



## Nature Hikes Help Mobilize Local Stakeholders

To raise awareness among key local stakeholders and stimulate a local debate about the urgency of Protected Area conservation, the Nishorgo Support Project and the Forest Department arranged hiking programs in early 2005 in Lawachara National Park and the proposed Satchuri National Park. Most stakeholders, including the Forest Department and project staff, participated in the three-hour hikes. The first hike began near Khasia Village at the edge of the Lawachara National Park. Local guides briefed hikers and then they were off to catch a glimpse of the Khasia ethnic group, including betel leaf pickers at work high in the trees plus areas stripped bare by powerful teak merchants who have illegally logged teak trees. These hikes are an important step in creating awareness of this most serious problem and then movement towards formalization of the Co-management Council, the body that will ultimately have shared management authority for these Protected Areas.



A local indigenous guide briefs hikers before entering Lawachara National Park

## Sylheti Imams Visit Lawachara National Park

Nearly 100 Sylhet region Imams, moved by discussions on Koranic references to nature conservation, followed up with a hike into the Lawachara National Park. The Imams first heard a



Imams at Lawachara National Park with newly-trained Eco-Guides

presentation on Islam and nature conservation delivered by staff of the USAID-financed Nishorgo Support Project and then followed newly-trained local Eco-Guides into the Park for a three-hour hike. It was the young trainees' first practical guiding experience. The 15 youths had participated in an

intensive two-day training course on Eco-Guiding. One enthusiastic trainee said "I now understand that a Protected Areas can be a sustainable source of income without destroying its resources." The Imams were extremely happy to visit and thereby, underscore the Koran's deep respect for nature. Involvement of local religious leaders is an important element of the Project's co-management approach at all sites. The initial linkage between the Imams and the USAID Nishorgo Support Project was made by another USAID-financed outreach program implemented by The Asia Foundation of Bangladesh. Building on this success, the Nishorgo Support Project team is now preparing a similar briefing/hiking opportunity for a second group of Imams from Sylhet on June 1st and 2nd.

## Farmers Near Protected Areas Receive Training in Nursery Enterprise

Fifteen women farmers, working near our three northern Project sites, were the first to participate in the Nishorgo Support Project's seven-day long "Nursery Development



The trainees for nursery development at a practical session, Srimongal

Training" this January. The training program will build the capacity of local stakeholders in enterprises that support income generation and make positive contributions to conservation. The objective is to enhance participants' nursery business management skills and income generation potential, while emphasizing linkages to the conservation of Protected Areas. A number of participants said that this was the first time they realized that they need to conserve the Protected Areas for their own economic benefit. The same training module was later replicated at Teknaf Game Reserve.



## Young Artists Compete in "Forests as I See Them"

Local youth, key to the success of the Nishorgo Support Project co-management approach are entering art competitions that will also raise awareness of the critical need for Protected Areas. Launched in February, 2005 with a series of drawing competitions, the first official event took place at Teknaf Game Reserve. Eighty selected students near Teknaf were divided into three age categories and asked to draw on the theme of "Forests as I See Them". The Project organized the events to highlight children's hopes for a better future. Similar events were undertaken in the Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary, the Satchuri National Park and the Lawachara National Park, where 75, 150 and 60 students respectively participated. Performances by local artists, including songs about wildlife and natural forest conservation followed the drawing competitions.



One of the winning drawings

## Participatory Bird Surveys and Eco-Guide Training Go Hand-in-Hand



15 newly trained Eco-Guides

Many Projects talk about "participatory monitoring" of impacts yet little forethought is typically given to the incentives for community members

to participate in what are often time-consuming monitoring activities. The Nishorgo Support Project is working to link the activities of participatory monitoring to practical income-earning skills. From April 29th to May 4th, 2005, the Project took the first steps to launch this strategy, training fifteen young unemployed youth (five from each of the three northern sites) in bird surveying. Afterward, they went into the field to conduct a participatory survey of eight indicator bird species in the Lawachara National Park. A three-day eco-guide training course followed. The Project will continue to support these young people in finding employment opportunities as paid local guides for the Protected Areas. A similar bird survey training followed by eco-guide training has now been completed for the two southern Protected Areas. As a result, the Project has been able to set its biodiversity indicator baseline measures while at the same time creating income earning opportunities for local stakeholders.

## Nishorgo Partners with Forest Department in America Week Khulna 2005

To inform Bangladeshi citizens about the US Government's partnership with them, and particularly the Khulna community, the US Mission in Bangladesh hosted the third annual 'America Week' in Khulna in late February, 2005.

Although the Nishorgo Support Project does not presently have any Project sites in the Khulna region, it does work closely with the Forest Department on Protected Area

management and as a partner, was happy to support the Forest Department in preparation of a Nishorgo Program booth at the event. Decorated with eye-catching, eight foot-high banners, the display and its information explained the Nishorgo Program and the role of the Support Project. Tiger pugmarks and sample specimens of wood from different trees of the Sunderban aroused great interest among the visitors. The Project was very pleased to be among the only booths staffed by our partners in the Government's, in the Forest Department.



Foresters and Nishorgo Support Project members jointly represented the Nishorgo Program at American Week, Khulna

## Bangladesh Scouts Partner for Bird Conservation

Some 3,000 Bangladesh Scouts marched in a rally in central Dhaka January 13th to raise awareness of bird conservation throughout the country. Minister Tariqul Islam, along with leading members of the Scouts and the Forest Department led the rally. As part of Nishorgo's effort to build strong partnerships for Protected Area conservation, the Project has spearheaded an effort to build a formal alliance with the Scouts, who number just under one million young people, living in all thirty seven Districts of the country. The Scouts and the Nishorgo Program are now formalizing a Memorandum of Understanding under which jointly sponsored activities will encourage the young generation of Bangladesh to become lifelong advocates of the Protected Areas System.



Nishorgo sponsored a rally of the Scouts