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Butterfly species last seen a hundred years ago recorded in Assam

A team of entomologists led by Kushal Choudhury has recorded the presence of the yellow-crested spangle (*Papilio elephenor*) which was last reported from Assam in 1907. The butterfly was spotted in Phipsu in the Ripu Reserve Forest in Assam on 22 July 2009.

The yellow-crested spangle is a federally protected species, listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act and also included in IUCN Red Data book. The identification mark is a red crescent on its head and the sides of the abdomen are buff in colour. The second type of spangle found in Assam is the common spangle (*Papilio protenor*).

This is the first report of the yellow-crested spangle from Assam after over a hundred years. The last report was made by C. T. Bingham in 1907, in his work 'Butterfly Fauna of India, Burma and Thailand'. The book has a brief description of the species but no illustration. This photograph of the yellow-crested spangle is possibly the first live photograph of the species in the wild, other than pictures of museum specimens.

The area where the spangle was sighted is still pristine habitat. But there is significant human pressure on this Reserve Forest—grazing pressures, fuel wood and timber extraction and forest fires. These, Kushal says, are the biggest

threats. "I have worked for eight years in these forests and this is the first individual of the butterfly that I have seen, which gives you a sense of how rare these creatures are. Butterflies are very sensitive to habitat changes, and if their home is not conserved they will be lost very soon."

Kushal Choudhury has received a CEPF Small Grant to study the 'Population status and distribution of Swallowtail (*Papilionidae*) butterflies with special reference to their conservation in the North Bank Landscape under Bodoland Territorial Council, Assam.

For more information

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▲ Yellow crested spangle

Capped langurs surveyed in northeast India

Over 250 individuals of capped-langur, belonging to 28 groups, were surveyed in three national parks in northeast India recently. Grantee Nabajit Das' study in the Nameri National Park, Eagle's Nest Wildlife Sanctuary and Sessa Wildlife Sanctuary highlights the threats that these primates face. A household-level socio-economic survey was also part of the study.

"Increased human activity in the buffer areas of the Nameri National park and increased habitat fragmentation with the development of the local economy, are immediate threats which may affect the habitat range of the langur, lead to genetic isolation and thus threaten the primate's continued existence", reports Nabajit Das on the threats that langurs face.

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New frog species proposed

A recent survey of amphibians in Ilam district of eastern Nepal has resulted in a new species of frog being proposed. Detailed photographs of several individuals, belonging to the genus *Paa*, show distinct horizontal white bands on their fingers, a characteristic different from other species.

Since the frog species was found by grantee Kalu Ram Khambu and his team near an area called Patenagi, it has been proposed that the frog be named *Paa rostandii patenagensis*.

Ram Khambu received a small grant to update information on the status of amphibian fauna in eastern Nepal and to initiate community-based monitoring and protection for these species. As part of the project, work on a new community-based amphibian conservation centre in Ilam has started.

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A road map for conservation in the Singalila National Park

The communities on the fringes of the Singalila National Park in Darjeeling, India, are marginalized and largely excluded from development and conservation processes. In the last year, the NGO DLR Prerna, with support from a CEPF large grant, has been working with five marginalized communities to reduce the threat of synthetic agricultural chemicals on the landscape. This is done through capacity enhancement of community members on sustainable agricultural practices including various types of composting, integrated pest management, inter-cropping and livestock management. Agro-biodiversity is also being promoted.

◀ Capped langur



saj. jilapn ©

The process is being facilitated through training programmes and exposure visits to over forty progressive farmers who are part of the initiative. These farmers have formed groups to transfer knowledge and skills in their community.

On 8 September 2009, representatives from NGOs, CBOs, the State Forest Department and the Forest Protection Committee (FPC) came together to chart a road map for the next two years. The need for empowering partnerships with the FPC and contextualizing a role for CBOs beyond that of welfare emerged during this process.

