

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XVI No. 4

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Protected Area Update

Vol. XVI, No. 4, August 2010 (No. 86)

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EDITORIAL

A terrible train of accidents

It is more than six years now that the railway track running through the forests and protected areas in North Bengal was converted from meter gauge to broad gauge. Scores of wild animals including elephants, gaur and leopards have been crushed under trains that have been speeding along this corridor. Accidents were happening even before the gauge conversion but then the speeds were limited and the number of trains were less.

No solution seems in view and to say then that Gorumara, Jaldapara, Chapramari and Buxa are protected areas makes no sense, because the animals here have no protection. Nearly a dozen and a half elephants have been mowed down in these PAs and adjoining forests by trains here and nothing has been done about it. Some of the solutions suggested over the years are outright laughable and non-implementable. These include suggestions by the court a few years ago to light up the tracks using solar lighting so that the train drivers will be able to see the elephants. More recently the West Bengal Forest Department has been advised to construct rail under and over passes to allow safe passage to wildlife in a few places along the 160 kms track.

The other suggestions have been of the temporary band-aid types - clear vegetation along the tracks to increase visibility; employ trackers with walkie-talkies to keep an eye on elephant movement; increase co-ordination between forest and railway staff and slow down the speed of trains at night when most of the accidents seem to happen. It is a telling comment that the concerned authorities have not managed to implement even these simple ideas. Conservation groups have suggested that all nighttime train traffic be stopped on this route or that the line be diverted to avoid the vulnerable areas. This might be a small price to pay to prevent the death of an endangered animal, but even this appears to be non-acceptable. When villages that predate the creation of PAs by 100s of years can be relocated in the interest of wildlife, there is no reason the same can't be done for these rail tracks that are

much more recent and have proven to hugely detrimental to wildlife.

Killing an elephant attracts the highest punishment under the law. There is much breast beating, for instance, when animals are killed by poachers or in retaliatory killings by villagers who are victims of elephant depredation. There are demands for stricter punishment, for immediate arrests and calls for the Central Bureau of Investigation to look into the matter.

We know exactly what is happening on the rail tracks in North Bengal. A similarly distressing situation exists in neighbouring Assam, which has the dubious distinction of maximum elephant deaths in train accidents (there are four stories on elephants and train accidents in this issue of the *PA Update* alone). The scene of 'crime' is known, the actors are known and yet no action is taken: killing of wildlife is clearly a lesser crime when committed by a particular set of actors. This is the story in different forms in different parts of the country. Some are more equal than others and wildlife, certainly, is at the bottom of that pile!



Wildlife and RTI activist murdered in Gujarat

It is just as we were going to press that we got the shocking news of the murder of wildlife and Right to Information (RTI) activist from Gujarat, Amit Jethva. He was shot dead by unidentified assailants outside the High Court in Ahmedabad on the 20th of July. Jethva was President of the Gir Nature Club and had been campaigning passionately for the protection of the forests and animals of Gir.

We strongly condemn this killing and hope that the perpetrators will be brought to book soon. We also express our heartfelt condolences to his family and close ones.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Plan to relocate Chenchu tribe from Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem TR

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has chalked out a detailed plan to relocate 1,000 families of the Chenchu tribal community from the Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve. The tribals are to be relocated to the fringe areas of the reserve and as per present norms, every family is being offered Rs 10 lakh for the relocation.

Anthropologists have expressed concern that the hunter-gatherer community may be unable to adjust to the new circumstances and the environment they are moved into.

The MoEF had also recently hired 400 young Chenchu boys as forest guards to protect the forests of the reserve.

Source: Rashme Sehgal, 'MoEF plans to uproot tribals to save tigers', www.asianage.com, 30/06/10

Drunk drivers pose threat to wildlife in Nagarjunsagar Srisailem TR

A study conducted by the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department has revealed that there is considerable wildlife mortality in the Nagarjunsagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR) on account of road accidents. Three leopards and four sloth bears were killed recently in such incidents. There is a serious problem of drunken driving at night and this is said to be the main cause of the wildlife deaths as well.

Vehicular traffic that is stopped from 9 pm to 6 am throughout the year on the road to Srisailem is allowed during festivals like Maha Shivaratri, Ugadi and Kartikamasam. The highest number of road kills were recorded between March and April and between July and December.



Source: 'Drunk drivers pose threat to animals in tiger reserve', *Deccan Chronicle*, 02/05/10.

Contact: **Field Director**, Nagarjunsagar - Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Srisailem Dam (East) – 512103, Andhra Pradesh, Tel: 08524-286089 / 286140(R). Fax: 08524-286071

ASSAM

Railway advisory to restrain elephant deaths in Assam

The Railway Board has issued advisories to prevent train accidents that have been frequently killing elephants in Assam.

The matter was discussed in a meeting in May held between officials of the Northeast Frontier (NF) Railway and the state forest department (FD). The FD expressed concern over the increasing cases of elephant deaths in train accidents in Assam. The Chief Wildlife Warden informed the railway authorities of the February 28 incident where despite information being passed on to the railway stationmaster at Azara on the movement of elephants in the area, nothing was done. A female elephant had died in the incident after being hit by a train at Deepor Beel. Responding to the FD's concern the NF Railway said the Railway Board had issued advisories aimed at preventing accidents. These involve the suggested engagement of elephant trackers equipped with mobile phone/walkie-talkies to receive/pass on information regarding presence of elephant herds around tracks. Separate wireless communication facility would be provided at the stations falling within the vulnerable areas identified.

The FD would also inform the railways about the locations where speed restrictions are required in the state. There are eight locations, which have been identified as vulnerable so far. Of these, two sites are in Guwahati, two in Karbi Anglong and one each in Digboi, Goalpara, Nagaon areas and in the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary. The Railways have, however, requested for a review on this issue as such curbs might affect train movement.

It has also been decided that the zonal railways in consultation with the FD will identify the vulnerable areas and arrange need-based cleaning of vegetation on either side of tracks. Pantry car staff will also be advised not to throw edible waste in the vulnerable areas as it might attract elephants and increase chances of accidents. Announcements are also to be made at stations near vulnerable locations advising passengers not to throw such waste. The train drivers, guards, station masters would be sensitised on wildlife conservation during periodical refresher courses at nominated zonal railway training centres.

About 37 per cent of the total cases of elephant mortality owing to train hits in the country is in Assam alone. This is the highest in the country followed by West Bengal, Uttarakhand and Jharkhand. Seven elephants have been already killed by trains in Assam this year. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XIV, No. 3 and Vol XIII, No. 5)

Source: Roopak Goswami, 'Rail advisory to curb jumbo deaths', *The Telegraph*, 17/05/10

CBI probe into wildlife contraband haul at Guwahati airport

A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe has been ordered into the seizure of 20 kg of tiger parts and skeletons worth Rs 5 crore from Guwahati airport in the month of June. 555 kilograms of pangolin scales were also part of the seizure. There were a total of four seizures in the span of five days from the airport and railway station in Guwahati. This is considered indicative of the fact that Guwahati is becoming a major hub for smugglers transporting wildlife products to neighbouring countries.

The recently seized consignment came from Dimapur in Nagaland and officials suspect that the tigers may have been poached in the Kaziranga National Park. The sender and the addressee were the same in all the cases. They were coming from Nagaland and destined for Manipur's Imphal West district. Officials said that such consignments go directly from Dimapur to Manipur and then to Myanmar. The 68 day Manipur blockade had forced them to be sent through Guwahati this time.

Source: 'Wildlife seizure in Assam, again', *The Times of India*, 21/06/10

'Govt orders CBI probe into seizure of tiger parts in Guwahati',
www.deccanherald.com 23/06/10

Speed restriction on NH-37 through Kaziranga NP

The Assam government has ordered a speed limit of 40kmph on vehicles using the National Highway – 37 through the Kaziranga NP. The move is aimed at ensuring the safety of the animals that are forced to move to higher ground in the Karbi Anglong hills during the floods.

The government has also prohibited carrying of fire-arms, bows, arrows and other weapons. Stopping heavy vehicles in front of eating joints and blowing of horn in the areas close to the park will also not be allowed.

