PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

The relocation conundrum

Maybe 'violent controversy' is a better term to describe the history of relocation from protected areas and the debates around this issue. Much has been said, argued, alleged and refuted in what is without doubt one of the most important, complex and unresolved issues on the conservation canvas of the country.

There is no common understanding, leave alone unanimity on the most basic of questions around relocation: Is relocation necessary at all? What's wrong if people are willing to relocate voluntarily? What is voluntary relocation to begin with? What should be the process of relocation if there is a willingness? Should it be land for land or will financial compensation compensate justly?

For a while it appeared that the relocation issue had gone onto the back burner because we were not hearing about it a lot. It never disappeared for sure, because it was central in many of the discussions around the declaration of Critical Tiger Habitats, Critical Wildlife Habitats and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers Forest Rights Act, to name just a few of the larger policy and legal instruments. The sense one is now beginning to get is that a lot is happening on the ground; a lot more, that is, than in the recent past. This is what information and experiences from the ground seem to suggest and news reports in this issue of the *PA Update*, are perhaps, an indication of that.

A 2nd village from the Sariska Tiger Reserve has been moved recently, the 2nd phase of relocation has started from the Tadoba-Andhari TR in Maharashtra and a huge allocation has been approved for relocation from the Melghat Tiger Reserve in the same state. There have been some reports that successful relocation has prompted more families to come forward for the same. There agitation against the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve for fear of losing livelihoods (fear of relocation must certainly be on their minds as well) while in neighbouring Kerala the agitation is for just the opposite. Those living in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary here are upset that the scheme for their relocation is not being implemented promptly.

The issue might be relocation but five different stories seem to emerge from these five different sites. Are these reconcilable for us to have an overarching policy that is acceptable to all and can be made to work? How does one ensure the fundamental non-negotiables of equity, justice and sustainability? What values do we want to uphold and what will be the process to make that happen?

Puzzle, mystery, poser, riddle, problem, challenge...conundrum has many synonyms and clearly they all hold true when we discuss relocation from protected areas.

Eds Note: It is our constant endeavor to make the *PA Update* more interesting and relevant. Towards this end we have introduced two new sections: The 'Important Bird Areas Update' section (pg. 17) that first appeared in the last issue and *Quick* NEWS (pg 22) that starts this time. We hope you enjoy reading these and look forward to your comments and suggestions.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

MoEF over-rules independant experts, grants wildlife clearance for Lower Demwe HEP

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has cleared the Lower Demwe Hydro Electric Project (HEP) by over-ruling all independent members of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).

The project is the last dam on the Lohit River, which already has 12 dams planned upstream. The dam site is about 8.5 km from the Kameng Wildlife Sanctuary while the reservoir will be only 50 meters from the sanctuary boundary. The project is also likely to impact two downstream Important Bird Areas – the Chapories of the Lohit River in Arunachal Pradesh and the

Dibru-Saikhowa National Park in Assam (also see *PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6).

A report on the project by a sub-committee of the NBWL comprising Dr. Asad Rahmani, Director, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Pratap Singh, CCF (Wildlife) Arunachal Pradesh (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6) was discussed in recently held meeting. All the independent members present in the meeting categorically rejected the project, stating a number of issues ranging from absence of studies, an erroneous WAPCOS report, to the fear that a wrong precedence would be set.

The Minister for Environment and Forests and Chairperson of the Standing Committee, NBWL, Ms. Jayanthi Natarajan, however went ahead and cleared the project. NGOs and researchers have strongly opposed the project and are also considering legal intervention in the matter.

The Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) too has criticized the clearance saying it had been given in spite of opposition from the people and government of Assam.

Also see: http://www.moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Demwe_Lower_Hydroelectric_project.pdf), &

http://sandrp.in/dams/Demwe Lower Unacceptable
Wildlife Clearance.pdf*http://sandrp.in/dams/Demwe Lower Unacceptable Wildlife Clearance.pdf>

Source: 'MoEF over rules all the independent wildlife experts - Wildlife clearance for Lower Demwe Project will be disastrous for the biodiversity, Press Statement dated 16/02/12 issued by the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People (SANDRP). 'Environment clearance to 1760 MW Demwe dam', *The Assam Tribune*, 15/02/2012.



ASSAM

Manas NP receives four rhinos from Kaziranga

The Manas National Park (NP) in Assam received four rhinos - three females and a male — in the first translocation from Kaziranga, under the Indian Rhino Vision (IRV) 2020 programme. The total number of rhinos it has received has now gone up to 16, including 14 translocated ones. Altogether 20 rhinos — 10 each from Pobitora and Kaziranga — were to be translocated to Manas under IRV-2020. 10 animals have already been shifted there from the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) (*PA Updates* Vol. XIV, Nos. 6 & 5 and Vol. XIII, Nos. 5 & 2).

In 2007, the two orphaned rhinos, rescued and reared at the Kaziranga-based Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, were released in Manas NP, while the first wild to wild translocation took place in 2008 when two male rhinos were captured in Pobitora WLS and then released in Manas. They have been radio-collared for tracking their movements with telemetry equipment.

IRV-2020 is aimed at increasing the rhino population of the State to 3,000 by 2020. The programme, implemented by the Assam Forest Department with the support of World Wildlife Fund and the International Rhino Foundation, will ensure that the animals are distributed over at least seven protected areas of the state so that in the event of any epidemic afflicting the entire population in Kaziranga and Pobitora, the one-horned rhinos in other protected areas can be conserved

Source: Sushanta Talukdar, 'Manas gets four more rhinos', *The Hindu*, 21/02/12.

Contact: Director, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd.
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03666 – 261413. Fax: 232253 /
260253

No new stone crusher or any other industrial unit around Kaziranga NP

In an order passed in February, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed the Assam Government not to grant permission to any new crusher unit or any other industrial unit within the 'No Development Zone' (NDZ) of the Kaziranga National Park. The tribunal also directed the authorities not to renew the permission granted to stone crusher units and other units which are functioning in the vicinity of the park till further orders.

