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White-Winged Wood Duck

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- Miss Parinita Singh, *Range Officer, Digboi Range Office*
- Frontline staff of Dehing Patkai WLS
- Dr. Deep Bora *Principal, Digboi College*
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- Miss Ankita Thakuria, *Student Digboi College*

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1. General Background

1.1 Title of Project

Reviving White-Winged Wood Duck from extinction in Dehing-Patkai wildlife sanctuary, Assam, India

1.2 Reporting period

Sept 2017- May 2018

1.3 Project Site

Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam, India.

2. Introduction

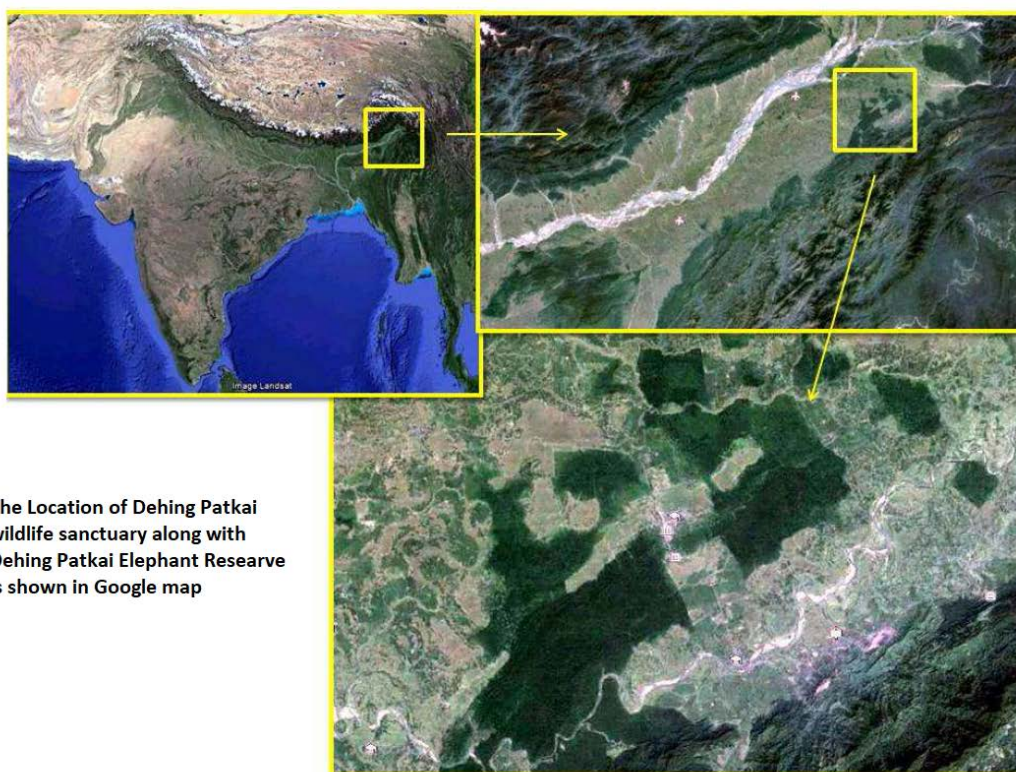
White-winged Duck *Asarcornis scutulata* is endangered, owing to destruction of riverine habitats including loss of forests across its range. Increasing human population and its growing demands for land and biological resources have further affected the Dehing-Patkai landscape to a great extent. Fragmentation of habitat has primarily occurred as a result of infrastructure development, widening of road, Oil Drilling, illegal logging and NTFPs collection from the Sanctuary. The small and fragmented populations are vulnerable to extinction from stochastic events, loss of genetic variability, hunting and collection of eggs and chicks. All these factors are led to decrease the white winged wood duck population. There has not been any comprehensive survey of recent status in Assam. The Dehing-Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the last strongholds of the species with an unknown population.