Recent flooding and subsequent inundation of the Kaziranga NP has, as in previous years, forced animals to cross the NH-37 to reach the dry highlands in Karbi Anglong hills. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XVI, No. 1; Vol XIV, No. 6; Vol XIII, Nos. 6, 2 & 1 and Vol XI, Nos. 6 & 4)

Source: 'Speed limits set for vehicles in KNP',
www.sentinelassam.com, 21/06/10

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga NP, PO Bokakhat, Dist. Golaghat – 785612, Assam. Tel: 03776-268095(O), 268086®

Locals protest killing of a youth by Kaziranga NP staff

People of Silveta area under Bokakhat subdivision of Golaghat district have demanded a high level inquiry into the killing of Rahul Kutum by the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) forest guards. He along with three others were shot dead in the Bogpur area of the national park on May 21.

Local people have claimed that Kutum was fraudulently declared a poacher. They have alleged that one Hariprasad Dolley of Agoratoli area had helped the KNP officials in planning the killing.

Following a complaint from the family members of Rahul Kutum, the

Bokakhat police arrested Dolley under section 302 of the Indian Penal code in charge of murder and produced him in court that sent him to the jail.

Source: 'Poacher killing: Protest in Kaziranga National Park', *The Sentinel*, 01/06/10

Manas Tiger Reserve Information System

The environmental NGO Aaranyak in collaboration with the Forest Department (FD) of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) has developed an information database for the Manas Tiger Reserve called the Manas Tiger Reserve Information System (MANTRIS).

It is a web-based Geographical Information System (GIS) that will be of immense help for park managers and stakeholders besides nature and wildlife enthusiasts. It contains detailed information on all aspects of the tiger reserve including administrative centers, forest boundary, land use pattern, drainage, forest villages, NGO locations, roads network, elephant points, golden langur points, and a digital elevation model (topographic model) of the tiger reserve.

The project was financially supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) and is the first of its kind web-based information software on any of the protected areas in the North East of the country.

The software is now available in digital format with Aaranyak which has plans to make it available on the internet subject to approval of the FD. The digital copy of MANTRIS is available for conservation agencies on request.

Contact: **Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar**, Aaranyak, 50 Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO: Beltola, Guwahati - 781028, Assam. Tel: 0361-2230250. Fax: 2228418. Email: bibhab@aaranyak.org

Director, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd. Dist. Barpeta – 781315, Assam. Tel: 03666 – 261413. Fax: 232253 / 260253

Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam. Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386

BIHAR

Dolphin *mitras* in Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary



The Bihar government has decided to appoint 20 Gangetic dolphin *mitras* (friends) in an attempt to stop their poaching in the state. These will be appointed in 20 selected villages along the 50 km stretch of the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary in Bhagalpur district. These are villages where there have been reports of dolphin hunting. Senior forest officials said that the *mitras* will be appointed for 10 months and would be given Rs 500 per month as a 'source of encouragement' for saving the dolphins and creating awareness among the villagers.

The initiative of the state government follows the killing in May of four dolphins near Patna. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 6, Vol XII, No. 2 and No. 43)

Source: 'Friends for dolphins', *The Telegraph*, 15/05/10.

Contact: **DFO**, Banka Forest Division, I/c Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin WLS, Banka, Dist. Bhagalpur, Bihar. Tel: 06424 -232216

GUJARAT

'Amitabh Route' in Gir interests tourists

Filmstar Amitabh Bachchan's visit to the Gir Sanctuary has sparked greater tourist interest here. The sanctuary observed a sudden increase in number of tourists who insisted on traveling the 'Amitabh route' in the sanctuary to spot lions exactly the way he did.

There are six designated routes in Gir of which Amitabh shot on four and posted pictures of lions on his blog. The sanctuary was closed from June 1 to 5 as he was shooting an advertisement for the Gujarat Tourism Corporation. It then opened for only

10 days before it closed again for the monsoons.

The last 10 days of the tourist season saw a sharp increase in tourist arrivals. The number of vehicle permits issued daily before Bachchan's visit were 60-65. This number jumped to over 85 after the 5th of June.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik, 'Big B's charm working? Tourist flow at Gir sanctuary increases', epaper.timesofindia.com, 25/06/10

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/630051. Fax: 631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in
CWLW - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar-382010, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-230007. Fax: 221097.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Markhor numbers up in Qazinag NP; peace along Indo-Pak border main reason

A recent census of Markhor in the Qazinag National Park (QNP) along the Line of Control (LOC) between India and Pakistan has put the number of these endangered animals here at 300. This is considerably higher than the 115 goats counted in the 2005 census.

Officials say that the main reason is the ceasefire agreed between the India and Pakistan in 2003. The Markhor was reportedly scared away or regularly fell victim to artillery duels between the two armies. These have not been seen in many years and the wildlife populations are recovering as a result. It has been suggested that a similar increase in markhor population would be seen on the Pakistan side of the LOC. There is a concern, however, of the impact on the Markhor of the electrified fence that has been erected along the LOC to stop incursions of militants from across the border. The 10 feet high barbed wire fence passes through Markhor habitat in the area.

Source: 'India Pakistan border truce helps rare Kashmir goat', www.dawn.com, 29/04/10.

Contact: **I/c Qazinag NP, C/o CWLW**, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, Tourist Reception Centre (TRC), Srinagar – 190001. Tel: 0191-2544575, 0194-2452469

KARNATAKA

Bannerghatta night safari between 6 and 11 pm: FD

The Karnataka Forest Department has submitted an affidavit to the High Court saying that the proposed night safari at Bannerghatta National Park will not be allowed beyond midnight.

The affidavit says that the Central Zoo Authority had approved the master plan submitted for the year of 2009-2010 to 2018 - 2019 on February 11, 2010. As per the plan an area of 115 hectares has been earmarked for the night safari and the visiting hours will be between 6 pm and 11 pm on weekdays depending on the season. On weekends the safari will go on till midnight.

A Bangalore based advocate, B R Deepak, had filed a PIL challenging the proposed night safari. He had contended that it is against the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972 and the wild animals would be under extreme pressure and stress if the safari is allowed. (Also see *PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 2)

Source: 'No Safari at Bannerghatta after midnight', www.deccanherald.com, 21/06/10

Contact: **CF**, Bannerghatta NP, Bannerghatta, Dist. Bangalore – 560083, Karnataka. Tel: 080-28428540(O), 28428572(R). Fax: 28428540

Motor rally inside Cauvery WLS; spotted deer killed

Jayadas Menon, a 41-year-old resident of Bangalore was arrested recently for illegally organizing a motor rally through the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. A spotted deer was killed due to reckless driving by Khushwanth Randhawa, one of the rally participants on June 8 near Muthathi inside the sanctuary. The vehicle driven by Randhawa was seized by the Kanakapura wildlife division staff. An offence (FOC 3/09-10) was booked against 10 persons including the driver and the organisers.

Menon was produced before the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC), Kanakapura and has been remanded to judicial

custody. He has been booked under The Wild Life Protection Act 1972 Sections 9 (Prohibition of killing of wildlife), Section 27 (Trespassing into wildlife sanctuary) and Section 51 (Penalty clauses punishment which extends up to three years). The case of a road kill is equivalent to poaching and is a non-bailable offence.

On the day of the accident, the organiser had claimed that he had permission to organise the rally within the sanctuary. When the forest staff demanded the written copy of the permission, he failed to furnish it, and also fled from the spot. The rally was organised between Bangalore and Kochi. The first phase of it fell within the sanctuary.

The FD is reported to have said that there is high level pressure to release the accused.

Source: Subhash Chandra N S, 'Rally in wildlife sanctuary kills deer, one held', www.deccanherald.com, 29/06/10.

Contact: DCF, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary
Kanakapura, Dist. Bangalore, Karnataka.
Tel: 08117-22536(O), 22537(R)

MoEF cancels clearance given to power plant in Karwar; says it is too close to Cotigao WLS in Goa

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has cancelled an environmental clearance given to a 450 mw power plant proposed in Uttar Kannada district of Karnataka. The project in Hankona in Karwar tehsil had received environmental clearance in June 2009.

The rejection came following a report submitted by the expert appraisal committee, which during an inspection found that the project proponent Ind-Bharath Ltd had obtained the environment nod by hiding information in respect of various issues including proximity of the project to the Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary in Goa.

