

WILDLIFE PROTECTION SOCIETY OF INDIA

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W P S I

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Position: Wildlife Biologist

Summary: WPSI is seeking a Wildlife Biologist to conduct a three-month rapid assessment of the flora and fauna of a proposed Community Reserve in Nagaland. Ten members of the local community, who are employed with this project as wildlife guards, are available to assist the biologist in this challenging terrain. A limited budget is available to help cover costs.

Time Period: 3 months, starting in October 2016 (i.e. post-monsoon)

Location: Nagaland, NE India

Remuneration: The selected candidate will be remunerated based upon her/his skills and experience. Field expenses, travel and accommodation costs will be paid for additionally.

Application: Please submit a Cover Letter and Resume by 31 July 2016, to Avinash Basker at avinash@wpsi-india.org. The subject of the email should read "WPSI Nagaland Project".

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF THE FLORA & FAUNA IN THANAMIR, NAGALAND

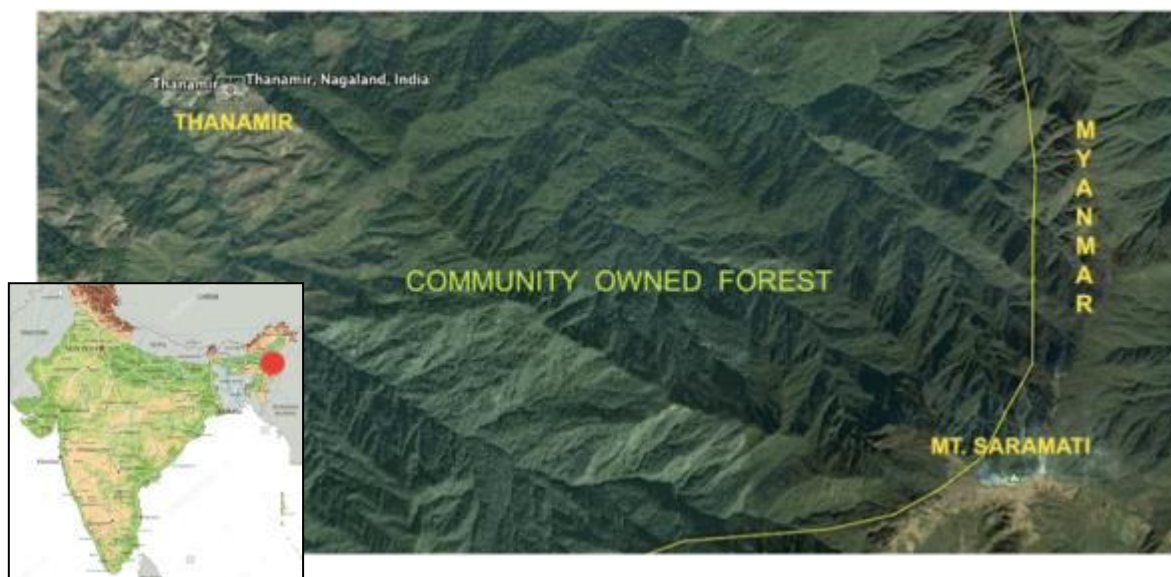
BACKGROUND

The state of Nagaland in northeastern India still has 81% of its geographical area under forest cover (*Forest Survey of India, 2009*). Situated in the Indo-Malayan region, a Global biodiversity hotspot, this is arguably one of the most important "carbon sinks" in the world. In addition, these forests are home to many vulnerable and endangered species including the hoolock gibbon, muntjac, gaur and clouded leopard. The birdlife is exceptionally rich including some spectacular species such as Blyth's tragopan and the wreathed hornbill. Unlike the rest of India, local tribal communities privately own most of these extensive forests. Only 6% of Nagaland's forests are protected by the Government.

The people of Thanamir village in Kiphire District own a particularly rich patch of forest, 25 to 30 sq km in size, which sweeps up to the peak of Mount Saramati and Nagaland's border with Myanmar. This modest village already serves as the last stop for the few trekkers and climbers that venture up to the summit of Mount Saramati.

PURPOSE

The people of Thanamir approached the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) through a community leader to assist them in declaring their forests a Community Reserve. A rapid assessment of the existing flora and fauna is a key element of the proposal to get it declared as a Community Reserve.



OBJECTIVES

1. To carry out a rapid assessment on the existing flora and fauna, and hunting and forestry practices.
2. To stimulate debate on realistic adjustments and alternatives within the community in order to conserve their forests.
3. WPSI will assist the local leaders in getting the area declared as a Community Reserve under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and eventually develop a self-supporting community livelihood programme.

The strength of community bonds and institutions in Thanamir and the richness of these forests make this an ideal location for a Community Reserve. However, one needs to work with the local community members to assess the advantages of protecting their rich forests as a Community Reserve and the far-reaching benefits to both the people and the wildlife of the area. This would act as a benchmark in this global biodiversity hotspot for other communities to follow.

STUDY AREA

Thanamir has a population of 850 people in 170 households (2011 census). It is governed by a 19-member village council, which consists of ten hereditary village elders and nine elected members. The council frames the rules of the village, and customary law is deeply entrenched and followed. The economy is almost completely subsistence based. Food comes from farming and animal husbandry activities (pigs, chicken, and the semi-wild *mithun*), which is supplemented by hunting. Most of the farmed land is held in common, and



Local hunters

at harvest time each household simply collects as much as it can. Their fuel and building materials come from the forest and there is a limited income from trekking expeditions to the 3,840 metre high Mount Saramati.

The forest is mixed and evergreen with sub-tropical broadleaf trees and conifers including bansam, pine and oak. It is a mountainous terrain with fresh water springs, large patches of wild bamboo, and rhododendrons growing at the higher altitudes. Of particular conservation value is that this vast stretch of forest protected by the local community is almost contiguous with Fakim Wildlife Sanctuary.



Mount Saramati

From local information and skulls and skins found in the village, it appears to be home to the Asiatic black bear, dhole, clouded leopard, marbled cat, wild boar, Indian muntjac (and perhaps the recently discovered leaf deer), capped langur, hoolock gibbon, rhesus macaque, hoary-bellied Himalayan squirrel, Malayan giant squirrel, flying squirrels, serow, sambar and gaur.



Animal skulls hanging outside a house

Tigers and leopards are occasionally reported from the area and it is likely that there are still relic populations of these big cats either in Nagaland or neighbouring Myanmar that with protection could make a comeback.



Festival in Kiphire District

WPSI
16 May 2016