

## **Project Update: December 2004**

### **WORKSHOP ON *IN SITU* STUDY OF GOLDEN LANGUR AT SHANKARGHOLA**

As a vital part of the 'Community Participation in Golden Langur Conservation Project,' a one-year project funded by Rufford Small Grant for Nature Conservation, *Aaranyak*, a society for biodiversity conservation in northeast region has successfully completed a three-day workshop (29 December to 31 December 2004) on *in situ* study of Golden Langur at Shankarghola, a remote village and the project site at the foothills of Bhairab Chura Proposed Reserve Forest, 35 km. from district HQ town Bongaigaon.

Fifteen educated village youths from Shankarghola and adjacent villages and 13 students of local Birjhora Mahavidyalaya and Abhayapuri College, and two students from the Department of Wildlife & Conservation Biology, North Orissa University (all members of *Aaranyak*) took part in the workshop. Both theoretical classes followed by practical exercises on how to identify group composition of Golden Langur, their survey techniques, behavior study, vegetation survey methods and habitat study were run from morning 7 o'clock to evening 8 o'clock besides delivering the practical knowledge of compass and GPS. The chief trainer was Dr. Dilip Chetry, research coordinator on Primates, *Aaranyak*, and he was assisted by Sri Ananta Borah, research coordinator, Plant Research, *Aaranyak* as well as one of the co-investigators of the Project. Moreover, the participants were also given knowledge of wildlife photography by Sri Ashok Dey, Finance Secretary, *Aaranyak*, who had been there throughout the workshop as the central observer. The whole workshop, which was held in temporary tents on the bank of *Kanglikata* stream with strict discipline, was directed by Dr. Hilloljyoti Singha, principal investigator of the Project, and was assisted by Sri Hemanta Kumar Saud, another co-investigator of the Project as well as Coordinator, west Assam zone, *Aaranyak*.

On 30 December 2004, an excursion team from Birjhora Mahavidyalaya and Abhayapuri College composed of students and teachers took part in the workshop. The outcome of the workshop was outstanding. The team could identify five troops of Golden Langur, and it was determined at the end of the analyses that within a three km stretch of one of the corners of the hill there were at least 35 Golden Langurs. The tree diversity of the area, which has been preserved by the villagers of Shankarghola, was found to be splendid – a mixed moist deciduous forest having not less than 35 species of trees (analysis is being done) revealed by rush survey within limited area of an average 200 m transects. Besides, the team also watched rhesus monkeys, 35 species of residential as well as migratory birds, collected scats of leopard, wild boar, monkey, Indian hare, porcupine and barking deer. Once, gaurs used to graze 30 years ago and gharials used to lay eggs 20 years back on the bank of *Doloni beel*, a tectonic wetland nearby the hill, Bhairab chura PRF is still scientifically unexplored potential forest. The workshop speculates that the one-year Project restricted to only the Shankarghola area, has further scope of extending its research throughout the Bhairab chura range.

Sri Mrigendra Kalita, Deputy Commissioner Bongaigaon distributed the certificates on the concluding ceremony on 1 January 2005 attended by men and women of the village. It was a

first time visit of a DC since 1985 in this remote village. In his speech, he encouraged the people to grow more bamboo and cane in the empty areas. He also appealed to them to cooperate *Aaranyak* to conserve Golden Langur. Sri Boloram Rabha, Head Master of the local M.E. School, the only graduate of the entire area submitted a memorandum describing problems of Shankarghola. Sri Karen Rabha, a reputed person in the village also spoke on the occasion.