



# COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

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*In order to promote global biodiversity and sustainable land use, Community Conservation catalyzes, facilitates and empowers local people to manage and conserve natural resources within the social, cultural and economic context of their communities.*

**\*CC Update\***  
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## Manas Biosphere Celebration 2005: A Major Success

On April 4-5 of this year The Manas Biosphere Reserve Forum, composed of five NGOs from western Assam under the Golden Langur Conservation Project (GLCP) organized an awareness celebration to focus on the Manas Biosphere Reserve. The GLCP was initiated by CC in 1998. The Celebration was organized in collaboration with the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) with full cooperation from the villagers of Ultapani, Labanyapur and Saralpara villages. The BTC is the newly elected administration for the lands in western Assam that encompass most of the golden langur habitat. Over 1600 villagers and members of NGOs and government agencies attended the event.

Although the Biosphere has existed since 1989, most people associate the name with Manas National Park. However three quarters of the Biosphere lands are Reserve Forests that are not well protected and have hundreds of villages located within them. These Reserve Forests (RFs) are the main range of the golden langur, (*Trachypithecus geei*), a monkey species endemic to western Assam, India and adjacent Bhutan. In order to focus on these western RFs, the celebration was held in Ultapani Village within the Chirrang RF, one of the best habitats for the golden langur within the Biosphere Reserve.

The program was presided over by Mr. Padmanath Brahma, a senior villager of Ultapani and also an expert on local herbal medicines who welcomed the delegates from different parts of the Manas Biosphere Reserve. The first speech was on the importance of the Manas Biosphere Re-

serve by Mr. Kanak Narzary, President of the Reception Committee for the celebration and a learned villager



Mr. Kampa Borgoyari speaking to the delegates from Ultapani village. Mr. N. K. Dey, Working President of the Committee, gave the inaugural speech. He was followed by Mr. Bishiram Narzary, Executive Member, in charge of Environment and Forest of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) who stressed the importance of the forest for future survival and the importance of communities to prevent encroachers from illegal felling of trees.

The first day's program continued with addresses by Mr. U. G. Brahma, Member of Parliament (Upper House) on concerns of forest loss in Bodoland, strengthening protection of the forest from illegal felling



Villagers observing Celebration exhibits

and encroachment, and an appeal to villagers to support conservation initiatives. Mr. Ritesh Bhattacharya, Dep. Director of the Manas Biosphere Reserve, spoke on the history of the Manas and Ultapani Forest where he served his first posting. The President of ABSU, Kokrajhar District, also spoke. The evening was dedicated to a cultural program performed by cultural units from various local villages.

The second day began with a trek into the forest of Ultapani to give delegates a view of the loss caused by encroachment and illegal tree felling. Many delegates saw golden langurs on the trail. The major program of the day was an open discussion with the villagers on prospects of conserving the remaining forest and reforesting the degraded areas.

The guests present in the meeting were Mr. Kampa Borgoyari, Exec. Minister in charge of Education, Sericulture and Industry, BTC, Mr. G. C. Basumatary, Conservator of Forest, Western Assam, Mr. B.N. Patiri, DFO Kachugaon, Mr. Choudhury, DFO Haltugaon and Mr. S. K. Boro, of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

The village heads of Ultapani, Labanyapur and Saralpara unanimously agreed on the mutual village problems of poor roads, communication, schools, electricity, drinking water, and floods. Mr. Kampa Borgoyari took note of these problems and promised some solutions.

Mr. Sher Bahadur Mogar, Village Head of Labanyapur, emphasized living in harmony with the forest for long-term use of the resources and stressed the role of the NGOs,

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villagers and Government. Mr. Padmaath Brahma mentioned that the Celebration had broadened the participant's vision of the Biosphere Reserve to include over 2800 sq km from the Sankosh to the Dhansiri River within the newly formed Bodoland Territorial Administrative District.