The interim order came in response to an application filed by Rohit Choudhury, a resident of Bokakhat, the town nearest to the park. He had alleged that there were serious violations of the Eco Sensitive Area (ESA) notification issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF).

The MoEF had a few years ago, issued a notification declaring an area of 15 km radius around the Numaligarh Refinery as a NDZ directing that the expansion of industrial area, township, infrastructure facilities and such other activities which could lead to pollution and congestion shall not be allowed within this zone except with prior approval of the Central Government. According to the applicant, however, a large number of industrial and other activities have been allowed within this zone without the requisite clearances. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XII, Nos. 2 & 1; Vol. XI, Nos. 6, 5 & 4).

Source: Order of the NGT,

http://www.greentribunal.in/orderinpdf/38-

2011(OP)_15Feb2012.pdf

Contact: Rohit Choudhury, Tel: 09911387992.

Email: rohitskaziranga@gmail.com Director, Kaziranga NP, PO Bokakhat, Dist. Golaghat – 785612, Assam. Tel: 03776-

268095(O),

Contact: Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam, Tel: 0361-

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JHARKHAND

Sniffer dog traces 32 kg ivory in Dalma WLS

One of the sniffer dogs trained by Traffic-India/World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – India to control wildlife trafficking, recently helped in the recovery of 32 kg of ivory from the forests of Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary. The tusks were of an elephant that had died two days earlier. The dog

named Tracey was requisitioned from the Betla Tiger Reserve when officials found the tusks missing from the dead elephant. After searching the area thoroughly, she led the team to the spot where the tusks were hidden. The operation was coordinated by Kamlesh Pandey, DFO, Wildlife Division, Ranchi.

Earlier, Jackie, another dog trained under the programme had helped apprehend two poachers in Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh. Several traps for catching wild animals and six live Grey Francolins were recovered from them. Similar success was also achieved by Raja in the Brahamapuri Wildlife Division, Maharashtra where the villagers living nearby had killed a leopard and hidden its body parts. Raja, along with his handlers not only found the hidden parts but also helped bust a racket that led to the arrest of seven involved.

The programme has so far trained seven dogs with fourteen handlers to detect wildlife articles that include tiger bones, tiger skin, leopard bones, leopard skin, and bear bile. The dogs are currently deployed in the forest departments of Haryana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6)



Source: 'Tracey sniffs out 32 kg ivory in Dalma', www.dailypioneer.com,

08/02/12.

Contact: Divisional Forest Officer, Dalma WLS Wildlife Division, Ranchi, Jharkhand. Tel: 0651-301861

KARNATAKA

Five protected areas expanded

The Karnataka Government on December 27, 2011, notified around 1,255.64 sq km of reserve forest land as national park and wildlife sanctuaries. The areas of four

wildlife sanctuaries – Dandeli, Mookambika, Cauvery and Someshwara, and one national park – Bannerghatta, have been extended by adding adjoining reserve forests.

The decision for the expansion had been taken during the State Wildlife Board meeting held in July 2011 that was chaired by the then Chief Minister, Mr B S Yeddyurappa. The Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife, Ministry of Environment and Forests, had on October 14, 2011, approved the plan.

Source: Ashwini Y S, 'Wildlife sanctuaries to get bigger', *Deccan Herald*, 18/01/2012.

Contact: DCF, Dandeli Wildlife Division, Dandeli – 581325, Uttar Kannada, Karnataka. Tel: 08284-231585(O), 230114(R). Fax: 230300. DCF, Bannerghatta NP, Bannerghatta, Dist. Bangalore – 560083, Karnataka. Tel: 080-28429366. Fax: 28428540. Email: bnpblr@gmail.com

Special Tiger Protection Force deployed in Karnataka

Karnataka has become the first state in the country to deploy the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) — a commando unit meant to protect its tiger population from poachers. Fifty-four personnel of the STPF - consisting of 40 guards and 14 deputy forest range officers – were recently given certificates for completing their commando training by Karnataka forest minister, Mr C P Yogeswar.

They were given three-months training, including one and half months of commando training, to provide them with such skills as survival in jungle and use of weapons like SLR, assault rifles, LMG and grenades. They were also taught about various aspects of forest and wildlife laws. They will be armed with .315 rifles.

The STPF unit will be solely responsible for undertaking anti-poaching measures and will have the power to shoot. When a commando reaches the age of 40 years, he will be taken off from STPF duty and assigned other job under the Forest Department.

The 54 personnel would be divided into three groups and stationed at three locations in the Bandipur and Nagarhole reserves. 54 more STPF personnel would be recruited to strengthen the existing deployment.

In 2008, the Centre had given a onetime grant of Rs 50 crore to the NTCA for raising, arming and deploying STPFs in 13 TRs: Dudhwa-Katerniaghat, Ranthambore,, Corbett, Pench, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pakke, Bandipur-Nagarhole, Tadoba-Andhari, Mudumalai, Kaziranga and Simlipal.

Source: Shubhadeep Choudhury, 'Commandos to protect tigers in Karnataka', *The Tribune*, 05/01/2012.

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

Kudremukh TR proposal dropped; no expansion of Bhadra TR

The Karnataka government has dropped a proposal to expand the Bhadra Tiger Reserve and another one to include Kudremukh National Park under Project Tiger. The information was provided in the state assembly in August 2011 by the Law Minister, Mr Suresh Kumar who said that the proposals had been withdrawn on account of the opposition by local people who fear that their livelihoods will be seriously affected. The minister was responding to a question asked by the leader of the opposition, Mr Siddaramaiah.

The State government had proposed to expand the area of Bhadra tiger reserve from the existing 500.16 sq km to 848.62 sq km. 600 sq km of Kudremukh Park was also proposed to be brought under Project Tiger (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 4)

The Chief Minister of Karnataka, Mr DV Sadananda Gowda had recently written to the Centre to drop the plan for the expansion of the Bhadra Tiger Reserve on account of opposition by local communities.

