

Project Update: November, 2017

The *Askot Primate Project* (APP) team spent eventful times so far in 2016-2017. We started off through brainstorming sessions on project inception, objectives refinement, project planning, team composition and a search for funding opportunities. After most of these initial tasks had been completed, we decided on applying for a Rufford Small Grant to kick-start our conceived long-term project. While preparing the project proposal for RSG and contacting various concerned people, the team also applied for a research permit at the central office of the Forest Department of Uttarakhand.

A minor administrative hurdle was faced by the team at the initial period. While we got the RSG in December, 2016, the research permit took some more time to be granted due to official delay, which was effectively addressed by the officials of the Forest Department with best intentions. This, combined with logistic problems, took the project to a late start (March, 2017).

When the project finally took off in March 2017, we had a wonderful field time in the remaining summer months (till May, 2017). We visited some of the targeted villages as well as different habitats within our study area and did questionnaire survey, rural appraisal, group discussions, habitat survey and mapping exercises.

The monsoon had particularly been severe this year (July-September, 2017). There were several cloudbursts and landslides in the study area, claiming many lives and destroying properties of locals. A particularly brutal one at the Malpa village claimed at least 25 lives, including six defence personnel (See TOI, 15th August 2017). This same village endured the infamous 1998 cloudburst which killed noted classical danseuse Protima Bedi (over 200 casualties). The rains cut off most of the rural roads/tracks which adversely affected our field work schedule.

The monsoon was utilised to work on the GIS-database. This section has had good progress so far, with almost two thirds of the work completed.

The autumn season has been good so far in terms of tasks done. We worked on every stated objective, except capacity building. The villagers have been welcoming to us and participated in our activities with great enthusiasm. We also made considerable progress in vegetation sampling, disturbance survey and habitat mapping.

We at the project team are hopeful that we will be able to complete our objectives by the stipulated time.

Photographs from the field



Left: Himalayan langurs (*Semnopithecus schistaceus*) running away from farmland. Right: Vegetation and disturbance sampling. ©Subhajit Saha.



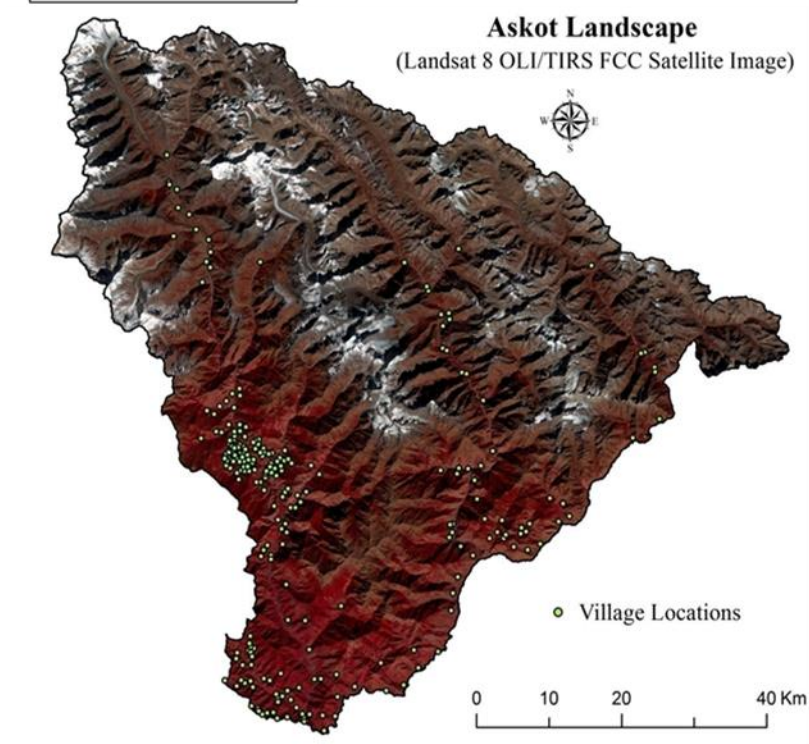
Left: Questionnaire survey. ©Subhajit Saha. Right: Informal discussion. ©Bhawan Singh Airy



Left: Participatory Rural Appraisal. Right: Interview. ©Rizwan Khan.



Left: Participatory Rural Appraisal. ©Rizwan Khan. Right: Himalayan household. ©Subhajit Saha.



Maps. ©Surajit Dutta

Promotional materials



APP Banner. Design - Manish Kaneria and Subhajit Saha



Himalayan Exploration, Conservation and Livelihood Programme (HECaLP) logo. Design - Manish Kaneria. Concept, sketch and photograph - Subhajit Saha



APP logo. Design - Manish Kaneria. Sketch - Subhajit Saha