The team found that there was a contradiction between data furnished by the firm and the actual position of various aspects. The firm had concealed details on the location of discharge of cooling water, impact of intake and outfall on the fisheries, and the presence of patches of dense forest in and around the project site, including mangroves. Taking serious note of the matter, the ministry cancelled the environment clearance and the Coastal Regulation Zone nod sanctioned to the company.

The local residents, including members of the Hankona fishing community, had filed two appeals before National Environment Appellate Authority (NEAA) against the project forcing the MoEF to send a team to verify the allegations. They had raised fears of loss of livelihood and had also pointed out that the plant was located only 3.5 kms from the Cotigao WLS.

The NEAA had already rejected the power plant (*PA Update* Vol XV, No. 5) on various grounds including that it was close to the forests of the Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve

Source: 'Environment Ministry refuses Karna power plant proposal', www.deccanherald.com 29/06/10.

Contact: **I/c Cotigao WLS, C/o Chief Wildlife Warden**, Wildlife Wing, Junta House, Panaji 403001, Goa. Tel: 0832 – 224747 / 223508. Fax: 224747

Two elephants from Hassan moved to Bandipur NP; one starts return journey

The Karnataka Forest Department has started an operation to tranquilise elephants in Hassan district and move the animals to the Bandipur National Park. These animals are part of a herd of 20 that is at the centre of ongoing conflict with villages in the area.

Two elephants have so far been moved as part of the effort called 'Operation Magadihalli'. The first elephant was captured in the first week of June in Karadibetta Hosahalli in Alur taluk, while the 2nd one was caught about a week later in Dodabetta also in Alur taluk. They were fitted with radio collars before being transported to the forests of the Bandipur National Park.

Subsequent reports indicate that one of the elephants had started, almost immediately, to walk back to its old territory. It had walked 70 km from Bandipur and had reached the backwaters of Kabini river. The latest in the matter is not known.

Forest officials were hoping to get the permission from the Union government for the capture and translocation of the entire herd of 20 animals, but it is not sure now considering that one of the first two that were moved had started returning to its old territory.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol XII, Nos. 6 & 4)

Source: 'Rouge elephant captured', *The Hindu*, 07/06/10

'Second rogue elephant captured near Doddabetta' *The Hindu*, 14/06/10

'Radio collared jumbo traces back its steps', *Deccan Herald*, 16/06/10

Contact: **Field Director**, Bandipur Project Tiger Reserve, Aranya Bhawan, Ashokapuram, Mysore – 570008, Karnataka. Tel: 0821-2480901(O), 2484980 (R).

Special Tiger Protection Force for Bandipur Tiger Reserve

The Karnataka government has decided to expedite its 2008 plans to set up a task force to protect tigers of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. The move comes after the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) threatened to cut funds as eight tigers have died since 2009 in the reserve. Four of these deaths have occurred since January 2010. The NTCA has asked the state to review the monitoring and security of the tiger reserves.

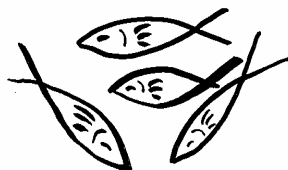
The state government is working towards setting up the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) by 2011 as per NTCA guidelines and has set aside Rs. Four crores for the purpose.

The STPF will be headed by an assistant conservator of forests and will comprise three range forest officers, 18 foresters and 90 guards, who will be divided into three groups. It will also have a member from NCTA. Each group will be provided a vehicle, arms and other equipment by the NTCA. Those selected for the force will undergo six months' rigorous training at Yelahanka Police Training centre.

Source: 'Task force to protect Bandipur tigers', *Deccan Herald*, 02/06/10

Pollution related deaths of fish and crocodiles in River Kali near Dandeli WLS, Anshi NP

It has been alleged that the pollutants being released in the River Kali by the West Coast Paper Mill Ltd has caused wide-scale fish and



crocodile mortality in the waters of the river. Forests of the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary and the Anshi National Park are in the vicinity and wild animals in the region depend on the river for water.

This was pointed out in a letter to the environment Minister, Mr. Jairam Ramesh, Hemanta Naik a resident of Dandeli Town along with photographs of fish found dead in the river on June 13, earlier this year.

The letter also points out that air and water pollutants were damaging the health of people in the area as well as the crop production. Strict action has been demanded against the industry.

Source: Hemanta Naik. Letter to Mr. Jairam Ramesh dated 14/06/10.

Contact: **Hemanta Naik**, Kali River Bachao Andolan, I/637, Opposite CMC, Township, Dandeli - 581325 Uttara Kanada, Karnataka. Tel: 09844201252. Email: hemanta_naik@yahoo.com
DCF, Dandeli Wildlife Division, Dandeli – 581325, Uttar Kannada, Karnataka. Tel: 08284-231585(O), 230114(R). Fax: 230300

KERALA

Solar fencing leading to increased human-elephant conflict in Kerala

Solar fencing to prevent elephants from dying in railway accidents and to protect private property is leading to an increase in human-elephant conflict in adjoining areas. The Forest Department (FD) and the Railways recently put up solar fencing along a 20-kilometre stretch between Kanjikode and Madukkarai in the Walayar forests as a large number of elephants had died after being hit by speeding trains (*PA Update* Vol XIV, No. 2). As a result, no death has been reported on the railway lines between Walayar and Madukkarai for the past one year. Another 10 kilometres of the rail track is currently being fenced. A private company which has started a wind farm in Attapadi has also put up an electric fencing around hundreds of acres of their land.

This blocking of elephant movement routes, however, is said to have resulted in elephants moving into adjoining areas and an increase of conflict here. Those affected on account of these developments include the residents of Malampuzha, Kava, Padalikaad, Kottekad, Venoli and Attapadi areas. Large areas of cultivated land have been damaged and two people were also recently killed by elephants in Attapadi and at Adupu colony in Malampuzha.

The FD has planned to put up a 20-kilometre fencing in the Malampuzha and Pudussery panchayats. Seven wild elephants are reported to be roaming in these panchayat areas and another two dozen in the surrounding agricultural land. A group of people has been engaged here to use crackers at night to scare away the elephants.

Forest authorities have also submitted a scheme estimated at Rs 1.5 crore to Project Elephant to protect elephants and their habitats in the region. The suggestions include the provision of solar fencing, digging of trenches and providing water holes in the forest areas so that the animals do not enter human habitations.

Source: 'Squads to counter elephant menace on the cards', www.expressbuzz.com 10/05/10

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden** – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-2322217 / 2360452 / 2204896. Fax: 2360452 / 2322217

New frog species in Ervikulam NP

A team of scientists from Delhi University led by Dr. SD Biju of the School of



Environmental Studies, have reported a new frog species from the Ervikulam National Park. It is bright orange to reddish in colour, has multiple macroglands on the body, is extremely short limbed and is morphologically different from all other families of frogs. It has been reported only from the summit of Anaimudi. Biju is said to have first located the frog in 2001 and then spent seven years to complete the study including its reproductive behaviour.

Source: 'New frog species found in Western Ghats', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 06/05/10.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Ervikulam NP, P.O. Munnar, Munnar, Kerala. Tel: 04865-230487

MADHYA PRADESH

Guards burn tiger cub carcass in Pench TR; cut pads for *tantrik* ritual

Three forest guards and the Chairman of the local Eco-development society (constituted by the Forest Department) were arrested in the month of June for burning the carcass of a tiger cub in the Pench Tiger Reserve. The cub had reportedly died a natural death and the forest guards had chopped off the cubs pads/feet before burning the carcass. The pads were to be used for performing certain *tantrik* rituals, which the guards believed would make them wealthy.

The cub was one of three with a tigress that had been seen in the reserve. Officials had found the cub near a water body away from its mother. Noting its critical condition, they had directed the guards to keep a watch on the animal. Two days later the guards said that the cub was no longer there and that it had been taken back by its mother. The details of what happened became available only after a priest was called by them to their camp to perform a *tantrik* ritual using the cub's pads.

