posters, etc** : Two

bicolor, low cost posters, one depicting two globally threatened birds, the White - winged wood duck and the Bengal florican, and the other depicting some endangered mammals such as the Indian one-horned rhino, elephant, tiger, etc., were produced by the Foundation. The posters in the local language have been widely distributed among villagers, schools, and Government offices, to promote the need for conservation.

ii) **Assistance & Rewards:** The Foundation assisted the family members of the late Samsul Haque who was the key informer in Orang Sanctuary. He was brutally murdered by a gang of armed poachers. The Foundation awarded Rs. 10,000/- to the widow for his contribution in helping the authorities to check rhino poaching in Orang. The killing of Haque had shattered the anti - poaching network in Orang, the home of the second largest rhino- population in India. The villagers stopped cooperating with the Forest Department. The assistance given by the Foundation has to a great extent restored the network and the confidence of the villagers. This has been followed up by other activities such as the holding of Motivation and Veterinary camps.

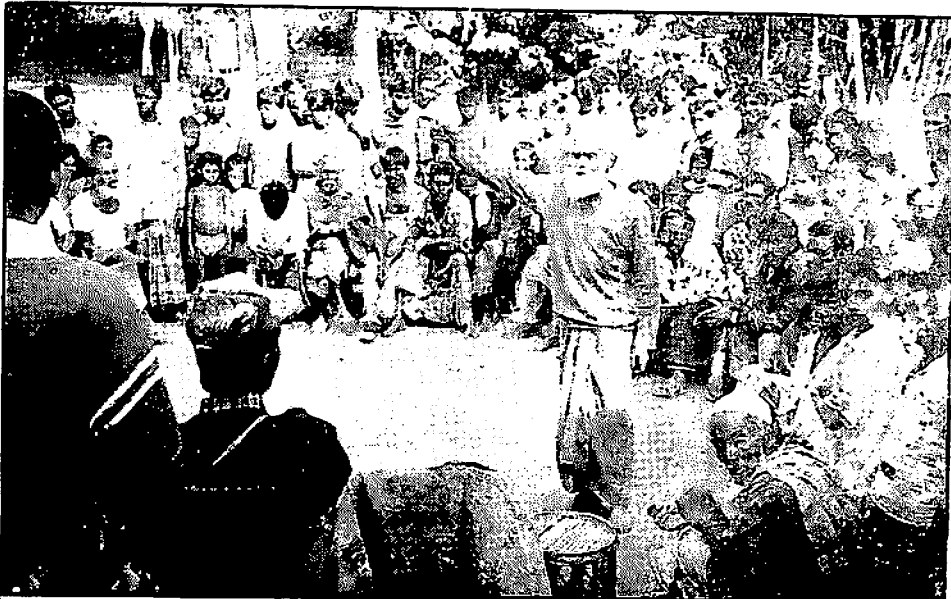
### 3. Eco-Development.

1) **Veterinary Camps:** During the last one and half years, as many as 13 such camps were organised in the fringe areas of different parks and sanctuaries. The area-wise break up is as follows:

<i>Kaziranga</i>	<i>3 camps ( 7-9 Oct. 1995; 21- 23 Jan. 1996)</i>
<i>Manas</i>	<i>2 camps (9-11,16&amp; 17 March, 1996)</i>
<i>Nameri</i>	<i>2 camps (1-3 July, 1995; 16&amp;17 Sept. 1995)</i>
<i>Pabitora</i>	<i>1 camp (11&amp;12 November, 1995)</i>
<i>Garampani</i>	<i>1 camp (23-25 November , 1995)</i>
<i>Laokhowa</i>	<i>1 camp (10 &amp; 11 Feb., 1996)</i>
<i>Orang</i>	<i>2 camps (26-28 January, and 14 August, 1996).</i>
<i>Chakrasila</i>	<i>1 camp (25-27 November, 1995).</i>

The holding of veterinary camps had three main objectives:

*A motivation camp in progress near Pabitora Sanctuary, the most densely inhabited rhino reserve in the world.*



