

Anti-poaching camp at Manas



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Hantigiri Narzary 6 June 2014 Updated 6 Jun 14047 views

The anti-poaching tower was inaugurated at Kuklung Range of the Manas Reserve Forest in Chirang forest division of Bodoloand Territorial Area District (BTAD) under the aegis of the International Fund for Animal Welfare-Wildlife Trust of India (IFAW-WTI) in association with the Assam Forest department on Friday.

Nizira Borgoyari, Project Officer, Greater Manas Conservation Project, WTI, Assam said in a statement that the tower was inaugurated in the presence of WTI, Forest dept, Raigajili NGO and SSB, the anti-poaching/watch tower has been established in a strategic location to help Raigajili Eco-tourism and social welfare society (RESWS) in protecting the forest and wildlife from threats. The watch tower will serve as a base for staff of the forest department as well as volunteers of RESWS as they concentrate on curtailing poaching activities in the area which had reach x number of incidents over the past y number of years.

“It is a well known fact that Manas has been facing social and civil unrest for several years now which has also led to a degradation of socio-economic conditions. Unfortunately that has taken a major toll on the wildlife in the area. Right from poaching to Illegal tree felling to encroachments, the impact on the animals and the habitat has been severe. On top of that, because of the squalor around, any attempts to stop this is met with violent resistance,” said Dr Bhaskar Choudhury, Regional Head of Assam for WTI.

The Kuklung Reserve Forest in Chirang Forest Division of the Chirang district of Greater Manas is abundant with biodiversity including many species ranging from the tigers, elephants, pygmy hogs, golden langurs, capped langurs, clouded leopards etc. The anti-poaching/watch tower will be the first of its kind in the region and is supported through the IFAW-WTI Greater Manas Conservation Fund (GMCF).

Radhika Bhagat, Head of WTI’s Wild Aid division, shed some light on the history of RESWS’s efforts in the area saying, “They as a local NGO along with the Forest Department have been doing a lot to help protect the area but have also been attacked for the same. In fact in 2010 four volunteers of their organisation were seriously injured after timber smugglers demolished their office which was also looking at anti-poaching activities, in retaliation to many illegal timbers were seized due to RESWS’s efforts.”

IFAW-WTI has been working in the Greater Manas landscape for several years with the Assam Forest Department, the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), the communities and local NGOs in efforts to bring Manas back to the former glory. With the tagline 'Bringing Back Manas' resounding in all the work being carried out, the projects vary from species recovery with the rhino and elephant rehabilitation project to green livelihoods being encouraged with the weaving centres being established to promote traditional forms of weaving help curb anthropogenic pressures on the forest. Alternate energy resources have also been endorsed in the fringe villages of Greater Manas in the form of improved cook stoves which have been adopted by hundreds of families in the area.

Shishir Kumar Brahma, Range Officer Kuklung Range Chirang division said, "Anti Poaching camp is good opportunity and infrastructure for the benefit of Forest and wildlife Conservation in the range".

Hantigiri Narzary

Reporting from Kokrajhar

BY HANTIGIRI NARZARY

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