Source: Moushumi Basu. 'Pench guards burn tiger cub's carcass'

www.dailypioneer.com 22/06/10

Contact: **Field Director**, Pench Tiger Reserve, P.O. Barapathar, Dist. Seoni - 480 661. Tel: 07692-250794/250594. Fax: 250794/221180. Email: root@trpench.ren.nic.in

MAHARASHTRA

Big reshuffle in Maharashtra FD

In a major reshuffle seven chief conservators of forests (CCFs), 19 conservators of forests (CFs) and three deputy conservators were recently shifted from their present posts in Maharashtra. Officials said the transfers were routine and that more were in the pipeline.

SWH Naqvi, CCF (HRM), Nagpur, has been shifted to Pune as social forestry director (SFD). He will be replaced by Prakash Thosre, who is SFD director. Amravati territorial CCF S D Sontakke has been shifted to Aurangabad. He will be replaced by Sarjan Bhagat, general manager of Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM), Nagpur. Shree Bhagwan, CCF at Thane, will replace Bhagat at FDCM. Suresh Thorat has been shifted from Borivali to Thane while he will be replaced by Sarvesh Kumar from Aurangabad.

Mohan Jha, field director of Pench tiger reserve, has been shifted but his posting is awaited. He will be replaced by A Ashraf, joint director of social forestry, Aurangabad. Sanjay Thakre, field director of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), has also been shifted to FDCM as regional manager (headquarters). V K Sinha, who is in FDCM, will replace Thakre. Thakre's exit comes as post of Tadoba CF is to be upgraded to CCF rank.

Gorewada zoo director A R Mande has been shifted to working plan, Amravati. Similarly, R S Yadav, who headed the North Chandrapur Circle, has been brought to PCCF's office as CF JFM-II. Yadav will be replaced by GRK Rao. C S Gajbhiye, who looked after JFM II, has been shifted to HRD in PCCF's office.

F S Jafry of working plan division, Nagpur, has been shifted as joint director, social forestry, Pune. Virendra Tiwari, who was with working plan, Amravati, has been shifted as CF (tendu), Nagpur. YLP Rao, who headed Kolhapur wildlife division, will be replaced by M K Rao. YLP Rao has been shifted to Nagpur in land record department in place of PCS Singh. Singh has been transferred to Chandrapur in silviculture.

The three deputy conservators shifted include Anwar Jamal Ahmed to Alibagh, S U Hiwlekar to Shahapur and D B Shrikhande to Pandharkawda. Shrikhande has been posted in place of Gopal Kale, who had committed suicide a few months ago.

Source: '29 top officials shifted',
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> 15/07/10

Satellite-collared leopard walks 120 kms to Sanjay Gandhi National Park

A project involving satellite tracking of collared leopards has documented a case of a leopard that

walked 120 kms to the forests of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai. The animal was released at Malshej Ghat in Pune district as part of joint effort between Project Waghoba and the Maharashtra FD.

The animal had been rescued from a well in Alephata near the Pune-Nashik highway about a year ago. It was fitted with a collar and released near Malshej Ghat. The collar had a Global Positioning System (GPS) and Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM). The readings of the leopard's position were stored in the collar and transmitted via SMS to the server whenever the animal reached an area that had mobile connectivity.

The animal took four months to complete its journey. In the process it crossed the railway line close to the station at Kasara and headed towards the Tansa and Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuaries before finally reaching the Nagla block in the northern part of Sanjay Gandhi NP. It then swam across the Vasai creek, and crossed the busy Ghodbunder Road to enter the main area of the national park.

The tracking device reportedly malfunctioned when the animal crossed the creek and as a result the researchers lost track of it.

Source: Simit Bhagat. 'Spotted: Ajoba's trek from Malshej Ghat to national park'
The Times of India, 30/06/10.

Contact: Vidya Athreya, Project Waghoba.

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Four policemen suspended for getting too close to tigress in Nagzira WLS

Four policemen, all constables, were suspended recently for getting too close to a tigress in the Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary. They were held guilty of violating forest and wildlife regulations including carrying weapons inside the protected area, entering

the park without proper authorization, alighting from the vehicle, and stepping close to a protected and endangered creature.

The four, all attached to the Bhandara district police headquarters, reportedly left their official vehicles and went very close to a tigress in an attempt to get a picture on their mobile phone cameras.

The tigress was resting near a waterhole around 7 a.m. when a dozen policemen came to the spot in two vehicles. Some of them belonged to the security provided to Justice R.M. Borde of the Bombay High Court (Nagpur Bench), who had gone for a visit to the park. Four policemen from the group disembarked along with their weapons and cameras and moved towards the tigress. When they did not heed her angry warnings, she roared loudly and jumped towards them. Shaken, they scampered back to their vehicles.

A group of tourists, who were present at the spot, complained to forest officials about the incident.



Source: 'Cops suspended for getting too close to tigress', <http://sify.com/news> 16/06/10

Contact: **DCF, Wildlife**, Nagzira WLS, ITI Road, Fulchur, Gondia 441601, Maharashtra. Tel: 07184-226399(O), 226564(R)

MEGHALAYA

NBWL rejects uranium mining in Balpakram National Park

The National Board on Wildlife (NBWL) has finally rejected the uranium mining project in Balpakram National Park in Meghalaya after stiff opposition from various quarters. (see *PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 3)

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Standing Committee of the NBWL held in the month of May following a site inspection visit by its members.

A number of organizations including the Garo Students Union (GSU) had opposed the

Department of Atomic Energy's (DAE's) move for exploratory drilling for uranium by denotifying an area of 8.0 square km in Rongcheng plateau of Balpakram National Park in the South Garo Hills.

A report submitted by the inspection team has asked for all road construction and mining to be stopped inside the park. It has also recommended strict regulation of all coal mines in Garo Hills and other parts of the state and implementation of proper mining plans.

Source: 'NBWL rejects uranium mining project in Balpakram Nat Park',

www.economictimes.com 14/05/10

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Balpakram National Park, Wildlife Division, Baghmara, Dist. South Garo Hills, Meghalaya, Tel/Fax: 03639-22220
Chief Wildlife Warden, Government of Meghalaya, Lower Laichumiere, Risa Colony, Shillong - 793 001.

ORISSA

NTCA to oppose decision allowing for removal of bamboo from Satkosia TR

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has decided to file an affidavit in the Supreme Court opposing the recent decision to allow for bamboo harvesting in sanctuaries. The move comes in response of the recent decision of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) to allow for bamboo harvesting by locals in the Satkosia Tiger Reserve for bonafide uses.

The Orissa government was reportedly keen to allow for the harvesting and the Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) had recommended that the felling and removal of bamboo can be done only by engaging locals in the protected areas and those living in the immediate vicinity.

The NTCA has however expressed concern that this would allow a large number of people including vested groups to enter protected areas to exploit the resources for commercial gains. It noted that bamboo flowering occurs in various tiger reserves like Bhadra, Anshi and Dandeli and Bandhavgarh

and allowing people to remove bamboo would pose a threat to the wildlife, particularly tigers here.

Source: 'Govt will ask SC to reconsider order on bamboo harvesting',
www.deccanherald.com, 22/06/10

Contact: **Dr. Rajesh Gopal**, NTCA, Annexe No. 5, Bikaner House, Shahjahan Road, New Delhi-110011. Telefax: 2338 4428. E-mail: dirpt-r@nic.in

Divisional Forest Officer, Satkosia Wildlife Division, at/P.O./Dist. Angul – 759143, Orissa. Tel: 0674-230218(O), 230219@

Expert committee to probe mass killing of elephants in Simlipal TR in April

A two-member expert committee of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has started its investigation into the poaching of elephants inside Simlipal Tiger Reserve. Following petitions by wildlife activists to Union Minister of Environment and Forest, Jairam Ramesh, NTCA member secretary Rajesh Gopal constituted a two-member independent team comprising wildlife activists Belinda Wright and Biswajit Mohanty. The team was to tour the reserve and assess the ground situation, and submit its report within a fortnight.

A local forest staff had reported the death of one elephant in the reserve in April. Subsequent visits and investigations by wildlife activists from Mayurbhanj found that six more had been killed. It has been suggested that the actual number of elephants killed is 12.

A fact finding team of activists found remains of burnt bones of one elephant at Dudhurchampa. Remains of two carcasses including bones were found buried at Mondama hills under Kandadhanu section. Another burnt elephant carcass was discovered at Jodapal Chhak. Officials of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve admitted the elephant deaths, but its director and Regional Chief Conservator of Forests refused to confirm whether the elephants have been killed by poachers.