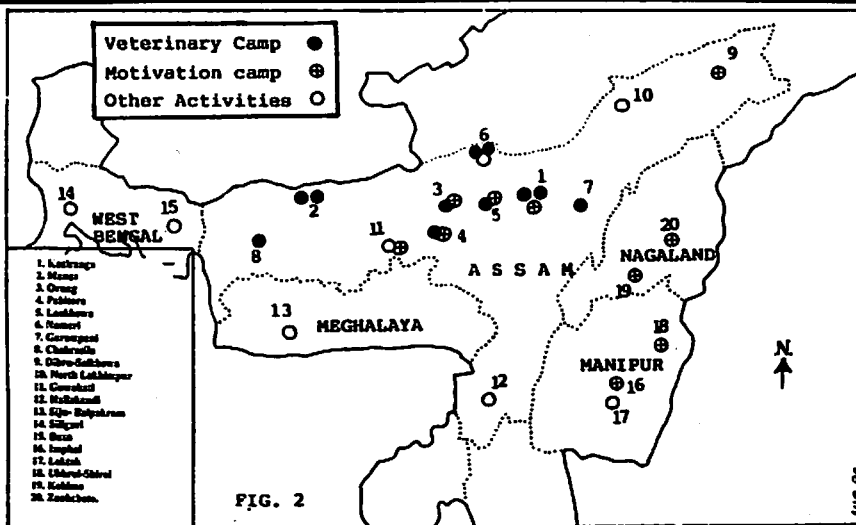


FIG. 2

a) To create an immune belt along the fringe areas of parks and sanctuaries so that wild herbivorous animals including the rhino, elephant, wild buffalo, deer, remain safe from diseases such as Foot-and-mouth, Anthrax, etc.

A large number of animals die every year due to various diseases which are recorded as "natural deaths". Often the carcasses are located quite a few days after the actual death, resulting in difficulty in ascertaining the real cause by Post Mortem examinations.

b) To motivate the villagers and ensure their support to the park or sanctuary.

During such camps, the villagers get the benefit of free treatment for their domestic cattle, pigs and chickens. Usually in remote areas veterinary facilities are not available and, even if some units are there, they are without sufficient infrastructure; often relying on expired or outdated medicines.

About 7500 cattle (including buffalo) were inoculated against Anthrax, Foot-and-mouth, etc. Goats, sheep, pigs and poultry were also treated. Departmental elephants used for anti-poaching patrolling were also treated and vaccinated, at Kaziranga, Manas and Orang.

It has been found that the veterinary camps are required in two different seasons, pre and post Monsoon.

The veterinary camps were success-

ful mainly because of the cooperation of some of the best veterinarians of Assam, who participated through different NGOs, namely The Early Birds, Refinery Employees Trek-ers' Guild, Blue Cross Society and The Assam (Bhoreli) Anglers' Association. In fact, these organised veterinary camps by the NGOs in Assam is without parallel. No such schemes have been reported from other parts of the world except for an occasional Government sponsored programme.

ii) **Medical Camps:** Two camps were organised jointly along with the veterinary camps, one each in Chakrasila Sanctuary and Manas National Park. In Manas, 100 Forest staff, along with their family members and 147 villagers were examined, treated and provided with free medicines.

iii) **Motivation and Awareness Camps:** This was an important objective of the Foundation's Action Plan in the last year. Six such camps were organised in different areas, and the response was excellent. The camps were in,

<i>Laokhowa</i>	<i>(14-15 October, 1995)</i>
<i>Pabitora</i>	<i>(1-2 December, 1995)</i>
<i>Orang</i>	<i>(6-7 January, 1996)</i>
<i>Imphal</i>	<i>(15 January, 1996)</i>
<i>Dibru-Saikhowa</i>	<i>(15-16 January, 1996)</i>
<i>Kaziranga</i>	<i>(17-18 January, 1996)</i>

All these camps , except at Orang and Imphal, were organised in association with Nature's Beckon, an active NGO based at Dhubri. The camp at Orang was organised jointly with Aaranyak Nature Club, another active NGO based at Guwahati. The camp at Imphal was organised in association with the Manipur Association for Science and Society, a leading NGO of Manipur.