[For more information](#)

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Little care for a rare hare

Read researcher Naba K Nath's account of his CEPF-funded study on the elusive hispid hare in the News and Features page of www.panda.org/easternhimalayas/cepf. "The dearth of information on the Hispid hare creates hurdles in efforts to conserve the species. Regulating grazing in hare habitats, preventing hunting and controlling the harvest of thatch grass are some of the measures that are needed to protect the species," says Naba Nath on hispid hare conservation.

[For more information](#)

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Hornbills affected by hunting

In eastern Arunachal Pradesh, like other areas in southeast Asia, hornbill body parts, particularly tail feathers, are an important

component of the traditional head dresses of local tribes. In addition, large tracts of forested areas are under pressure from logging and habitat conversion.

CEPF-grant recipient Rohit Naniwadekar's study on the response of hornbills to hunting and logging has thrown up some interesting results. The study looked at three species of large hornbills (2.5 – 3 kg) — wreathed hornbill (*Rhyticeros undulatus*), rufous-necked hornbill (*Aceros nipalensis*), and the great hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*).

The research team did not find evidence that logging had an impact on any of the three species. Hunting, however, does affect the rufous-necked and great hornbills. This may be due to the fact that these two species are resident species exposed to hunting pressure throughout the year, while the wreathed hornbill exhibits seasonal movements which lessens the time of its exposure to hunting.

Rohit Naniwadekar also calculated sustainable harvest rates for the two hornbills affected by hunting. The sustainable rates for both were between 2.5 to 3 per cent of the population, which translates to 3-4 great hornbills and 17-20 rufous-necked hornbills per 100 square kilometers, in a pristine habitat such as the Namdapha National Park which has very little human-related disturbance. These low harvest rates are due to the fact that hornbills start breeding when they reach 4-5 years of age and raise only one chick a year. This clearly indicates that hunting hornbills is not a viable option even in pristine habitats where there is low hunting pressure.



▲ Rufous-necked hornbill

Hornbills, particularly great hornbills, are slowly vanishing from the still intact forests of Arunachal Pradesh. Hunting seems to be a greater threat to them than logging understandably because of the direct removal of individuals from the population. Hunting is deeply ingrained in the local culture across the state and perhaps across many a tribe in northeast India, making its curbing an exceptionally challenging task. Considerable effort through conservation education might be necessary in the near future to ensure a secure future for hornbills in the area.

[For more information](#)

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Poachers caught by community-based group

Four Tibetan poachers were caught in Papung village in the foothills of the Kangchenjunga in eastern Nepal by a community-based anti-poaching unit and the civil society organization Kangchenjunga

Landscape Concern Group (KCG) towards the end of July this year, and handed over to district police officials. The patrolling team also seized parts of the Himalayan monal pheasant, musk deer snares and pheasant snares.

The community-based anti-poaching units have been actively monitoring and controlling poaching activities in the last few months. Their CEPF-funded project aims to establish community-based anti-poaching networks that are especially relevant in remote areas where few government mechanisms operate. The project is an important one to address illegal activities in areas in eastern Nepal that border India and China.

Another recent achievement of the KCG is the involvement of yak herders in monitoring poaching. These yak herders are often the only people in the remote areas of the Kangchenjunga Singalila Complex.

[For more information](#)

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The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a global programme that provides grants to nongovernmental organizations and other private sector partners to protect critical ecosystems. It is a joint programme of Conservation International, l'Agence Française de Développement, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank.

To apply for a CEPF grant, all applicants must submit a Letter of Inquiry (LOI), when calls for LOIs are advertised on the websites www.panda.org/easternhimalayas/cepf and www.cepf.net. The call for proposals will also be advertised in major national newspapers. Guidelines and format for developing LOIs are available on www.cepf.net.

In the Eastern Himalayas region, WWF leads the regional team responsible for facilitating, coordinating and monitoring grants for CEPF-supported conservation projects.

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