Member of National Board of Wildlife, Mr Mohanty has also written to Jairam Ramesh demanding a CBI investigation into the mass killings of elephants in Simlipal.

Source: Debabrata Mohanty, 'Elephants go the tiger way in Simlipal Reserve',
www.expressindia.com, 04/06/10

Contact: **Director**, Simlipal Tiger Reserve, P.O. Baripada, Dist. Mayurbhanj – 757002, Orissa. Tel: 06792-252593(O), 252773(R) Fax: 256705

Biswajit Mohanty, Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack – 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671 – 334625. Fax: 610980. Email: kachhapa@gmail.com

MPs ask for action on Dhamra Port forest violation



Over 20 politicians, cutting across party lines, including parliamentarians and members of the standing committee for Science and Technology, Environment and Forests recently called on Minister for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh to take action against ongoing violation of the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) for the construction of the Dhamra Port in Orissa. The port is coming up close to the Bhitarkanika National Park and a number of scientists and conservationists have expressed fear that it will pose a long term threat to the mass nesting grounds of the endangered olive ridley sea turtles and also to the mangrove forests of the area (PA Updates Vol XV, Nos. 6 and 4).

Documents obtained under the Right to Information Act reveal, prima facie, that the Dhamra port construction is in violation of the FCA. Officials within the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Orissa Forest Department have stated that the entire Dhamra port area is Protected Forest land, and permission for construction of the port was never sought from the Centre.

Greenpeace has pointed out that even the Supreme Court has taken cognizance of this and had sought a response on the violation from the government over eight

months ago. The ministry, however, has still to respond. Greenpeace has also pointed out that ports have been proposed in Orissa near all turtle mass nesting sites and this large scale port construction will play havoc with coastal ecosystems and traditional fisheries livelihoods as well.

Source: 'MPs ask Jairam Ramesh to act on Dhamra Port Forest Violation' Greenpeace Press Release, 17/05/10.

Contact: **DFO**, Bhitarkanika NP, At/PO Rajnagar, Dist. Kendrapada – 745225. Orissa. Tel: 06729-72460/64. Fax: 06727-20775
Sanjiv Gopal, Campaign Manager Oceans, Greenpeace India, Bangalore, India. Tel: 09845535416. Email: sanjiv.gopal@greenpeace.org

MoEF denies permission for thermal power plant at Dhamra near Bhitarkanika NP

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has scrapped a proposed power plant near Dhamra port, close to the Bhitarkanika National Park. Engineering and construction firm Larsen and Toubro Ltd (L&T) was going to build a 1,680MW coal-based thermal power plant at a site 8 kms from the boundary of the protected area.

The ministry's move has put a question mark on the Rs7,650 crore project as L&T had not identified alternative sites for it.

Source: Padmaparna Ghosh & Utpal Bhaskar. 'Turtle nests endanger L&T project in Orissa', *Mint*, 16/05/10
CWLW– Orissa, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674-2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840. Fax: 512502

RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan to construct small dams and ponds in its protected areas

The Rajasthan government has planned to construct small dams and ponds inside protected areas to provide relief to wild animals. In the first phase, the forest department (FD) would spend Rs. 41 crore on the construction of 85 water bodies inside the Sariska and Ranthambore Tiger Reserves and the Sawai Mansingh Wildlife

Sanctuary. In the next phase, all other sanctuaries and parks would be covered under the scheme. A sum of Rs 300 to 400 crore would be spent on this.

The FD would identify places where these water bodies are to be constructed and later the water resource department would construct them. They are expected to be constructed by November.

Source: Anil Sharma, 'Rajasthan to dig ponds in water-starved sanctuaries', www.thaindian.com, 25/05/10

Tigers translocated to Sariska from Ranthambore TR were siblings



DNA tests conducted by the Bangalore based National Centre of Biological Sciences (NCBS) has confirmed that the tigers that were translocated from Ranthambore to Sariska between June 2008 and February 2009 were siblings. This has been admitted in a recent report of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). The findings are based on scat analysis of the translocated animals to Sariska.

The NTCA had ordered the DNA tests in January earlier this year to ascertain breeding compatibility before shifting any more of the cats to Sariska.

The NTCA, meanwhile, is reported to have taken a decision to translocate two more tigers that moved out of the Ranthambore National Park into adjoining forests – one male in Kela Devi Wildlife Sanctuary and a female near Kota. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, Nos. 3 & 1 and Vol XIV, No. 5)

Source: Jay Mazoomdar. 'It's official: DNA tests nail Sariska siblings', *Hindustan Times*, 22/06/10

Contact: **Director**, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Sariska, Alwar – 301022, Rajasthan. Tel: 0144-241333

CWLW Government of Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, Jaipur - 302 005. Tel: 0141-2380832 / 2540531. Fax: 2380496/2380832

SIKKIM

Sikkim says no to SC directive of 10 km eco-sensitive zone around PAs

The Sikkim wildlife board has said the Central Government's directive to declare zones around the national parks and sanctuaries as eco-sensitive cannot be implemented because of the mountainous terrain of the state.

The Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife) had in May, earlier this year, asked Sikkim to prepare detailed proposals as a follow up to a 2006 Supreme Court order asking for declaration of the area within a 10kms radius of PA boundaries as eco-sensitive.

A state official is reported to have pointed out that the 10 km areas put together came to 3,730 sq km which was 52.57 per cent of the total area of the state. The total area under the protected areas and the eco-sensitive zones together would then be 83 per cent of the state. This, added to the fact that the state was largely mountainous with deep valleys and steep gradients would leave very little space for human habitation.

It was also noted that if notified the eco-sensitive zones would cross three international borders and also into the Bengal side.

Source: 'Contour blocks eco tag - Hill state no to '10km' plea', *The Telegraph*, 25/05/10

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Government of Sikkim, Forest Secretariat, Deorali, Gangtok, - 737 102, Sikkim. Tel: 03592-281240 Fax: 281778

TAMIL NADU

Elephant-proof trench work along NMR stopped

The Southern Railway authorities have called off their efforts to dig an elephant-proof trench along the Nilgiris Mountain Railway (NMR) in Kallar in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The trench digging work was being undertaken following the recent killing of railway line maintenance staff by

elephants and incidents of wild elephants chasing line maintenance personnel.

The digging of the trenches drew objections from wildlife enthusiasts who pointed out these would result in the fragmentation of an important elephant corridor, preventing movement of elephants from Coimbatore towards Sathyamangalam, Karnataka and other parts of the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve.

The Conservator of Forests, Coimbatore Circle and District Forest Officer subsequently met with officials from Southern Railways and alternative measures to deal with the issue were discussed. It has been suggested that five watch towers be erected along the NMR line to monitor the movement of herds, besides utilising the services of tribals to help the railway line staff in their maintenance work. The trenches were also subsequently filled up.

Source: 'Elephant-proof trench work along NMR stopped', *The Hindu*, 14/06/10

Contact: **R. Jayaprakash**, PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore - 641014, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 09894259100. Email: crjayaprakash@gmail.com

UTTAR PRADESH

CEE biodiversity awareness programme in Dudhwa TR

The Centre for Environment Education - North in association with the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department recently conducted a two-day biodiversity awareness programme at three locations in and around the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. The theme of the program that was organized on May 21 and 22 was 'Biodiversity is Life, Biodiversity is Our Life'.

It was aimed at motivating the tribal community to understand the importance of biodiversity and to get involved in conservation activities. 250 community members from five different villages attended the programme.

Source: *Ceenario* 34, Enewsletter of the Centre for Environment Education, May 16-31, 2010

Contact: **Director**, Dudhwa National Park, Dist.
Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. Tel:
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UTTARAKHAND

Meeting on conservation and livelihoods in the Askot-Nanda Devi landscape

A one day consultation on conservation and livelihoods in the broad region comprising the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve (NDBR), Askot Wildlife Sanctuary, and intervening Van Panchayats was held in early June. The consultation was organized jointly by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and Kalpavriksh (KV) and was held in Dehradun.

Those attending the meeting included WII scientists and research students working in these landscapes, the Conservator in charge of the NDBR, other forest officials, NGOs and community participants.