At these camps, awareness through talks, video shows (at Laokhowa), games and interaction with villagers were the highlights. At Imphal, the Chief Executive also delivered a talk in the Department of Life Sciences of Manipur University, where most of the Science Colleges were represented by at least one teacher.

In addition to these, many other informal talks were organised in Forest Camps, and village schools, Some motivation camps organised by other organisations were attended by the Chief Executive who delivered lectures and audio - visual talks :

- i) National Children's Science Congress, Tezpur (October, 1995).
- ii) Meeting of NGOs on Forest Bill, 1995, at Guwahati (21-10-95)
- iii) Workshop on role of tea garden in wildlife conservation, Buxa Tiger Reserve (30-10-95)
- iv) Seminar on conservation by AASU (All Assam Student's Union), Tezpur (10-11-95).
- v) Seminar on Wildlife Conservation, North Lakhimpur (27-28 December, 1995).

- vi) Nature Camp of BNHS at Kaziranga (6-12-95)
- vii) TRYSEM trainees at Manas National Park (4-1 -96 and 12 -3-96)
- viii) TRYSEM trainees at Kaziranga National Park (1st week of December, 1995)
- ix) Students of B. Borooah College and Pragjyotish College, Guwahati (29-9-95)
- x) District Animal Welfare Board, Hailakandi (21-1-96)
- xi) NCC camp at Nameri (28-12-95)
- xii) Rotary Club meeting, Guwahati (15-3-96)

The Foundation sponsored two participants from a newly - formed NGO of southern Assam (Hailakandi) to enable them to participate in a regional nature orientation Camp organised by the CEE (Centre for Environment Education) at Chakrasila, in February, 1996.

#### **4. Repair of Wireless Systems.**

Walkie-talkies were repaired at Kaziranga (ten), Orang (four) and Pabitora (eight ). Battery chargers were repaired at Kaziranga and the main set at Pobitora

#### **5. Others .**

Black salt and mashamber were provided to the patrolling elephants of Pabitora Sanctuary. These are used regularly as traditional medicine (mixed with other ingredients) and also for regular massage.

Two reports were published during the year,(i) Survey of wildlife in Bherjan, Borajan and Podumoni RFs with a proposal

*Rhinos wallowing in a pool, Pabitora Sanctuary (left); A Wild buffalo in Borkolia, Dhakuakhana Sub-Division of Lakhimpur district (right). Photo: A.U. Choudhury*



for a Wildlife Sanctuary and (ii) Survey of White-winged wood duck and the Bengal florican in Tinsukia district and adjacent areas. Both these reports were results of first-hand field surveys, and contain important original data on many endangered species. The Governments of Assam and also Arunachal Pradesh are examining both the reports for possible implementation of the recommendations.

## 6. Other Activities.

**Assistance :** A hundred kilograms of Elephant chain was provided to Kaziranga National Park for its patrolling elephants. In areas like Kaziranga, where wild populations are also found, domestic elephants are to be kept under control.