Source: Project Tiger: Bhadra, Kudremukh dropped', *Deccan Herald*, 03/02/12.

Contact: DCF, Bhadra Wildlife Division Chickmagalur – 577101. Tel: 08262-234904 (O), 230751(R) DCF, Kudremukh Wildlife Division, Karkala, Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka. Tel: 08258-221183(O), 221004(R). Fax: 08258-221183

Task force constituted for mitigation of humanelephant conflict in Karnataka

A task force with the main aim of the mitigation of human-elephant conflict in Karnataka constituted in the month of January. The members of the task force are Mr Ajay Desai, Member, Project Elephant Steering Committee and Elephant Task Force; Dr Raman Sukumar, CES, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore; Dr. SC Chandra Lele, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment, Bangalore; Dr Basappanavar, retired forest officer (he is assisting the High Court in the pending court case); Dr SS Bisht, former Director, Project Elephant; Mr. BR Deepak, Advocate; Dr NK Madhusudhan, elephant biologist and CCF & Field Director, Mysore Elephant Reserve Member-Convener).

The Task Force has the TOR:

- (i) To look into the entire gamut of issues related to human-elephant conflict in Karnataka with special reference to Hassan-Kodagu area and make recommendations to bring about a more effective conservation and management regime for the species and its habitat in Karnataka with due focus on participation of local communities.
- (ii) To study the composition of the elephant population in Kattepura area and its movement pattern.
- (iii) To undertake consultation with a view to considering translocation of problem elephants, with people, including the people presently affected and also those from where the elephants are to be translocated and other experts, including international experts in elephant behavior and conservation, and conflict management.

The task force will submit an interim report to the Director (Project Elephant), Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and Chief Wildlife Warden, Karnataka every three months citing progress of the field study.

In a meeting the task force had with farmers of the region in the first week of March, they are reported to have demanded gun licenses to get rid of the 'elephant menace' themselves. They also objected to the action of a set of environmentalists to move the high court against the relocation of the elephants from the region.

Source: 'Constitution of Task Force for Mitigation of

Human-Elephant Conflict in Karnataka' Office memorandum No. 4-1/08-PE issued by MoEF, Project Elephant Division, 20/01/12. 'Give us guns, we'll handle elephant problem: planters', *The Hindu*, 07/03/12 Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993.

KERALA

Agitation planned against delay in relocation from Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

People living inside the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary are planning agitations against the delay in the implementation of the scheme for their relocation from the sanctuary. The Wayanad Sanctuary Karshaka Samithi and the Wayanad Chetti Service Society has threatened that their members would occupy revenue land and buildings in possession of the Forest Department (FD) near the sanctuary in protest.

The Central Government had sanctioned Rs. 80 crore for the relocation of 800 families inhabiting 14 villages in the sanctuary in November last year and had released Rs. 5.5 crore for the resettlement of inhabitants of the Golur and Ammavayal Villages (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 1). It had also specified that the amount should be spent before March 31, 2012.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests said the FD was awaiting an order from the government increasing the budgeted amount for the relocation scheme.

Source: 'Forest –dwellers plan agitation', *The Hindu*, 27/02/12.

Contact: Wildlife Warden, Wayanad Wildlife Division, P.O. Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad-673 592, Kerala. Tel: 0493-2620454
Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471 2321610, 2529300. Fax - 0471 2320554. E-mail: cww@forest.kerala.gov.in

MADHYA PRADESH

1,700 vultures counted in Panna Tiger Reserve



1,700 vultures were counted during a three-day census conducted at the Panna Tiger Reserve (TR) in the month of January. Seven of nine vulture species including the White Backed and the Long Billed Vulture are found in Panna.

The presence of large number of vultures

is attributed to the good wild animal population in the forests, the presence of cliffs for their nesting and also the fact that there is very infrequent use of Diclofenac by the villages located in and around the reserve.

Source: '1,700 vultures recorded at Panna during

census', *The Pioneer*, 25/01/2012.

Contact: Field Director, Panna National Park, Panna

- 488001, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07732-

252135. Fax: 07732-252120

NGOs, activists allege atrocities in Satpura TR; demand implementation of FRA $\,$

Tribal individuals, activists and NGOs in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh have alleged atrocities in the Satpura Tiger Reserve and have made a list of demands in a recently issued note. The allegations are related to an incident on February 2, at the Sonpur check post where a confrontation occurred between some adivasi women and forest staff.

It occurred when four women from village Nankot had taken their cattle to graze in the park. These were confiscated by forest staff and taken a few kilometers away to the forests of Sangai. When the women were driving back their cattle from Sangai they were stopped at the Sonpur check post. The forest staff posted here led by Forest Ranger is alleged to have misbehaved with the women, ill treated and abused them.

These are the findings of an investigation team of local people that the Samajwadi Jan Parishad (SJP) had formed to look into the incident.

The team also made a list of three demands:

- a) Forest staff including the Ranger alleged to be involved in the incident be booked under relevant provisions of the law and suitable action be taken against them
- b) The Forest Rights Act be implemented in the Hoshangabad district in the right spirit and community forest rights be granted over forest resources. Committees under the provisions of the Act should be formed again by the villagers
- c) Local adivasi communities need not be relocated in the name of wildlife protection and that they should be made part of the process of conservation.

The Forest Department's point of view in the matter is not known.

Source: 'Atrocities on adivasis in the Satpura
Tiger Reserve have reached their limit
– at the root of this lies the non
implementation of the Forest Rights
Act' (Translated from the Hindi
original), Note issued by the
Samajwadi Jan Parishad.

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MAHARASHTRA

New sanctuaries adjoining Nagzira WLS, Bor WLS and Navegaon NP

The Maharashtra government has notified three new sanctuaries in the Vidarbha region. These are in the Umarzari forests adjoining the Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), and forests adjoining the Bor WLS and the Navegaon National Park. Notifications for this were issued in February and March 2012.

