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Move to document Orang tigers through camera trapping

By A Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, June 18 – An innovative blend of technology and human ingenuity is the backbone of a new plan to study tigers in the Orang National Park. As part of a recently launched initiative by the conservation group Aaranyak, efforts are on to document tigers through camera trapping in tandem with other methods.

As part of the programme, sophisticated cameras would be placed at strategic places. The camera's motion sensors would trigger recording of objects which come into view regardless of weather condition. There are reasons to believe that the project would yield results, because Aaranyak already possesses experience in camera trapping of tigers inside Manas National Park.

According to Aaranyak's Firoz Ahmed, "The project would be a key to evaluate and monitor the status of tiger as well as its prey base in their habitats with little human interference, and with a high level of efficiency."

Besides, the plan would help identify existing or possible dispersal routes of tigers into and out of the park. Another result would be the capacity building of local scientists and foresters for long-term monitoring of wildlife, the Cambridge-trained zoologist revealed.

This project would first seek to identify individual tigers in the park and estimate the density of tiger and prey animals using camera trapping and line transect method respectively. Subsequently, it would attempt to fill in considerable gaps on wild tiger research and monitoring in the region.

At present around twenty tigers inhabit the national park that covers an area of 78.80 sq km where the tiger population is considered "a healthy breeding population." The tigers could move away to nearby protected area the Kaziranga Tiger Project and populations resulting in an exchange of genes.

Other spinoffs from the project include the creation of GIS database of the park and its fringe areas along with a habitat stratification map prepared and correlated to tiger and prey density.

The project also gains in significance because it brings focus on Orang National Park in the context of the national and the international conservation map. The park is the only one situated on the north bank of the Brahmaputra to have a viable population of around 70 one-horned rhinos apart from being a refuge of the elusive tiger.

Executed by Aaranyak in collaboration with the Orang National Park authority, the project's technical support is from experts of the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehra Dun. Financial aid has been offered by David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation, Seaworld Busch Gardens' Conservation Fund and US Fish and Wildlife Services.

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