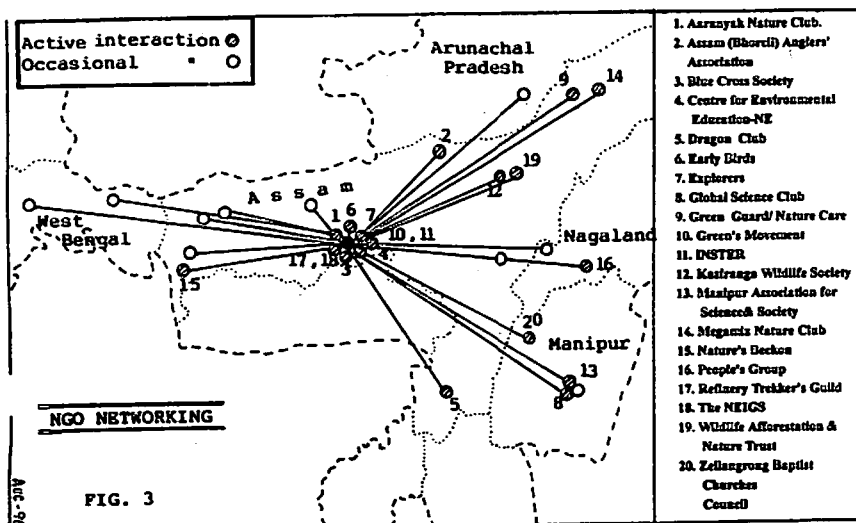
Torchlight batteries for use during night patrolling were provided to Pabitora (40 Nos.) and Kaziranga (887 Nos.). A diesel generator set at Orang Wildlife Sanctuary was also repaired.

**Liaison with Government:** During the one and half year, the Chief Executive has had meetings with Shri Nagen Sharma, Hon'ble Forest Minister of Assam, Shri J. Hazarika, Adviser to the Chief Minister of Assam, and the senior officials of various departments including Forest, Panchayat & Rural Development, Revenue, Home, etc. He also had meetings with Dr J. Rongpi, MP &

Chief Executive Member, Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council. In other states, the Chief Executive maintained contacts with Dr. N. Luwang, Hon'ble Minister of Science, Technology & Environment, Manipur, and the officials of the Forest departments of Meghalaya, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh.

The Chief Executive was invited by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Assam, to attend the workshop on the National Forestry Action Plan held at Guwahati on 30-8-95. The Chief Executive was also invited by the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, to attend a meeting on Amendments to the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, at New Delhi on 15-16 March, 1996.

**NGO Networking:** A major success of the Foundation during the last year was its networking with NGOs all over the North East. Such a network ensures participation of local communities as well as smooth implementation of various programmes. The network also enabled the Foundation to keep itself well-informed of happenings. Details of networking with the list of NGOs are shown on Fig. 3





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge the support and assistance of the following officials in Assam; Late Hiteswar Saikia, former hon'ble Chief Minister ; Mr. Nagen Sharma, present hon'ble Forest Minister; Mr. Jatin Hazarika, Adviser to the former Chief Minister; Mr. H. Sonowal, Commissioner and Secretary, Forest department ; Mr. R.N. Hazarika, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest ; Mr. B.N. Kalita, Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife, now retired) ; Mr. P. Lahon, Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Mr. S. Chetia, Chief Conservator of Forest (Terr.); Mr. A.B. Roy Choudhury, Deputy Secretary, Forest Department, Mr. S.K. Sen, Director of Kaziranga; Mr. R. Agarwalla, Field Director of Manas, Mr. C.R. Bhobora, R.K. Das, R. Bhattacharjee, S. Islam, D. Zaman, and M. Ali (all Divisional Forest Officers), Mr. Bhupen Talukdar, Pankaj Sharma, Dharani Boro, Narayan Sharma, A. Brahma, A. Baidya and D. Deka (all Range Officers)

and the staff of the Forest Department posted at different protected areas.

In Meghalaya, among the officials, we are grateful to Mr. S.B. Singh, Chief Conservator of Forest (Wild life) and Mr. T. Deb Roy, Divisional Forest Officer.

For Their continued support and encouragement, we thank Manju Barua and Ranjit Barthakur of WANT, Belinda Wright of the WPSI, Soumyadeep Datta, Kulojyoti Lahkar and Mridu Phukan of Nature's Beckon, Moloy Baruah of Early Birds and Refinery Trekker's Guild; Bibhav Talukdar of Aaranyak Nature Club; Dr. Atul Borgohain and his colleagues of Blue Cross Society ; Aneisha Sharma of Green's Movement; Dr. R.K. Ranjan Singh, Dr. K. Muivah and other members of MASS, Imphal.

We are also grateful to Save the Rhino International, an UK-based organisation for donating the cost of raincoats for Pabitora Sanctuary.