The Umarzari WLS will be spread over an area of 151 sq km that will include 121 sq km of land of the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra. 60 sq km will be added to the present 61 sq km of the Bor WLS.

These new declarations are in lieu of the denotification that was done to the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary in Nannaj, Solapur in the year 2011 (*PA Updates* Vol. XVII, No. 5; Vol. XVI, Nos. 5, 3 & 2; Vol. XV, No. 6; Vol. XIV, No. 4; Vol. XII, No. 3; Vol. XI, No. 5 and No. 29).

Source: 'Vidarbha gets three new sanctuaries', *The Hitavada*, 05/03/12.

Jamni villagers set for relocation from Tadoba – Andhari TR

Over 104 families from Jamni village, located inside the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) have received the first installment of Rs one lakh, for their relocation from the reserve. They have opted for the total cash compensation of Rs. 10 lakh per family as per the rules of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

Another 114 families from the village have opted for the proposal where the they would be rehabilitated by the Government. As part of this scheme the Government would construct a house for them, besides giving them cash of Rs 50,000. They will be relocated to Ambdi village, on the Khadsangi-Samudrapur road in Chimur tehsil. It is about 30 km from their presnt village.

Around four years back, the entire Botezari village and 49 families of the Kolsa village within the TATR were rehabilitated at Bhagwanpur village, during the first phase of relocation

Source: 'Tiger conservation: Maharashtra villagers get first installment of rehab package', Business line, 01/03/12.

Additional Rs. 3665.50 lakhs allocated for relocation of two villages from Melghat TR

The National Tiger Conservation Authority

(NTCA) has approved the release of an additional Rs. 3655.50 lakhs for relocation of two villages from the core of the Melghat Tiger Reserve. The initial outlay of Rs. 544.93 lakhs has therefore been increased to a total of Rs. 4210.43 lakhs. Of this money an amount of Rs. 739.19 lakhs was to be released during the year 2011-12. The money will be treated as 100% central assistance by the Government of India.

A total of 141 and 172 families from the villages of Dhargad and Pili respectively are to be relocated as part of this plan.

Source: Letter No. 4-1(10)/2011-PT by Dr. HS Negi, Deputy Inspector General (PT) dated 28/12/11.

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MEGHALAYA

Exercise for Bird inventory, REDD+ feasibility carried out in Balpakram Baghmara Landscape

The NGO Samrakshan Trust recently prepared a bird inventory and carried out a REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) feasibility exercise in the Balpakram Baghmara Landscape (BBL) in the South Garo Hills.

The bird survey covered the Balpakram National Park; the Nokrek National Park and Nokrek Biosphere Reserve; the Siju Wildlife Sanctuary; various reserved forests; the rich community forests of Gongrot, Dambuk Attong, Rangtangsora *Akings* and others in the region. An inventory of 212 birds has been prepared based on which Samrakshan proposes to design a detailed bird tourism package outlining important areas for sighting specific birds.

A biomass estimation exercise - a

REDD+ feasibility study was also undertaken along with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) from November 2011 to January 2012. It involved gathering information from vegetation plots in different strata of forests on community land in various *Akings* of the landscape.

Source: 'Bird inventory of Garo Hills' and 'REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) Feasibility Study Vegetation Plots for Biomass estimation', Green Footprint, Newsletter of the Samrakshan Trust, Meghalaya, January 2012

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ORISSA

Number of Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika drops to 145



The number of Irrawaddy dolphins in Chilika has dropped to 145 from an estimated 156 last year (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 2) and 158 in 2010. The latest figures were made available after a census in January earlier this year. The number of calves has, however, increased from four in 2011 to 11 this year.

The census was conducted using the line transect method. A team of three persons carried out sampling of dolphin/group of dolphins in each of the 18 transects. 90 people from different organizations including the state government's wildlife wing; the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-India; the Odisha Watershed Development Mission; Bombay Natural History Society; the Regional Museum of Natural History, Bhubaneswar: Centre for Environment Education. Bhubaneswar: researchers and academicians: Wildlife Society of Orissa; the Chilika Wildlife

Division, animal resource development department, local NGOs and local motor boat associations participated in the census operation. In addition, 40 local volunteers were deployed in 18 boats.

According to the chief executive of Chilika Development Authority (CDA), the slight reduction in the number of dolphins compared to the last two years could be due to migration of species from the lake, though so far it has not been established through visual observations.

The CDA is planning the setting up of a permanent station, equipped with a highly efficient hydrophone array, developed by Tokyo University, Japan, at the mouth of the lake so that the movement of dolphins can be known. A memorandum of understanding has been signed between CDA and the Tokyo University and work is likely to start in April. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIII, No. 2 and Vol. XII, No. 2)

Source: 'Number of dolphins in Chilka drops to 145', *The Times of India*, 20/01/2012.

Contact: DFO (WL), Chilka Wildlife Division, At/PO Balugaon, Dist. Khordha – 752030, Orissa. Tel: 06756 – 211012 / 9437109889. Email: bravo_123@satyam.net.in
CDA, BJ-45, BJB Nagar,
Bhubaneshwar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 – 434485. Website: www.chilika.com

Orissa to set up elephant-friendly electricity structures



The Orissa government has decided to replace single and double electricity poles with elephant-friendly structures in districts

where elephants have died due to electrocution. Narrow based lattice structures (NBLS) will be set up in Dhenkanal, Angul, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj by replacing the single and double poles in all 11 KV and 33 KV lines in future.

The Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW) had a round of meetings with distribution companies as well as the top officials of

Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) Ltd in this context recently. It was decided that the new structures will be installed in Keonjhar district on a pilot basis. The task would be carried out by the distribution utilities in consultation with the Divisional Forest Officers (DFO). It will be replicated in all elephant corridors in phases subsequently.