The meeting ended with a general discussion followed by Kampa Borgoyari calling for a stop to all forest and wildlife destruction and a plea to save what is left of the forest. He stressed involvement of ABSU and the All Bodo Women Welfare Union to help communities in capacity building and economic development of compatible livelihoods involving use of medicinal herbs rather than forest destroying crops such as tea. He suggested that the golden langur be adopted as the state animal of the Bodoland Territory. At the end of the discussion the delegates came up with recommendations to present to the BTC.



Delegates at the Celebration

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## Building Capacity of Communities to Co-manage in Belize

At the end of a gravel road, only a few miles beyond the Community Baboon Sanctuary, lies the small village of Rancho Dolores, Belize. Here, the young community group that co-manages the Spanish Creek Wildlife Sanctuary struggles with issues that seem to be common in community-based projects in Belize and around the world. There is sometimes disagreement within the community about actions to take, problems with marketing the sanctuary to tourists, difficulty raising money to pay wardens' salaries, inexperience articulating management objectives and several other challenges that come up when a community decides to take responsibility for the management of a protected area near where they live. Like many community-based conservation groups, the Rancho Dolores Environment and Development Group is long on enthusiasm and ambition among its members, but lacking in many of the skills needed to manage the sanctuary the most effectively and efficiently.

Community Conservation (CC) Board President, Scott Bernstein, is working to help the Government of Belize, the Peace Corps, non-governmental organizations such as Community Conservation, and individuals within Belize identify and develop the skills communities need to co-manage protected areas. In his third year as a graduate student in the Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Bernstein is researching four communities in Belize that are co-managing protected areas: Rancho Dolores, Silk Grass, Santa Elena and Santa Cruz. Through interviews with community members involved in management of the protected areas, government officials and others, he is identifying which skills communities in Belize bring to co-management, and which are the most needed to develop or enhance. Additionally, he is designing a training



Villagers of Santa Cruz & Santa Elena meet at Rio Blanco National Park Office

program that can be delivered to community members across Belize to increase their capacity to be effective co-management partners with the government.

Bernstein's thesis has three main focuses. The first summarizes the body of literature that describes ways to evaluate community-based conservation projects and defines the varied skills needed of community organizations in general for protected areas management. Of these, a key model for evaluation of community-based conservation projects was developed by CC Director, Dr. Robert Horwich, along with Dr. Jonathan Lyon and Bernstein. Additional models considered are from The Nature Conservancy and other organizations involved in community training and development. From this analysis, a picture of the extensive collection of skills needed by communities becomes evident. To be effective managers, communities must possess not only biological and scientific skills, but also those of community organization, business and financial management, and social development.

Second, through interviews of key stakeholders involved in co-management in Belize, a picture of where communities are strong and where they need development emerged. The four selected communities are very diverse demographically—particularly in the ethnic makeup of each community—but share many common features which

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make them desirable case studies. Each project is fairly new, has had some success, and shows much promise for the future. Also, each community organization has recently received assistance from a Peace Corps volunteer involved in the project. Community members, government officials, and stakeholders within Belize were open and straightforward concerning their past successes and challenges, had a clear picture of some of the skills they needed to develop within their communities, and had a vision for the success of co-management in Belize.

The third part of Bernstein's research—and that which he is hoping is the most useful—is the design of a training program that could be implemented within Belize. While many individuals within Belize have received training to help them be more effective co-managers of protected areas, a comprehensive training program for community members has not yet been undertaken. Bernstein hopes to outline some of the

general principles behind training community members for community-based co-management, and describe a program that is both effective and practical to be delivered to the communities. Notes Bernstein: "Collaboration is really the key issue here. There are many knowledgeable and skilled individuals working in conservation in Belize. If the mechanism was in place to allow them to transfer their knowledge and skills to community members as well as build upon the knowledge already existing within some communities, the communities would be in a much better place to manage protected areas."