## BRIEFLY

### New Bird Sanctuary

The Government of Assam vide Notification No. FRW. 15/96/3 dated 3rd July, 1996, has declared Bordoibam-Beelmukh as a Bird Sanctuary under the provisions of the Indian Wild Life(Protection) Act, 1972. The sanctuary covers 11.25 Sq km comprising a large lake with marshes, and is partly in Lakhimpur (Dhakuakhana Sub -Division) and partly in Dhemaji district. Some rare and endangered birds recorded in Bordoibam - Beelmukh includes Spottedbilled pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, Ferruginous duck *Aythya nyroca*, Large whistling teal or Fulvous tree duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*, Darter *Anhinga rufa*, Greater

spotted eagle *Aquila clanga* and Swamp partridge *Francolinus gularis*. A bird watching tower has been constructed by the DRDA, Lakhimpur while a tourist lodge has been completed at Gogamukh (15 km from Sanctuary). The nearest airport is at North Lakhimpur (Lilabari), 60 km away.

### Addition to Nameri Wildlife Sanctuary

Nameri Wildlife Sanctuary of northern Sonitpur is home to endangered species such as the White-winged wood duck *Cairina scutulata*, Asiatic elephant *Elephas maximus*, Gaur or Indian 'bison' *Bos gaurus* Hornbills (Bucerotidae) and the Golden mahseer *Tor*



*The wetlands of Bordoibam - Beelmukh Bird Sanctuary. Photos: A.U. Choudhury.*

sp.. The Government of Assam vide Notification No. FRW. 11/96/9 dated 8th July 1996, has added 75.0 sq km of Naduar Reserve Forest as the 1st Addition to Nameri Sanctuary. This has increased the protected area from 137.0 sq km to 213.0 sq km. The area added is towards east and south-east of the existing sanctuary.

### **NGO activities :** **Awareness in Nagaland**

People's Group, an NGO based at Kohima, organised a week long awareness programme from 24th June, 1996, under the banner of WILDLIFE FESTIVAL of NAGALAND. The programme included a day-long workshop and week-long film-show and exhibition. The workshop was attended by the Vice-Chancellor of Nagaland University; Mr. Natwor Thakkar of Nagaland Gandhi Ashram; Dr. V.T. Darlong, Joint Director, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, Shillong office; Dr. A.Gangwar of Centre for Environment Education-NE, Guwahati and Dr. A.Choudhury, the Chief Executive of the Rhino Foundation. This was the first such conservation Programme in Nagaland.

### **Plantation of medicinal plants at Raja Mayong**

Green's Movement, a Guwahati-based

NGO has taken up a plantation programme of medicinal plants at the foot of Raja Mayong Hill near Pabitora Sanctuary. The local villagers of Burha Mayong are also collaborating in the programme. Mr. Nagén Sharma, Hon'ble Forest Minister of Assam, inaugurated the programme on 8 August by ceremonially planting a neem sapling. Mr. P. Lahon, CCF (Wildlife), Assam and Dr.A Choudhury, Chief Executive of the Rhino Foundation were also present.

### **NGO interaction programme**

The Kaziranga Wildlife Society, one of the oldest conservation organisation of Assam has organised an interaction programme of some NGOs at the Swadeshi Academy, Guwahati on 11 August. The Rhino Foundation has partly sponsored the programme which included popular lectures, exhibition and group discussion. Audio visual talks were delivered by Dr. P.C. Pathak and his team of experienced veterinarians of Blue Cross Society, Mr. Bibhav Talukdar of Aaranyak Nature Club, Mr. Prashanta Saikia and Joydeb Bose of Gauhati University, and Dr. A Choudhury of the Rhino Foundation. Mr. A Padmapati and Mr. P.C. Barthakur of the KWS welcomed the participants at the beginning. The Assam State Zoo and the Centre for Environment Education NE participated at the exhibition.