Additionally, all the 11 KV and 33 KV lines under the Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana will be constructed along with vacuum circuit breakers (VCBs). The CWW has directed that maintenance of all the existing lines in the forest areas must be taken up on an urgent basis. The companies have been directed to initiate prompt action against illegal hooking in the overhead lines which often results in sagging and cause deaths.

At least 39 elephants have been killed by electrocution in the last eight years in Orissa. 17 cases were reported in 2004-05 alone making Orissa the state with the highest number of electrocution cases in India. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, No. 1; Vol. XVI, Nos. 5 & 3; Vol. XIV, No. 3 and Vol. XII, Nos. 6 & 1).

Source: 'Now, structures to stop Jumbo electrocution', *The New Indian Express*, 30/01/2012.

Contact: CWLW- Orissa, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneshwar - 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674-2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840. Fax: 512502

RAJASTHAN

GPS monitoring of wildlife in Sariska TR

Monitoring of wildlife in the Sariska Tiger Reserve (TR) will be done via a global positioning system (GPS).

As per the new plan, satellite and digital cameras would be installed in and around the TR. Every forest guard will have to prepare reports of animals and their activities and submit them daily. All data relating to the tigers, their numbers and the birth of cubs would be sent to the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, which would eventually make it available online.

The census of the animals would also be done through four different methodologies. Transit line cameras would be installed in the TR and

transit line census of the big cats would be done on the 5th, 15th and 25th of every month

With this system in place, even the activities and movements of forest staff could be tracked and used for disciplinary purposes if the need arises.

Source: 'Sariska reserve to have GPS system soon', *The Times of India*, 17/02/12.

Contact: Director, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Sariska, Alwar – 301022, Rajasthan. Tel: 0144-41333

Umri village moved out of Sariska TR

Almost five years after the first village relocation from the Sariska Tiger Reserve, a 2nd village, Umri, was moved in the month of February. The population of about 250 Gujjars (84 families) and twice the number of their cattle have moved to Rundh Mozpur, some 40 km away (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 3). According to the Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Rajasthan, this has made available nearly 50 sq km of land for wildlife of the reserve.

The families accepted the option of taking agricultural land as compensation. Accordingly, each got six bighas of land and about Rs two lakh as financial assistance for building a house. The Forest Department (FD) has made arrangements for water supply and electricity to the new village and the families have been divided into clusters of four for allotment of land.

Two tigers - ST 4 and ST 5 - have already been spotted in the habitation cleared by humans and the cattle.

Baghani was the first village that moved out in 2007-08 to Barod Rundh (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 3), a locality in Alwar district, close to the Jaipur-Delhi stretch of the National Highway. After five years outside the forest, they are reported to be happy. It has been argued, in fact, that the good rehabilitation package given to the first village had helped others to also come forward. There are other reports, however, that those who have been moved are unhappy as the promises made to them have not been kept in the process of relocation.

The Rodkayla and Dabli villages inside the reserve too are in the process of moving out. Another four villages – Kiraska, Devri, Rourkala, and Hamirpur - are in various stages of re-location. In Kiraska, 80 families have moved out and 16 others have taken the second installment of the package.

Source: Sunny Sebastian, 'Villagers make way for big cats in Sariska', *The Hindu*, 15/02/12, 'Indian village relocated to protect tigers', *The Daily Star*, 16/02/12.

Kumar Sambhav Shrivastava. 'Lies, deceipt and relocation', *Down to Earth*, 01/03/12

Conservation Reserve status for Jawai Bandh forests

The Rajasthan government has taken a decision to declare the Jawai Bandh forests in Pali district as a conservation reserve. The decision was taken by the standing committee of the Rajasthan Board for Wildlife, which met recently under the chairpersonship of Minister for Environment & Forests. It would be the fifth conservation reserve in the state; the earlier ones being Jhodbede in Bikaner district, Bisalpur in Tonk district, Soonda Mata in Jalore district and Gudha Vishnoi in Jodhpur district. The state also has one community reserve in Rotu in Nagaur district.

Located in the south-western transition zone of the Aravallis on the Jawai river and the Luni river basin, and in close proximity of Kumbalgarh sanctuary, the Jawai dam was built in 1957 for drinking water purposes. Considered to be an ideal location for sighting crocodiles, the area also has a large presence of turtles, fishes and aquatic birds. 288 crocodiles were counted here in the wildlife census of 2011. The Jawai Bandh terrain was declared a closed area in 1983 and after the 2002 amendments to the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) it ceased to exist in that category.

Source: 'Conservation reserve status for Jawai forests', *The Hindu*, 02/02/12.

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

2380496/2380832

TAMIL NADU

FD to create fodder resources for elephants in Coimbatore division

The Forest Department (FD) in Coimbatore has identified 10 sites, each measuring 20 hectares, to create fodder resources for elephants in the region. Of the total 690 sq km forest area in the region, 400 sq km, 58 villages and 315 km of forest boundary were identified as conflict prone.

The Coimbatore division has six ranges: Booluvampatti, Coimbatore, Periyanaickenpalayam, Karamadai, Mettupalayam and Sirumugai and the 10 sites would be in these six ranges with additional fodder banks in pockets that accounted for a higher population of elephants and instances of conflict.

The State Government has also announced that waterholes would be created to prevent the wild elephants from wandering out of the jungles. Rs One crore has been sanctioned and the division has secured Rs 30 lakh for the first phase of work which is reported to have begun under the supervision of Conservator of Forests – Coimbatore Circle and District Forest Officer.

The FD has also launched the exercise of removing exotic weeds such as lantana. Native grass species would be planted immediately. Officials have already commenced the preparation of a nursery for saplings of jackfruit, bamboo and ficus so that they could be planted even as the southwest monsoon sets in by May end or June.

Source: V.S. Palaniappan, 'Forest Department begins work on fodder scheme for wild elephants', *The Hindu*, 18/01/2012.

Tribals oppose proposal for Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve

Tribals living in the forests that will comprise the proposed Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 1 and Vol. XVII, No. 6) have decided to oppose the move fearing that it will seriously affect their livelihoods. They have alleged that their access to the forest to collect forest produce and to graze cattle has been restricted. They also say that they have been asked by the

Forest Department (FD) officials to sell of their cattle and look for alternative livelihoods.