Habitat of White Winged Wood Duck

2.1 Study area and location:

Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary (27.261 N 95.478 E) is situated in the Tinsukia district of eastern part of Assam in India. The habitat is regarded as last remaining patches of rainforests which is contiguous with the forests of Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar in the east. The Dehing-Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary is the last remaining patch of rain forests in Assam and a major trans-boundary conservation landscape in Indo-Burma hot spot. It was declared as Wildlife Sanctuary in 2004 to protect the elusive White-winged Duck. The Sanctuary is also a part of Dehing Patkai Elephant Reserve.



Satellite Map of the Study Area

3. Objectives:-

Following are the major Objectives of the study –

1. To assess the population status and distribution of White-winged Duck by occupancy method.
2. To promote White-winged Duck as iconic species of Dehing- Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary.
3. To build capacity of local youths for regular monitoring and as tourist guide.
4. To outreach local community against pesticides and oil pollution.

3.1 Present status of the study:

| Objectives | Activities | Current status | Major activities carried out in short |
|--|---------------------------|----------------|---|
| To assess the population status and distribution of White-winged Duck by occupancy method. | Study design and planning | Completed | We developed a map of the study area with support from Aaranyak GIS lab. The area is gridded into 1x1 km ² and the preliminary present absence survey was carried out. Almost 50% grids are covered and we |

| | | | |
|--|---|---------|---|
| | | | recorded presence of white wood duck in 10% of the grids having water source. |
| | Field Survey | Ongoing | We recorded 25 white-winged duck in the study area. Further we developed 20 artificial nest boxes to be installed in the selected water source habitat. |
| To promote White-winged Duck as iconic species of Dehing- Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary. | Meeting with official persons | Ongoing | Three major meetings held with high official of forest department, Local legislative member, Digboi college and District commissioner. This meetings are the first initiative to build a rapport and bring them to take part in the conservation initiative. |
| To build capacity of local youths for regular monitoring and as tourist guide. | Workshop on Birds (white winged wood duck) | Not Yet | We plan to carry out the workshop in next three months (Jul-Sept 2018) |
| To outreach local community against pesticides and oil pollution. | Education outreach programs in schools and Colleges | Ongoing | A total of 25 awareness programmes held so far in 16 Schools and 9 villages. The total participants were more than 5000 individuals. A leaflet displaying the importance of White winged wood duck in local language was prepared (3000 no) and distributed across the region. |

3.2 Project Activities in details:

Activity 1:- To assess the population status and distribution of White-winged Duck by occupancy method.

Initially, the study area has been gridded in 1 x 1 km². During Nov 2017 to May 2018 we have identified 15 different spots where we have sighted 25 White winged wood ducks in 20 different occasions. 4 km transects are laid down through a small stream where 6 individuals were recorded



During the Survey

during the survey. These places are visited once a week in order to check their feeding and other habits.



White-Winged Wood Duck

Habitats assessments: We are studying the habitats by measuring different parameters including the water pH level and other associated environmental variables. The data will be analyzed during the last period of the study.



Left: Habitat of White Winged Wood Duck. Right: During Steam Survey.

Activity 2: To promote White-winged Duck as iconic species of Dehing- Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary

We had meetings with the higher officials of forest department, Local legislative member (*Digboi*) and nearby Colleges where Importance of White Winged Wood Duck was explained and leaflets were distributed. Posters were distributed to every range of Digboi Division. Three Art competition and Two Quiz competition organized for school students.

Right: Nesting Tree



Art and Quiz Competition among the School Students

Activity 3: To build capacity of local youths for regular monitoring and as tourist guide.
Workshop on Birds (*white winged wood duck*) is still to be done.

Activity 4: To outreach local community against pesticides and oil pollution.
Initially we have done 21 awareness programmes at different Schools and villages that are nearby in forest areas. Also students of colleges have been engaged in such awareness programmes. Local villages are being outreached on the worse situation these bird are facing due to various activities.