## Threat to Balpakram

Aided by documentation from the Zoological Survey of India, the Rhino Foundation and the Wildlife Protection Society of India produced an Impact Assessment of the proposed ACC Cement Plant near Balpakram National Park. The threat to one of the most valuable areas of tropical forest in the North East, which contains a large concentration of Asian elephants, seven species of primates and eight species of cats, by this development plan, was thoroughly researched. The

C.E. visited the site with Forest Department officials in October, 1995.

## International Gang of poachers.

The West Bengal Police busted an international gang of poachers and traders in Siliguri in June, 1995. The arrested persons included a Taiwanese national and one rhino horn was recovered. The Chief Executive visited Siliguri in June-July, 1995, to follow up, and to monitor the arrest and the case. Although the accused persons are now on bail, case is still going on in Siliguri Court.

*One of the Posters produced by the Foundation as part of its awareness campaign:*


# DO NOT KILL

The White-winged Wood Duck and the Bengal Florican are globally threatened birds. Their largest concentration is in N.E. India. Help conserve them for posterity and ecological balance. Do not collect their eggs nor catch young birds.


কোন হাতি আৰু উলু হাৰা কিম্বা দুটা অন্যতম বিপন্নতাৰ আশংকাৰী প্ৰজাতি। ইহঁতৰ সৰ্বাধিক উচ্চ পূৰ্ব জাৰাজমতই পোৱা যায়। ভৱিষ্যত বংশধৰ আৰু প্ৰাকৃতিক আৱশ্যাব্যয়ৰ বাবে ইহঁতৰ সংৰক্ষণত সন্মত কৰক। ইহঁতৰ কণী বা পোৱালী সংগ্ৰহ নকৰিব।

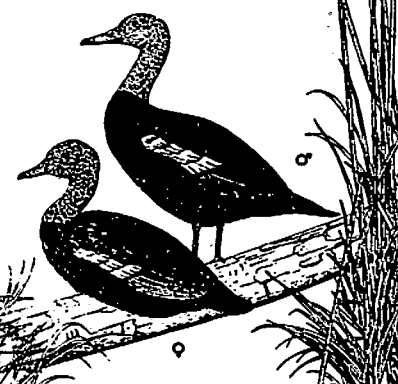
## মারবেন না নামাৰিব

BENGAL FLORICAN  
*Houbaropsis bengalensis*  
উলু হাৰা  
কামুৰ  
Doa thling  
Eaha mare



WHITE-WINGED WOOD DUCK  
*Colinus cataracta*  
কামুৰি  
কলী টিৰ হাঁস





ILLUSTRATED & DESIGNED BY  
DR. ANURAGBHAI CHOUHAN  
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আমক জীয়াই ৰাখিবলৈ বিচক  
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**WILDLIFE SURVEY IN  
BHERJAN, BORAJAN, & PODUMONI  
RESERVED FORESTS OF TINSUKIA DISTRICT, ASSAM, WITH  
A PROPOSAL FOR A WILDLIFE SANCTUARY**



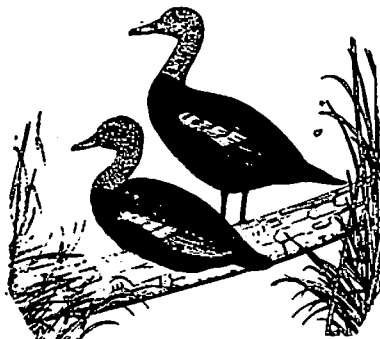
*Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury*

September, 1995

THE RHINO FOUNDATION  
FOR NATURE IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

**SURVEY OF THE  
WHITE-WINGED WOOD DUCK  
AND THE  
BENGAL FLORICAN  
IN TINSUKIA DISTRICT AND ADJACENT AREAS**

*Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury*



1996

Published by  
The Rhino Foundation for Nature in NE India

*Survey of wildlife in Bherjan, Borajan and Podumoni RFs with a proposal for a Wildlife Sanctuary, 18 pp+ maps.*

*Survey of White - winged wood duck and the Bengal florican in Tinsukia district and adjacent areas. 82 pp+ maps. Price : Rs 150.00*



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