Irked by these developments, over 10,000 tribal residents of Thalavadi, Thiganare, Thinkalur, Panakkalli, Naithalpuram, Igalur, Thalamalai, Bainapuram, Hassanur and Germalam village panchayats have rallied behind Pazhamkudi Makkal Sanghom, a tribal outfit supported by the Communist Party of India (CPI), that plans to organize a series of agitations in this regard.

Mr PL Sundaram, the MLA from the Bhavani Sagar constituency has pointed out that the rights of the tribals over forests in this region had been curtailed long ago due to the Veerappan crisis. After he was killed, the FD had constituted several tribal forest protection committees and they functioned well, collecting and selling minor forest. Twenty seven such bodies had together made a profit of Rs 64 Lakh in the last few years. All this was now slated for change with the creation of the tiger reserve.

While tribal rights activists have said the move would be a serious violation of the Forest Rights Act, senior forest officials were reported to have said that restrictions would be imposed once the tiger reserve was notified and the tribals should look for alternative occupations and livelihoods.

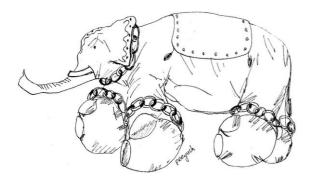
Source: KA Shaji. 'Tribal spot danger in tiger reserve plan', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com,

22/02/12.

Contact: CR Bijoy, Coimbatore Human Rights Forum. Email: cr.bijoy@gmail.com

UTTARAKHAND

Inspection reveals poor condition of private captive elephants in Corbett NP



An inspection of the overall status and housekeeping of private captive elephants around Protected Area Update Vol. XVIII. No. 2

Corbett National Park has revealed them to be in extremely poor condition and in violation of Project Elephant guidelines. The inspection was undertaken on directions of the National Tiger Conservation Authority by co-opted member of Animal Welfare Board and People For Animals Uttarakhand member secretary, Gauri Maulekhi.

The inspection has revealed that injured and diseased elephants are being forced to work; tusks are being pulled out and trimmed without the knowledge permission of the Chief Wildlife Warden: a visually impaired elephant is being made to work on commercial rides on NH-12; false reports of health and fitness are being issued by the local veterinarian (even lame and visually impaired elephants are declared fit by him) and many elephants have been missing over the past three years with no records available with the forest department (FD). Most of the six elephants inspected were found in a listless state induced by continuous work and lack of social activity. They are tethered and kept in a specific location when not working.

It has also been noted that most of the pachyderms are bathed only once or twice a week, which has caused dryness and accumulation of dirt over the skin leading to ectoparasitic infestation. None of them has ever been dewormed and vaccinated against susceptible diseases. This has exposed them to diseases like tetanus and rabies besides increasing the parasitic load. Many animals displayed signs of torture such as wounds caused by a pointed object in the forehead region, base of the ears and hind legs.

The office of the Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve, maintained documents of all private captive elephants in the periphery of CTR till 2009. As per these records there were 10 elephants in the area till 2009 but only four of these elephants are now present. No record of relocation of the missing elephants was found with the FD.

Source: 'Corbett's elephant handlers flouting central guidelines', The Pioneer, 08/02/12.

Contact: Field Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar –244715, Nainital,

April 2012 (No. 96)

Uttaranchal. Tel: 05947 – 285489. Fax: 285376

NGT orders no tree felling on forest land diverted for Alaknanda-Badrinath HEP



The National Green Tribunal recently ordered that no trees should be cut on the forest land proposed to be diverted for the 300 MW Alaknanda (Badrinath) Hydropower project in Uttarakhand without its prior permission. The order was passed in response to an appeal (No 7/2012 dated 31-1-12) filed by Vimal Bhai of the Matu Jansangthan and Dr. Bharat Jhunjhunwala, challenging the forest clearance given by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) on Nov 8, 2011 (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 1).

The MoEF had cleared the project by overruling the decision of the Forest Advisory Committee to twice reject the forest clearance to the project in their meetings on May 30-31, 2011 and Oct 12, 2011. The Wildlife Institute of India (WII), through a report commissioned by the ministry had also recommended that the project should not be taken up considering the serious nature of impacts on wildlife in the region.

Source: 'Green Tribunal stays use of forest land for Alaknanda-Badrinath HEP in Uttarakhand', Press Note by Matu Jansangthan, 16/02/12.

Contact: Vimalbhai, Matu Jansangthan, 16/02/12.
Contact: Vimalbhai, Matu Jansangthan. D- 334/10,
Ganesh Nagar, Pandav Nagar Complex,
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Divisional Forest Officer Nanda Devi
National Park Joshimath, Dist. Chamoli
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Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0135- 2644691



WEST BENGAL

West Bengal to compensate tea-garden workers' losses caused by elephants

The West Bengal state government will give compensation to the tea garden workers, whose property and buildings have been damaged by elephants. The decision was announced by the state forest minister Mr Hiten Burman after a meeting with several tea gardens' associations in February. The state government and tea garden owners will jointly pay the compensation to the labourers.

Source: 'Compensation for damage by tusker', *The Statesman*, 04/02/2012.

Tourism facilities to be upgraded at Buxa Tiger Reserve

Authorities of the Buxa Tiger Reserve are formulating plans for a major overhaul of the tourist facilities at the reserve. Tourist lodges will be set up at seven spots in the buffer zone of the reserve, which will allow for 250 tourists to stay here at any given point of time. Tented accommodation for tourists is also to be created and watch towers will also be constructed. There will be a greater emphasis on educating visitors by upgrading the nature interpretation centre and organising nature study tours.

If the plans are approved, the project which will be implemented by the West Bengal Forest Development Corporation is expected to be in place by the next tourist season which starts during the Durga Puja holidays.