Issues discussed during the meeting included the challenges from mass tourism/pilgrimage, new roads, hydro-electric projects (several of them being built or planned in Askot WLS), lack of livelihoods for the youth, decline in agriculture (including the associated crop damage by wild animals and declining agro-biodiversity) and animal husbandry, reduced food security and rapid cultural changes. It was also pointed out that the closure of the Nanda Devi National Park to local communities had caused overgrazing in adjacent pastures and conflicts between communities, increased poaching, decline in the wool industry (as sheep, no longer able to access high altitude pastures, were replaced by goats), and a sense of alienation.

The participants listed the key issues and follow up actions as well. These include among others, the collection of existing studies and information about the region (including case studies of where alternative, sustainable livelihood options are working), sub-regional dialogues and preparation of a land use map of the region.

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25654239. Email: ashishkothari@vsnl.com

Initiative to revive Gola elephant corridor

The Union Minister of Environment and Forest, Jairam Ramesh, has asked for the setting up of a committee to help revive the old Gola elephant corridor adjacent to the Rajaji NP. It is a 2.5 km long and 500 meter wide corridor between Haldwani and Lalkuan and has been badly impacted due to increasing human habitation and other installations like Indian Oil depot and a Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) station.

The committee that would include representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Wildlife Institute of India, the Wildlife Trust of India, and concerned forest divisions would prepare a comprehensive report on the corridor in three months.

Concern has been expressed, however, of the impact this project will have on the families of villages like Bindukhatta and others between Tarai central forest division and Tarai eastern forest divisions. The representatives of Bindukhatta Sangharsh Samiti, the local unit of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and other social organisations handed over a memorandum to the minister in this regard. They have criticized the role of the successive governments in this issue. They have pointed out that if the government was indeed so sincere about the conservation of the wild animals and the Gola corridor, permissions should not have been granted to Indian Oil and ITBP in the first place.

Source: Rajendra S Markuna, 'Panel set up to study ways to revive Gola jumbo corridor', *The Pioneer*, 14/06/10

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP, 5/1 Ansari Marg,
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WEST BENGAL

Ban on diesel cars and plastic in Gorumara National Park

The forest department (FD) has decided to ban diesel-run vehicles and plastic bags inside the Gorumara National Park. The FD had recently issued a notification inviting proposals to run

petrol cars for tourists and it said that members of the eco-development committees would get preference. Petrol-driven cars will be introduced when the park reopens for visitors on September 16. The park is closed for monsoons from June 15 to September 15. Private vehicles will not be allowed and it is hoped the new system will reduce the number of vehicles plying in the park.

This initiative in Gorumara is based on a similar one that was introduced in Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary a few years ago. Each of the six vehicles, purchased by members of eco-development committees, runs two trips daily in Jaldapara. Each tourist has to pay Rs 175.

The Resort Owners Association in Gorumara has said that the new move will reduce pollution in the area but fears have been expressed about the fact that some people might lose their livelihoods. They also noted that nearly 1,000 visitors come to Gorumara every day on average and the new rule may not allow for all to be accommodated.

In another related decision, plastic bags are also to be banned inside the park. Those found carrying them would be fined. Paper bags, made by eco-development committees, would instead be sold at the entrance to the park.

Source: 'Gorumara ban on diesel cars and plastic', *The Telegraph*, 09/06/10



Contact: **DFO**, Gorumara NP, Aranya Bhawan, Old Court Campus, Jubilee Park, P.O. & Dist. Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-224907(O), 222838(R). Fax: 03561-223563. Email: wild2@dte.vsnl.net.in

North Bengal PAs under threat from hydroelectric project in Bhutan

Renewed interest in the 4060 MW hydroelectric project on the River Sankosh in Bhutan has raised concerns of its impact on forest areas in North Bengal including the Buxa Tiger Reserve and the Chapramari and Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuaries.

The project involves the construction of two dams to feed a 141 km canal, 128 km of which would be inside India. The canal intends to

connect the Sankosh river in the east with the Teesta in the West. The power generated would feed the entire northeast and reach as far as Meerut in UP. The canal would also irrigate fields and supply drinking water to parts of Bengal.

It is feared, however, that the project would take a heavy toll on the forests in the region. Excavating the canal is expected to destroy at least 450 sq km of forest land, 100 sq km of which would be within protected areas. The project will also drastically reduce water in the Sankosh and other streams that are the lifeline of wildlife in Buxa TR. It is also expected to further aggravate the problem being faced by wild animals due to the broad gauge railway track that runs through the region. A number of animals have been killed in train accidents in the last six years (see following story).

Though the Detailed Project Report (DPR) by the Central Water Commission (CWC) was first handed over to the Bhutan government in December 1997, it did not get cleared due to protests. Now, the Indian government wants to revive it after receiving a request from Bhutan. A revised DPR for the project is expected to be completed within this year. The work for the revised DPR is said to have been completed in Bhutan but the work for the Indian portion is yet to start.

Source: Pinak Priya Bhattacharya. 'Hydel project shadow on dooars', *Times News Network*, 21/06/10

Contact: **Field Director**, Buxa Tiger Reserve, P.O. Alipurduar, Dist. Jalpaiguri - 736 122. West Bengal. Tel: 03564-256333 /255979. Fax: 03564-255577. Email: buxatiger@dte.vsnl.net.in

Elephant killed in railway accident near Siliguri

A 15 year old female elephant was mowed down by the Alipurduar Junction-bound Intercity Express near Red Bank Tea Estate in the night on June 1. Forest officials reported that the animal was one of a four member herd of elephants that was moving from Moraghat forest to Reti. While three elephants could cross the track, the last one was run over by the train that was coming from Siliguri at a

high speed. The driver subsequently stopped the train and found that the animal had been dragged about 100 metres. The body was cut into several pieces due to the collision

The forest department has identified 14 vulnerable points, where the railways need to take precautionary measures but Red Bank is not one of them though it is frequently used by elephants to move between Moraghat and Reti forests. A senior railway official of the Alipurduar Railway Division noted that if the railways can get timely information about the location of vulnerable elephant herds, drivers could be instructed to drive cautiously. In this instance no such information had been provided to the railways.

(See story below and also *PA Updates* Vol XI, No. 1; Vol. XV, No. 1; Vol. XIV, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol XIII, Nos. 6, 3 & 1; Vol XII, No. 3 and Nos. 49, 47, 39, 36, 34, & 29)

Source: 'Tracks turn jumbo killing fields', *The Telegraph*, 03/06/10.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)**, North Bengal, West Bengal Forest Dept. Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-25627(O) 25596

Advisory emphasizes over/underpasses across railway tracks in North Bengal; nature groups disagree

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and the Railways recently sent a joint advisory to the West Bengal Forest Department emphasizing the construction of underpasses or overpasses across railway tracks in the forests of north Bengal to bring down the number of animal deaths in train accidents. The MoEF has agreed to bear the cost of the project along with the expenses of putting up signboards warning train drivers and holding workshops to sensitise motormen and guards.

It also says that vegetation along the tracks should be cleared to ensure better visibility. The advisory is the follow up of a recent meeting the Minister for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh had with senior FD officials to discuss the issue

The railway track that passes through the Buxa Tiger Reserve, Gorumara National Park and the Mahananda and Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuaries was converted to broad gauge in 2004. 16

elephants, six gaur and four leopards have been killed since then by speeding trains on the 160 km stretch between Siliguri and Alipurduar (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XVI No. 1; Vol. XV, No. 1; Vol. XIV, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol XIII, Nos. 6, 3 & 1; Vol XII, No. 3 and Nos. 49, 47, 39, 36, 34, & 29).

Environmental and conservation groups have, however, criticized the suggestions made in the advisory saying that identifying just a few points along the track was no solution at all. They have also pointed out that there is no guarantee that the animals will use these passes. Most of the accidents are reported to happen at night and the groups have called for a stopping of night-time rail traffic on this route. A senior forest official said that the only proposal on the advisory list that seemed practical was for the engagement of animal trackers. They will patrol the jungles on either side of the tracks and will be equipped with either mobile phones or walkie-talkies to provide relevant information to prevent accidents and animal deaths.

Source: Anirban Choudhury, 'Green glare on forest pass plan - 'Impractical' tag on advisory', *The Telegraph*, 14/06/10.

