

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT OF THE TWO-DAY INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON "COMPETENCIES DEVELOPMENT FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION"

Rapporteur's Name:

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Respected dignitaries on and off the dias and my dear students, we have made a sincere effort to consolidate the gist of the two-day International Workshop on "Competency Development for Biodiversity Conservation," organised by B.H. College, Howly, in collaboration with Barnagar College, Sorbhog, G.L.C. College, Barpeta Road, Nabajyoti College, Kalgachia, and the Zoological Society of Assam on 22nd and 23rd March, 2024.

The workshop garnered substantial attendance, with participants ranging from faculty members to students. The inaugural session commenced with a warm welcome address by P. C. Choudhury, Assistant Professor, Department of Chemistry. He extended invitations to the esteemed Resource Person, Prof. Ramesh 'Zimbo' Boonratana, and other dignitaries, guiding them to their seats. Following this, he provided a brief introduction to Prof. Ramesh Boonratana, highlighting his educational background, research interests, and professional achievements, particularly emphasizing his invaluable contribution in the field of research, especially primate species and their conservation in Southeast Asia. Prof. Boonratana was then felicitated with traditional Assamese attire, including a PhulamGamosa and PatorSeleng, by Dr. B.C. Pathak, Principal of B.H. College, Howly, followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the Prof. Boonratana. The programme proceeded with a Saraswati Vandana performed by Chandamita Das, Assistant Professor, Department of Assamese, and a speech by Dr. Sadananda Nath, Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology (also one of the convenors), who also served as the program's convenor. Then Dr. B.C. Pathak concluded this segment with a welcome address to the resource person as well as participants present in the hall.

Following a tea break, the first technical session commenced at 11 a.m. The resource person started his lecture by elucidating the distinction between a conservation scientist and a conservation practitioner. Dr. Nabajit Das, Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology (also one of the convenors) assisted Prof. Boonratana during the technical sessions. Prof. Boonratana emphasized that no formal degree is necessary to engage in conservation practice, underscoring the larger number of conservation practitioners compared to conservation scientists. The lecture then proceeded with the presentation of its aims and objectives, which were articulated as follows:

Aim:

Determining the competencies required for undergraduates, postgraduates, and academics to achieve biodiversity conservation

Objectives:

- To identify biodiversity conservation research priorities in NE India.
- To determine the core competencies needed for carrying out biodiversity conservation.
- To deliver an essential core competency for undergraduates and academics to achieve biodiversity conservation.
- To match or align identified research, projects, or programmes with the UN-SDGs.

He has also put forward a number of questions related to the topic of the workshop.

Following are a few of the questions he brought under discussion.

- What aspects of biodiversity conservation should I focus on?
- What are the priority species, populations, ecosystems, and landscapes I should focus on?
- Can my biodiversity conservation efforts focus on other aspects (e.g., human-related issues)?
- What competencies and skills do I need to work towards biodiversity conservation?
- Can my institution provide me with the necessary competencies and skills?

The resource person discussed the distinctions among biodiversity research, biodiversity conservation, and biodiversity conservation research. Furthermore, he delineated the disparity between academic research publications and conservation-focused research publications. While academic research publications are purely academic, academic with possible conservation applications, and academic with conservation applications, conservation research publications highlight conservation issues, address conservation challenges, and propose novel mitigation strategies. Engaging the participants in an interactive session, the resource person facilitated a brainstorming exercise on prioritizing biodiversity conservation research and projects. Participants were divided into five groups, each tasked with selecting a moderator or leader. These groups were allocated 25 minutes to delineate the geographic scope (Northeast India, Assam, or Barpeta), priority species, priority populations, priority communities or sites, priority ecosystems or landscapes, and priority themes for research projects.

Following the group allocations, a lunch break was provided for one hour from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Upon reconvening, the second technical session started, and each group was allotted 25 minutes to prepare their presentations. Group C commenced the presentations, focusing on the Golden Languor as their chosen species, with AvinashNath as their spokesperson. Subsequently, Group D also chose the Golden Languor, with Tribeni Pathak as their presenter. Group E presented on *ParmotremaTinctorum*, with Dr. RupjyotiGogoi delivering their presentation. Lastly, Group D, led by Titiksha Ray Choudhury, presented on the White-winged Wood Duck. While all presentations were commendable, Group E's presentation received special praise from the resource person for meeting the outlined parameters most comprehensively.

After the successful completion of the brainstorming session, the resource person enlightened the audience on "Competency-Building Topic: Tips, Tricks, Dos, and Don'ts on Getting Your Works Published." He offered valuable suggestions and recommendations, encapsulated as follows:

- Start with short notes or communications.

- Go for open-access journals.
- Consideration of non-specialized journals
- Write your conservation and conservation-related papers in easy-to-read English.
- Appropriately address authorship and co-authorship issues.
- Avoid predatory journals and conferences.
- Thoroughly review the literature and give credit where credit is deserved.
- Do not rectify references; cite the original.
- Cross-check citations with references (vice versa).
- Actively learn from experienced authors.
- Seek help from subject-specialists proficient in academic English.
- Request colleagues or supervisors to provide feedback prior to submission.
- Use freely available software to assist with grammar, etc., or simply to double-check typing errors.

In concluding his lecture, the resource person posed a pivotal question to the participants: "What next?" This inquiry ignited an open and engaging interactive session, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas. During this discussion, Dr. Barnali Pathak, Assistant Professor in the Department of Physics, raised a pertinent issue regarding self-plagiarism, a challenge scholars often encounter when endeavoring to publish their research papers. The resource person, recognizing the significance of Dr. Barnali Pathak's concern, endeavored to provide clarity and offered invaluable suggestions to navigate this complex terrain. Through insightful discourse and practical guidance, he addressed the nuances of self-plagiarism, ensuring that scholars like Dr. Pathak felt empowered to navigate the publishing process with integrity and confidence.

The valedictory session was skilfully conducted by organizing secretary Dandeswar Deka, Assistant Professor, Department of Physics culminating with a vote of thanks from Dr. Bhabananda Deb Nath. Dr. Barnali Pathak and Hunjuli Katharpi curated the rapporteurs' notes.

In the spirit of fostering continued growth and collaboration, the session concluded on a note of encouragement, inspiring participants to embark on their respective paths with renewed vigour and a deeper understanding of the intricacies of academic publishing.

Sd/

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