

Doon Watch Nature Series for Dehradun Live Hindustan Times by Sanjay Sondhi

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The Bompou Litter Frog

Last month, when I was traversing the green jungles of the north east, I received a few calls from Dehradun, saying that they had read about the new frog species from Arunachal Pradesh, that I had described. The Arunachal Pradesh Forest department had issued a press release about the discovery, and the news made its way all the way to Dehradun! Of course, I was busy exploring more of Arunachal's wild wonders, and did not really pay any attention to this. Only on my return was I told that the press release did not carry any photograph of the blue-eyed frog, which is a pity, because it is such a pretty frog. Can I hear some "yucks" out there! A frog, and pretty! Well look at the picture of the Bompou Litter Frog alongside and I am sure you will agree with me!



The new frog species was actually discovered in May 2009 at the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. It took all of two years to actually describe the species and have it published in Zootaxa, an international peer reviewed journal, with assistance from a French herpetologist, Anne Marie Ohler.

The frog is called the Bompou Litter Frog *Leptobrachium bompu*. The person who describes a new species is permitted to name it. International rules allow you to name it anything, other than naming it after yourself! For me, discovering a new species is

meaningless unless it assists in conservation. Applying this principle, I decided to name the frog after the locality in which it was found, Bompou. I followed this up with printing colour posters, which I distributed amongst the local community. The local team, which conducts ecotourism in the area was quite excited, and peppered me with questions. Is Bompou the only place where this frog is found in the world? And the answer is affirmative; at this point in time Bompou is the only place in the world that this frog is known from! It is very likely that it will be found in other regions, as more surveys get conducted, but today, the local community can proudly say that the only place the Bompou Litter Frog can be found is in Bompou!

It's been my experience that local communities need financial incentives to conserve their forests. At Eaglenest, an ecotourism venture which conducts bird watching tours, has been running for the last 5 years, providing the local community additional income. However, the money they earn is only one part of the story. Equally important is the pride that the local community is instilled with, in living in an area that is home to little known birds, frogs and other creatures. Hopefully, the successful conservation model at Eaglenest can be adopted in other areas in the country; and more of our forests can be saved.

Making a difference: Planning your Diwali holiday? Make this an eco-friendly holiday. Visit any of the protected areas in the country which has community based ecotourism (even Corbett has some). While you have fun in the wilds, the money you spend provides an incentive to the local community to protect their forests.

Feedback on this column is welcome at sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com

Photograph caption: Bompou Litter Frog

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