Radio collared tiger crosses border from India into Bangladesh in the Sundarbans



A tiger that was radio-collared in the Indian part of the Sundarbans is reported to have crossed over into Bangladesh.

The tiger had been trapped in the Arbeshi jungle in North 24-Parganas on the Indian side on May 21. It was tranquillised and radio-collared before being released in the Katuajhuri forest. The radio collar signals revealed that while on the first two days, the animal traveled 6-7 km, it covered double the distance subsequently.

Signals from the radio-collar were being received from the Talpatty island from the Bangladesh side of the Sundarbans.

Source: Border no bar: Radio-collared tiger strays into Bangladesh

'<http://epaper.timesofindia.com> 14/06/10

Contact: **Director**, Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve, Bikash Bhavan, 3rd Floor, North Block, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3211750. Fax: 3211529

CWLW, Government of West Bengal, Vikas Bhawan, North Block, Salt Lake, Calcutta 700 091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3346900/3583208. Fax: 3345946. Email: wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Solar lamps in buffer villages of tiger reserves

The Energy Resources Institute (TERI) is working on a project to install solar lamps in villages surrounding tiger reserves across the country. The pilot project has been taken up in its first phase in Ranthambhore, Bandhavgarh, Simlipal, Sariska Melghat, Kanha-Pench corridor, Dudhwa and Valmiki TRs. It is being implemented under the flagship project 'Lighting a Billion Lives'.

The lamps have already been installed in five villages in Ranthambhore TR, one in Bandhavgarh, and ten in Melghat. Work is also going on in another eleven villages in the Kanha-Pench corridor and in villages in the Dudhwa, Valmiki and Simlipal reserves.

Each village would be given at least fifty solar lamps and individual households would be provided with one lamp each as part of the project. Each of these lamps would have facilities of night LED lamps, dimmers, mobile charger besides battery status indicator. They lamps would be charged in the community-based solar charging stations that are coming up in the target villages. Such stations would be manned by the 'Prakash Doot' (messenger of light) who would be a member from that particular village community. He/she would be responsible for the distribution and upkeep of the lanterns besides maintaining the charging station.

It is hoped that these lamps will help reduce human-wildlife conflict as better lighting would enable forest communities to keep vigil on their surroundings. To reach out to key tiger habitats TERI has signed MoUs with a number of organisations including World Wide Fund for Nature – India, Wildlife Trust of India, The Corbett Foundation and Tigerwatch that are already working in different tiger habitats.

Source: Moushumi Basu, 'Solar lamps in buffer villages to reduce man-animal conflict', *The Pioneer*, 06/06/10.

List of threatened bird species in India rises to 154

Recent studies by BirdLife International and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) have revealed that the list of threatened bird species in India has risen from 149 in 2008 to 154. Destruction of habitat is the prime reason for the increased threats.

In light of the alarming situation of several bird species, the BNHS has urged the Government of India to start special programmes for the protection of birds and their habitats. BNHS has identified 466 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) across India, 200 of which are not officially protected. The BNHS has asked for the protection of these areas and also to involve local communities in conservation measures in such a way that it becomes a win-win situation for all with a sustainable development model.

Source: 'List of threatened bird species in India rises to 154', Press Release by the BNHS

Contact: **Dr. Asad Rahmani**, Director BNHS, Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai 400 023 Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2821811. Fax: 2837615. Email: bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in;

Committee for appraisal of mining and industry projects around tiger reserves

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has constituted a three member committee for appraisal of proposals of

mining and industries falling in the buffer/corridor areas of tiger reserves. The committee was made up of Mr PK Sen, Dr. Prakash Amte, Mr. Samar Singh and Ms Urmila Pingle.

It was set up in the first week of May and was expected to submit its report in a month's time. 17 proposals were referred to the committee as per the mandate given to it. These were related to 10 projects in Madhya Pradesh: seven in Chindwara district two in Umaria district and one in Katni district. Six projects referred were from Maharashtra: three in Chandrapur district, two in Kolhapur district and one in Gondia district.

The lone project from Andhra Pradesh was related to the construction of a memorial for former Chief Minister the late YSR Rajshekar Reddy in the Gundla Brahmeshwaram Wildlife Sanctuary (*PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 3).

It is not known if the committee has submitted its report yet.

Source: Office memorandum No – 1-9/2010- NTCA (part) by SP Yadav, Deputy Inspector General, NTCA, MoEF dated 14/05/10.

More than 70 leopards killed in first three months of 2010

Figures compiled by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) reveal that more than 70 leopards have been killed across the country in the first three months of 2010 alone. Records also show that 290 and 157 leopards were killed in 2009 and 2008 respectively.

These are figures from available information and it is believed that the actual number of leopards dying every year is much higher at 500 animals.

In Uttar Pradesh, Dudhwa National Park and its extended territories are the most affected. In Maharashtra there are records of nearly 30 leopard deaths from different parts of the state. Fifteen deaths were reported in Vidarbha, mostly from the forests of Chandrapur and Gadchiroli. Buldhana district reported four deaths. Most of these are said to have been by drinking water poisoned by villagers to 'punish' the cats for wandering into human habitations.

The animals are also believed to be killed for their skin which reportedly sells for Rs 25,000 in the local black market. In big cities, the price

goes up to Rs 50,000 and in the international market, it can fetch upto Rs One lakh.

Wildlife activists have demanded a dedicated conservation programme — on the lines of Project Tiger — for leopards, but there is no initiative yet from the government on this.

Source: Darpan Singh 'Spotlight on tigers makes poachers shift to leopards' *Hindustan Times*, 12/06/10

2nd meeting of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel

The 2nd meeting of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) was held in Coimbatore in the first week of May. The issues discussed during the course of the meeting including those relating to the criteria for declaring an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA), delineation of the geographical limits of the Western Ghats; registration of individuals and organizations that want to interact with the WGEEP; finalizing a list of expert papers to be commissioned by the panel and the scheduling of site visits and consultations.

Source: Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert

NeBIO – New Journal on Environment and Biodiversity with a focus on the North East

NeBIO, a new journal on environment and biodiversity with a focus on the North East has started publication recently. It aims at encouraging research work and also bridging the gap between various forms of methodologies, perspectives and knowledge production.

The journal has also invited contributions in the form of articles and papers.

Contact: Kh. Jibankumar Singh, Editor-in-chief
Email: nebio.editor@gmail.com

Open source software application for tree identification in Western Ghats

In a first of its kind initiative, researchers at the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP) and CIRAD, France, have developed an open source software application for identification of tree species in the two major biodiversity hotspots in the world - the Western Ghats and the Annamite rain forests of Laos, near Vietnam.

The project, 'Biodiversity Informatics and Cooperation in Taxonomy for Interactive Shared Knowledge Base (BIOTIK), is funded by the European Union. The software was developed by Dr Pierre Grard of CIRAD while a team of researchers led by Dr B.R. Ramesh developed the database on the tree species.

The software is available online at www.ifpindia.org/biotik and www.biotik.org.

Source: 'Western Ghat Trees', *Deccan Chronicle*, 09/06/10

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

Rhesus macaques released from research centre to Shivapuri NP; court issues show cause notice

The Nepalese Supreme Court has issued a show-cause notice to the government over the release of rhesus monkeys from the Lele Research Center to Shivapuri National Park. The Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation and Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation have asked to explain the decision of release.

The order was issued by the court in response to a Public Interest Litigation filed by the Law Students Society of Nepal against the release of what allegedly were genetically modified primates. The applicants have argued that the release of 263 monkeys is in violation of national and international environmental laws and principles regarding biological diversity conservation. They have also said that the release

violates people's constitutional right to a safe environment and health.

They have asked the court to order a capture and rehabilitation of all the monkeys and also to issue a directive to draft and issue necessary rules, guidelines and policies to regulate future cases of wildlife rehabilitation.

Source: Lucia de Vries 'SC issues show cause over release of monkeys', *Republica*, 20/06/10

OPPORTUNITIES

Course in Conservation Biology and Wildlife Management

Satpuda Foundation, the SGB Amravati University, the Wildlife Department of Maharashtra and Nature Conservation Society, Amravati will hold a three-week International Course in Conservation Biology and Wildlife Management in Amravati, India from December 2 to 20, 2010. The main objective is to train wildlife biologists, managers and environmental educators in the conservation of biological diversity.