Source: Ananya Dutta. 'Buxa Tiger Reserve to upgrade facilities', *The Hindu*, 03/02/12.

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

SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH

Five-year long awareness campaign launched in Sundarbans

The Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) has launched a five-year long mass awareness campaign through different programs from Khulna University campus on how to protect the Sundarbans.

The programme under the Sundarbans Tiger Project has been launched for 26 unions of Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Pirojpur and Barguna districts - adjacent to the Sundarbans - for a period of four years. In the fifth year, the campaign would cover all the unions of eight upa-zilas in these five districts. Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Arefin Siddique inaugurated the campaign recently.

Source: 'Five-yr campaign launched to save Sundarbans', *The Daily Star*, 18/02/12.

NTPC power project near Sundarbans



India's National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) is setting up a US\$ 1.5 billion, 1320 MW coal-based power plant nine kms from the Sunderbans in Bangladesh. The site is about 60 km from the Indo-Bangla border, and was apparently chosen because of its proximity to the Mongla port, convenient for importing coal required for the plant.

The plant will come up as an outcome of a 2010 MoU between NTPC and the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) for setting up a

power plant in Bangladesh's Bagerhat district. BPDB and NTPC will finance 15 percent each of the \$1.5 billion project and the rest will be funded by loans.

In 2011, Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) moved the high court, which issued a stay order on the project only to withdraw it temporarily following a petition by the Attorney General. Then the Department of Environment (DoE) issued a primary location clearance, subject to an environmental impact assessment (EIA) study. Bangladesh had paid NTPC \$2,50,000 in 2010 for conducting a feasibility study. The report submitted in April 2011 did not include any EIA.

The Bangladesh government has, however, allocated the equivalent of Rs 25 crore to acquire 1,834 acres in three villages of Lubachora in Rampal for the project. Media reports have indicated that since January 2012, Rs 1 crore (Tk Rs 2.5 crore) has already been distributed among 67 landowners.

The authorities are also preparing to dredge 10 km of the Poshur river for easier access to ships carrying coal for the plant.

Source: Jay Mazoomdar. 'A grand joint misadventure', *Tehelka*, 10/02/12.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Countries agree to crack down on trade in tiger parts

Crime officials from 13 affected nations met recently in Bangkok in an effort to check the illegal smuggling of tiger parts by increasing cross-border cooperation and supporting an initiative aimed at stricter enforcement. The 14 February, 2012 meeting, hosted by the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), was attended by 26 senior crime officials and other experts in the field of endangered wildlife. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) supported the

effort and pushed for harsher punishments as a means of deterrence.

Delegates also formally endorsed Project Predator: an effort initiated by Interpol in November 2011. The programme was designed to increase collaboration by international law enforcement officials on the illegal tiger trade, convert the willingness of politicians to help into tangible policy and action, and to provide training so that officials may be taught the skills necessary to tackle the issue effectively. The program is meant to protect all big cats in Asia, including Snow leopards and the Asiatic lion.

The agreement announced at the conference builds on progress made a year ago

with the creation of the South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN); an organisation of eight countries dedicated to curbing the illegal trade of wildlife. SAWEN was the first collaborative group of its kind in the region and was heralded by CITES as a major step forward in the protection of endangered species.

Source: 'Countries Agree to Further Crack Down on Tiger Trade', http://ictsd.org/i/news/biores/126038/, 20/02/2012

THE 'PA UPDATES FOR A 1000 FOREST STAFF Initiative

It is a matter of great satisfaction for the team at the *Protected Area Update* and at Kalpavriksh that the newsletter will be soon hitting the century mark. In it's 18th year of uninterrupted publication, the *PA Update's* 100th issue will be published in a few months time. We would like to thank all our supporters, well wishers and readers and hope that we will continue for another 100 issues as well if not more.

There is surely great scope for improvement in what the newsletter covers, how it is produced and how we reach out to an interested and relevant readership. As one effort at increasing the readership, particularly amongst the forest and wildlife staff, those at the very frontlines of conservation effort, we are launching this 'PA Updates for a 1000 forest staff' initiative.

It has been prompted by feedback to us that field staff often do not know what is happening in the policy arena, in other parts of the country and sometimes even in their own backyard.

We have set ourselves a target of being able to raise enough resources in six months time so that the 100th issue of the PA Update will go out to a set of 1000 forest staff with your support. We would like to request and encourage you to subscribe to the *PA Update* on behalf of forest staff - the more you can support the better. You tell us which particular state, region, protected area or particular individual or office in the forest staff you would like to reach out to and we will use your gift subscription to send the *PA Update* to that person or set of persons for a period of one year.

The annual subscription for this initiative of the *PA Update* will be only Rs. 100/-. You can support 100 such subscriptions or you can support even one!

We are sure you will agree that this is a campaign worth undertaking and that we will also get your support and contributions for this. If you need any more information or details, please certainly let me know. Please also circulate this widely on other networks that you might be part of and any other suggestions or ideas of how to make this successful are very welcome indeed.

Thanking you Pankaj Sekhsaria

Editor, Protected Area Update, Email: psekhsaria@gmail.com

Important Bird Areas Update

ANDHRA PRADESH

Rs. Two crore project for development of Uppalapadu IBA



The large number of birds using and visiting the water tank at the Uppalapadu Important Bird Area (IBA) has put severe pressure on the resources here. While a part of the tank has been left alone for the birds, villagers use the remaining part to draw water for non-drinking purposes.

Villagers who have played an important part in the conservation initiative here are opposed to proposals for the acquiring of the drinking water pond adjacent to the tank and are seeking other alternatives to solve the problem. They say they have already sacrificed a lot in allotting half of the water tank and if the remaining part of the tank too is given away, the village will be without water and they may be forced to leave their homes. Another proposal to acquire 15 acres of land on the west of the tank has run into rough weather due to soaring land prices.

