

Emergency Flood rescue and relief operations on at Kaziranga National Park to protect wildlife

Wildlife S.O.S and Friendicoes SECA teams are working in Kaziranga National Park patrolling the flood areas and highways to protect stranded wildlife...

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Flash Floods have hit the Kaziranga National Park and Emergency Relief teams from Wildlife SOS and Friendicoes SECA with initial support from One Voice and International Animal Rescue are already working round the clock in the affected areas with the Kaziranga Wildlife authorities to help animals displaced and marooned by the flash floods.

The Flood Relief Emergency Teams led by Kartick Satyanarayan, Co- Founder-Wildlife S.O.S and Dr. Kajal Kumar Jadav - Senior Veterinary Officer, Wildlife S.O.S flew to Guwahati, the capital of Assam with a team of vets upon getting an SOS from Kaziranga. Arriving with over 300 kilos of veterinary drugs, feed additives and medicines for animals as well as emergency medication for people, the teams hit the ground running and swinging into action immediately by first surveying and documenting some of the worst flood affected areas inside Kaziranga National Park in a speed boat with Range Officer of the Kohora range - Mr. D.D Boro.

Rain coats, torch lights, spare batteries are being provided to the frontline patrolling staff to monitor the National Highway which is the most vulnerable area where animals cross to higher ground to escape the floods. It is on this highway that elephants, deer, civets, snakes and other wildlife get killed by speeding traffic" said Mr. Boro who was on all night patrols with the Team.

A python about to be run over was rescued and released in a safe spot. Several Hog deer and Rhinos were driven to safer areas away from the Highway. The team also providing an all night support system to the frontline wildlife staff with 2 vehicles driving up and down the vulnerable areas all night providing the guards hot cups of tea and snacks to help them keep vigil to ensure that vehicles drive slow and no animals get killed.

"Working at the grassroot level with the frontline staff gives us an insight into their problems" said Kartick Satyanarayan. "Its important to feel the pain the field staff feel and share their burdens to understand and appreciate their situation first hand" he added.

"A forest guard patrolling the highway in pitch darkness and pouring rain will surely find a piping hot cup of tea at 2 am most refreshing. Recognising their commitment and efforts will surely go a long way in encouraging" said Dr.Nabha of Friendicoes SECA who was with the team.

In an encouraging sms to Kartick, Mr. M. C Malakar, Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam Forest Department wrote "I am thankful for the service that Wildlife S.O.S is providing to the frontline staff".

"Our teams are also providing veterinary drugs & medication to the livestock belonging to affected villagers living on the edge of the national park where water borne diseases as well as foot & mouth disease could affect domestic livestock. Affected cattle must be treated immediately as there is risk of this disease spreading to the wild animals like elephants, wild buffaloes and other herbivores" said Dr. Jadav.

The team has also provided 300 kgs of rice to the relief camps where women and children from the missing tribe are presently taking shelter in a school. Their belongings and houses have been washed away & if we don't help them now, they will be forced to sell their animals to butchers for distress sale to buy food for their children" said Dr. Suraj Kumar.

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An eco-friendly anti - poaching make shift watch tower was constructed with Bamboo and local materials in a tea estate where over ten Rhinos had taken shelter from the floods. By nightfall armed guards were in position at the tower to guard the rhinos from poachers. The patrol team met the guards at 2 am with biscuits, stuffed rolls and tea which was a welcome relief to the guards in the tower.

The team worked with the forest department at several road barriers to slow down speeding trucks and advising the drivers about crossing animals. Wildlife S.O.S is also helping the forest department establish several road barriers and go slow signs to help slow down traffic at Animal Corridors and critical crossing points on the highway.

"The need in Kaziranga is high and key issues affecting wild animals were discussed with the Director of the park. Issues such as the dreaded mimosa plant (legume) that is taking over the grassland habitat that is vital Rhino habitat and use of pesticides in tea gardens were discussed with the forest department for long term association. We shall be taking up these issues shortly. We are also considering establishing a rescue center to address the need" said Kartick Satyanarayan

The veterinary support team was joined by Dr. K.K. Sharma - Professor from the College of Veterinary Sciences in Guwahati and other volunteers who joined our teams in the field providing treatment to animals.

Wild Grass Resorts and Manju Baruah are providing valuable support to the Emergency team.

The team thanks Mr. Bonal - CCF Wildlife, Mr. M.C Malakar, Chief Wildlife Warden (Assam), Director and officials of Kaziranga and Dr.K.K. Sharma for their invaluable support to the team.

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Wildlife S.O.S is an Indian Non-Governmental organisation working in the field of Wildlife rescue and Rehabilitation since 1995. Our main project is the rescue and rehabilitation of 'dancing bears', which are Indian Sloth Bears exploited by a gypsy tribe, called Kalandars for street entertainment purposes. In collaboration with the State Forest Departments, Wildlife S.O.S runs the World's largest Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre for Sloth Bears in Agra alongwith 3 other centres in Bhopal, Bangalore and Hyderabad. Working in tandem with the government law enforcement agencies, including state forest departments, Wildlife S.O.S has rescued around 400 Sloth bears from leading miserable lives with Kalandars and with the recent extension to the Agra Bear Rescue Facility, we hope to eradicate the profession of 'bear dancing' by rescuing the remaining around 500 bears off the Indian streets and rehabilitating the bear dancers as well, so that they and their generations to come don't revert to 'dancing or poaching bears' ever again. Join hands with us in

giving both man and animal a life of Dignity and Freedom!!! The Bear Rescue & Kalandar Rehabilitation Programs of Wildlife S.O.S are primarily funded by International Animal Rescue. Other international partners are Free the Bears Fund Inc - Australia, Humane Society International-Australia and One Voice Association, France.

For more, visit our website, www.wildlifesos.org

For more information, Please contact:

Kartick Satyanarayan

Co-founder - Wildlife S.O.S

+91-9810114563

Vasudha Mehta

Communication Officer - Wildlife S.O.S

91-9837099719, +91-9958980909

You can also visit www.wildlifesos.org for more information.