

Project Update: October 2015

A programme coordinator and a field coordinator were appointed in July 2015. Reconnaissance visits were carried out in the study area based on which we identified Laldhang (rural) and Dehradun (urban) as suitable locations to conduct outreach activities.

The main target of outreach during this period was schoolchildren. Up till now 10 schools have been approached and structured awareness programmes have already commenced in five schools for schoolchildren of age-group 10–14 years. The project team has carried orientation sessions (with slide-shows, lectures and distribution of interpretive material) to encourage children to observe their natural environment. We identified about 20 children per school (~100 in total) who showed greater interest level and encouraged them to form a nature club. Subsequently, we held detailed sessions and field outings to encourage them to take up simple nature study projects, particularly on hornbills and figs.

Concurrently, the team started mapping hornbill food trees in Laldhang and Dehradun. Nearly 250 trees were mapped, of which 18 fruiting trees were identified for collecting detailed observations on feeding activities by hornbills and other birds, and for estimating the quantum of available fruit.

A storybook for children (~10-years-old) is in advanced stages of preparation. This book will communicate the fascinating ecological relationships supported by fig trees. An established writer has been commissioned to prepare the English text and a Hindi translation is also under way. A professional designer has been engaged for the layout and three illustrators have been approached to do the illustrations for the book.



Left: Project team conducting awareness programme with schoolchildren. Middle: schoolchildren taking observations on fig tree. Right: Oriental Pied Hornbill observed feeding on fig fruit.