The topics covered during the course include biodiversity inventory and monitoring, conservation biology, protected areas management, wildlife management and animal ecology and behavior.

SGB Amravati University will host the course and field assignments will be conducted in two Project Tiger reserves in central India. Tuition fees for participants will be \$1,800. Few deserving Indian participants will be selected at the subsidized cost of U.S. \$550 or INR 25,000.

Contact: Kishore Rithe. Email: rithekishore@gmail.com

ATREE Small Grants Programme 2010

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE) has invited proposals for its Small Grants Programme 2010. The small grant will support 7 – 8

proposals in each of the two areas of focus: Biodiversity & Conservation and Environment and Development. Possible areas that the grant will support include but are not limited to:

Biodiversity and Conservation

- Endangered and threatened Species and its habitat
- Gaps in taxonomic work and monographs
- Studies on lesser known or lesser studied species of wildlife
- Critical areas of biodiversity conservation
- Climate change and conservation
- Innovative approaches and tools for conservation education

Environment and development

- Enabling communities and other stakeholders to address local environmental concerns
- Analysis and monitoring of policies and institutions for their socio-economic and environmental impact
- Payments for eco-system services and poverty reduction
- Incentives for agro-forestry systems and sustainable farming practices
- Gender perspective in conservation/ Natural resource management
- Environmental degradation and impact on women

Each research grant is up to Rs 1 lakh and is available for duration of 1 year. Grants can be used for fieldwork, research writing, or internships with ATREE faculty. Proposals will be accepted from civil society organizations such as NGOs, community based organizations, academic organizations and individual researchers. Last date for submission of proposals is 15th September 2010

Contact: **Madhavi Latha**, ATREE, Royal Enclave, Srirampura, Jakkur Post, Bangalore-560064, Karnataka. Email: madhavi@atree.org

Short term field-based course in conservation science

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment's (ATREE) Academy for Conservation Science and Sustainability Studies is offering two short term field based courses in conservation science.

Both the courses – one focused on the Western Ghats and the other on the Eastern Himalayas - will be of 15 days duration. The course will comprise lectures, discussions and fieldwork.

The Western Ghats course will be held from August 10-23, 2010 in Bangalore and at Agasthyamalai Field Academy, Singampatti, Tamil Nadu. The Eastern Himalaya course which is being organized in collaboration with Aaranyak will be held in Guwahati in January 2011. Preference will be given to North East applicants for the course in the NE.

The course fee is Rs. 3,000 (foreign participants 500 USD) and includes boarding, lodging and course material.

Contact: **Madhavi Latha**, ATREE, see above

EQUATIONS is looking for programme staff for tourism related research

EQUATIONS, an advocacy and campaigning organisation working on the impacts of tourism is currently looking for people in the following thematic areas:

1. Ecosystems, Communities and Tourism
2. Economic Impacts of Tourism/Globalisation Impacts and Tourism
3. Women and Tourism
4. Communication, Website, Media, and Information Management

Contact: Shanti. Email:

hr@equitabletourism.org

Web: www.equitabletourism.org

UPCOMING

Research Seminar on Manas and Kaziranga National Parks

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) in association with the Assam Forest Department and other NGO's is organizing a seminar 'Understanding Conservation: Perspectives from Manas and Kaziranga National Parks'

The seminar will be held in Guwahati on September 4 and 5, 2010 and is being organized as part of UNESCO's 'World Biodiversity Heritage Sites' project.

The organizers have invited abstracts for papers and posters on Kaziranga and Manas for the seminar.

Contact: **Niraj Kakati**, Coordinator, WHBPI- Assam, ATREE, House No 62, Mother Teresa Road, Zoo Narengi, Guwahati – 781021. Tel: 09435048834. Email: niraj.kakati@atree.org

4th Symposium of 'Biodiversity and Natural Heritage of the Himalaya'

The Natural History Museum of Erfurt (NME), Germany, is organising its 4th international and interdisciplinary scientific meeting on the 'Biodiversity and Natural Heritage of the Himalaya' in Erfurt, Germany from April 15th to April 17th 2011.

The organisers have invited presentation in all fields of botany, zoology, ecology, geology, geography and anthropology (e.g. systematics/

taxonomy, phylogenetics, faunistics, biogeography, plant sociology, soil sciences). The conference language will be German and English.

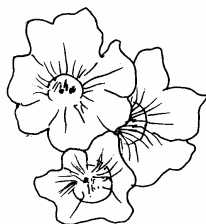
Contact: Matthias Hartmann, Email: matthias.hartmann@erfurt.de

Conference on 'Interdisciplinary Approaches in Environmental Sciences'

The Dept of Zoology at the MS University of Baroda is organizing the 12th Annual Conference of the Society of Science and Environment on "Interdisciplinary Approaches In Environmental Sciences".

The conference is will held in Baroda on the 9th and 10th October 2010

Contact: **Dr. Kauresh Vachhrajani**, Department of Zoology, Faculty of Science, M.S. University of Baroda, Vadodara-390002, Gujarat. Tel: 09427839382. Email: confzdmsu@gmail.com



Seeking Support for the PA Update

This issue of the *PA Update* is the first one of the new funding cycle and we are looking (as we do every year) for support to continue publishing the newsletter. While we do have the commitment of our old (and also some new) funders, we still need to raise substantial resources.

This is an appeal, therefore, to readers to extend whatever support you can or would like to, like you have done in the past. There are various ways in which you can support the *PA Update* - donations, individual subscriptions, gift subscriptions and bulk subscriptions for organisations that want to help reach out the *PA Update* to others as well.

If you want more information of how to contribute or have some questions or suggestions, please do write to me at psekhsaria@gmail.com

Please do consider contributing and all help, big or small, is most welcome.

PERSPECTIVE

Marine conservation – Seeking a model that safeguards livelihoods *and* ecosystems

Ashish Fernandes

Less than 1% of India's seas are legally protected and off limits to extractive activities. This has been enough, however, to generate a lively "conservation vs livelihoods" debate in the marine context. The challenge and need of the hour however, is to come together to fight the common enemy – destructive and unsustainable development that threatens *both* marine habitats and natural resource based livelihoods.

India's seas – if one considers the entire Indian EEZ and not just territorial waters – don't yet face resource pressures at a level comparable to those on land. Marine conservation too, unlike terrestrial conservation in India is at a nascent stage, and can move wisely to sidestep the pitfalls we have seen on land. We therefore have greater liberty to implement and evaluate conservation models and processes that have livelihood protection as an embedded goal. Traditional fishing communities in general feel strongly about the protection of their coastal resources – from industrial pollution, over fishing, pollution, and mangrove destruction. This became particularly clear in the recent public consultations held by Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh to debate changes to the Coastal Regulation Zone notification. Fishing communities across the country demanded strong action to protect mangroves, coastlines and the seas that they depend on.

Marine conservation needs to be at the level of ecosystems and habitats, and not restricted to a narrow species-based approach. Fishing communities need to be formally included and empowered to protect the habitats they depend on. This is the key challenge before the state and those advocating conservation.

There are examples from other countries with similar socio-economic profiles that we can

learn from. St. Lucia in the Caribbean and the Apo Islands in the Philippines are two instances of community managed fish reserves which are extremely small, yet have recorded significant catch increases in adjoining waters. Within 5 years of the creation of a network of small reserves in St. Lucia, catches of artisanal fishers in adjacent waters increased by between 46 and 90% .

Will such methods succeed in Indian waters? Can both livelihood security and conservation be ensured? We won't know till we try. With an 8,000 km. long coastline, we have space to experiment with innovative models. Unfortunately, the few marine areas in India that are closed to extractive use (Gahirmatha in Orissa, Gulf of Mannar National Park,) are both poorly protected and do not enjoy the support of the local community, making any kind of monitoring or scientific evaluation of efficacy difficult.

These areas also need to be protected from industrial threats –the Sethu Samudram canal, thermal plants and polluting units bordering the Gulf of Mannar, the Dhamra port and other planned industries near Gahirmatha, or petrochemical and other industries in the Gulf of Kutch.

Now more than ever, the political will to sustainably manage India's seas is critical. Only time will tell how well we fared.

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PERSPECTIVE is a new column that features invited opinion, comment and critique.

From

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