

Aaranyak submits report on genetic assessment of tiger population in Buxa Tiger Reserve



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Aaranyak, a society for biodiversity conservation in northeast India has achieved significant success in genetic research on tigers of northeast India. Wildlife Genetics laboratory of Aaranyak, situated at Guwahati, has successfully used DNA based analysis techniques for population estimation by using faecal samples of tigers in Buxa Tiger Reserve, in northern West Bengal. In a joint effort between Buxa Tiger Reserve Authority and Aaranyak, genetic profiling (DNA fingerprinting) of tiger faecal samples collected from the area has been undertaken, in order to understand the minimum number of tiger present. This work was undertaken due to the recent doubt on the status of tigers in Buxa Tiger Reserve, raised by some of the experts in the country. In a report submitted to the Buxa Tiger Reserve Authority, Wildlife Genetics Laboratory of Aaranyak has given sufficient scientific evidence of the presence of a minimum of fifteen individual tigers in the study area. This is for the first time that DNA based techniques of analysis of faecal samples have successfully been used for estimating the number of tigers in a protected area in eastern (north east) India. It is worth mentioning that Buxa Tiger Reserve is situated at Assam West Bengal border and international border of Bhutan on the north. From geographical point of view, Buxa Tiger Reserve is contiguous with that of Manas Tiger Reserve of Assam and Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan. Therefore, this area is considered together with the forests of western northeast India from the point of view of ecological assessment of various wildlife species such as tigers.

This project team, headed by Mr. Udayan Borthakur, comprises of field as well as laboratory biologists of Aaranyak. Mr. Udayan Borthakur is also the head of Wildlife Genetics Programme of Aaranyak, which was started in the year 2008, in order to undertake population genetic work on various wildlife species in northeast India.

A technical report on genetic assessment of Buxa tiger population will soon be published jointly by Aaranyak and Buxa Tiger Reserve authority, which will be made available in Aaranyak's website (www.aaranyak.org).

JayantaKumarPathak

BY JAYANTAKUMARPATHAK

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