Bernstein envisions an institute within Belize that would develop a vast array of skills in several members of each community. "Training is best when it is in a real context for people. Community members need to be able to not only apply what they learn to their own situations, but also have a voice in how the training is presented. They can build upon their broad experiences to decide what is

most important to them and how they would like to learn it," he says. This institute, best located within a community itself, could utilize hands-on activities, lecture, discussion, independent study, and group projects to develop skills. Presenters could be those most knowledgeable about a particular subject at hand, drawing from the government, international organizations, NGOs and community members. An effective training program would need to be longer term than the weekend or week-long workshops ongoing in Belize. "One thing that is becoming clear from many examples around the world is that managing a protected area is very challenging. If we want communities to succeed, it's important that they have all of the tools they need at hand. This can't really be accomplished in a week or a month. A real investment in developing strong and effective community co-management groups will ultimately pay off with social, economic and conservation benefits for everyone in Belize."

Bernstein's research was funded by a Tinker-Nave S-T Field Research Grant.

## Conservation in Mizorum, India

In early March Dr. Rob Horwich, Director of CC accompanied Arpan Sharma, member of Samrakshan Trust to Mizorum, one of the southern most of the seven northeast states of India that is bordered by Bangladesh to the southwest and Burma to the southeast. Samrakshan will be initiating a community conservation project in Mizorum that CC may act as an advisor to. With Liana, a Mizo man hired for the Samrakshan project, Horwich and Sharma traveled east from Aizawl, the capital, to one of the sites selected for the project, the Dampa Tiger reserve.

Mizorum's history is very different than other states in India, including the northeastern tribal states. Although the population is mainly Mizo tribal people, due to the isolation of the state, much of their education was left to the Christian missionaries. Thus the Mizo people

appear more western in dress and customs and almost all are of a number of Christian faiths. Their foods are more simple and basic with much less use of spices as in other states of India. The main language is Mizo although there are a few other minor tribes that reside in Mizorum.

They stayed a few nights at the Dampa Tiger Reserve in order to meet some of the villagers surrounding the sanctuary and to introduce the potential project to them. The forests of the Dampa area are located on steep hills and at various times the local tribal people have cut them for slash-and-burn farming called jhumming. As the forests begin to re-grow the earlier successional stages are colonized by a number of species of bamboo often with one dominant species. While at Dampa they visited Serhman, a Mizo Village and Dampa Rengpui, a Bru tribal village.



Mizo Villagers with Dr. Horwich, and Liana, Coordinator of the Samrakshan Project

At the two villages Sharma and Liana introduced the potential project to the villagers and received feedback at the village meetings. Finally, in their visit through the forests

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**CC Books available for sale:**  
**A Belizean Rain Forest** \$21  
**Primates of Northeast India** \$25  
**Natural Resources of Orinoco, Nicaragua** \$10  
**Sea Turtle coloring book** \$7  
**CBS Howlers (poster)** \$12  
**Golden Langur (poster)** \$12  
**Community Conservation video** \$22  
 All prices postpaid

at Dampa, they saw a troop of Phayre's langurs and a pied hornbill. On the return trip to Aizawl, they also met the District Forest officer (DFO) at Phailing and the Chief Conservator of Forests in Aizawl. There, Horwich delivered a lecture on community conservation in Belize, US and Assam at Aizawl University.



Bru Tribal Woman of Dampa Rengpui Weaves Traditional Fabric

## Kickapoo River Cleanup Nets Nearly 2 Tons of Trash

On Saturday April 30<sup>th</sup> Valley Stewardship Network (VSN), with the help of over 45 hard-working volunteers and many generous sponsors, cleared litter and debris from the banks and main channel of the Kickapoo River along the 6-mile stretch of river from Readstown to Soldiers Grove. Some roadside cleanup was done as well. This dedicated group collected 3,850 pounds of trash. Among the stuff collected were 51 tires, 5 TVs, 2 microwaves, a car fender, a clothes line with poles, along with lots of containers and litter that never should have been there.

VSN, which started as part of a CC-initiated project on the Kickapoo River, is a grassroots non-profit



organization encouraging pro-active stewardship of the Kickapoo Watershed through educational events, information sharing and water quality monitoring. VSN reminds everyone that June is Invasive Species Month and encourages people to pull garlic mustard. For more information about VSN please visit their website at [www.kickapoovsn.org](http://www.kickapoovsn.org).

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