The local forest officer has suggested that the entire area needs to be declared a conservation reserve under the Wildlife Protection Act so that the forest department can initiate some activities here. Others like, K. Mrutyunjaya Rao, exhonorary wildlife warden, has advocated a conciliatory path, suggesting that the District Administration should take along the villagers and provide them with alternative sources of water to find a solution to the issue.

In a meeting held recently the district Collector B. Ramanjaneyulu, assured the villagers that their concerns over water would be addressed. The collector subsequently announced a Rs. Two crore project for the development of the area as an 'eco-park'. He said that the entire area stretching

to 18.9 acres, consisting of the existing water tank, the school, and the other water tank would be handed over to the FD.

There is also a proposal for the setting up of a research centre for bird studies and a museum of various species. Environment-friendly packages would also be devised to tap domestic and international tourists

The Rs. Two crores to be used for the purpose is presently lying with the Irrigation Department which has this allocation for ensuring land acquisition. (Also see the 'A Decade Ago' section below)

Source: P Samuel Jonathan. 'Uppalapadu: winged visitors need more space', *The Hindu*, 03/02/12. 'Uppalapadu tank to be developed into eco-park', *The Hindu*, 04/02/12

Real estate threat to Pulicat lake

Environmental organizations have noted that the northern part of the Pulicat lake is under increasing threat from the mushrooming real estate business. Vast drains and fields have been used for industries and SEZs near the highway and the agriculture fields close to the Kudri Tank (north) are earmarked for plots. Additional threats to the lake include siltation, closure of the lake mouth, over-harvesting of fish and prawn and use of pesticides in the fields.

Pulicat is not only the home for a wide range of resident and migratory birds but it is also important for birds that breed at the Nelapatu Wildlife Sanctuary.

The NGOs have demanded additional legal protection to the area and say that a joint effort should be made by the Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh Governments to declare the Pulicat as a Ramsar site. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 1)

Source: B Aravind Kumar. 'Demand for protecting Pulicat lake', *The Hindu*, 20/01/12.

Contact: **DFO Wildlife**, Pulicat Sullurpet, Dist. Nellore, Tel: 08623-262158

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Nyamjang Chhu hydroelectric project threat to the Zemithang IBA

Concerns have been expressed over the impact of the 900 megawatts (MW) Nyamjang Chhu hydroelectric project on the Zemithang Valley which is an important bird area (IBA). Project documents presented to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for clearance indicate that the project will need 89 hectares of forest land and will involve the felling of over 9000 trees. It will also mean the submergence of another 41 ha of forest land.

The project promoter is Bhilwara Energy Limited. It involves the construction of a 11.2-metre-high concrete barrage and an underground power house with six units of 150MW at an estimated cost of Rs. 7,228 crore to be completed in five years. Work on the project is yet to start.

It is feared that the project will have an impact on the small Black necked crane population that is found here. Three of these extremely endangered birds were seen in the valley last year and seven were seen recently.

The region is also home to a number of other species of endangered fauna that includes the red panda, the Himalayan black bear, the musk deer, medicinal plants and rare orchids.

Source: Ananda Banerjee. 'Can the crane shift the dam?', *Mint*, 09/02/12.

GUJARAT

Maldharis demand FRA titles over grasslands in the Banni IBA

A conflict has arisen between Gujarat Forest Department (FD) and the Maldhari pastoral community over the recently formulated working plan for the Banni Grasslands Important Bird Area (IBA). The plan makes the grasslands off limits for grazing livestock—the main source of living for the Maldharis. The department recently deputed a divisional forest officer (DFOs) and three range officers (RFOs) to the Banni division to implement the forest working plan.

The Banni grasslands are spread over an area of 2400 sq. kms (Eds Note: The IBA directory by the BNHS says that the area is 3847 sq. kms) and home to nearly 25,000 Maldharis who live in 48 villages inside the Banni. The area was declared a protected forest in 1955 but the villages have continued to function under the revenue gram panchayats.

Around 600 sq km of the grassland is considered off limits as it is a part of the Kutch Desert Sanctuary and the Chhari Dhandh Conservation Reserve. remaining grasslands, the FD proposes to protect 30 percent land as grass plots while 38 percent will be used for harvesting *Prosopis* juliflora commonly called Vilayati keekar by the forest development corporation and 30 per cent will be utilised for plantation and regeneration of forests. The plots will be fenced off for five years by rotation. The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) approved the working plan in 2010 and now the FD is in the process of implementing it.

Six months ago, the FD called the village panchayats to sign a MoU with them for harvesting the juliflora (the FD had planted these along the coasts in the 1960s to check salinity ingress; the trees have now spread in more than 80 per cent of the grasslands). Under the MoU villagers are promised labour employment for cutting the trees. The villagers said they would sign the MoU only if the FD promised these trees would be uprooted and open grazing allowed on the land. The department did not agree as it has plans to sell the wood from these trees to some power companies to be used as fuel for their power plants. The villagers subsequently refused to sign the MoU.

The Maldharis fear the working plan will seriously jeopardise their livelihood. There are about 100,000 cattleheads in the region which graze in the Banni. The Kankrej cow and the Banni buffalo, a breed raised by the Maldharis, are known for their good milk yields. Kankrej bullocks are used for agriculture in the Saurashtra region of the state. According to an estimate by the NGO, Sahjeevan, the grasslands produce 110,000 litres of milk every day. The livestock

economy— sale of milk, milk products, live bullocks and buffaloes— contribute Rs 100 crore per annum to the region.

The Maldharis have demanded that the current working plan be shelved and the village gram sabhas allowed to prepare a new working plan for the region, for which the government technical should provide assistance. Maldharis have demanded that the activities of the FD in the Banni should be stopped till the recognition of the community rights is settled under FRA. 15 of the 19 village panchayats in the region sent notices to the state government in the first week of February, demanding their right to manage the grasslands under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006. The community has asked the government to withdraw the Banni working plan and has threatened legal action if the government fails to respond to the demand. The notices say if the government does not respond to the demands in 60 days, the residents will take legal action as provided in the FRA. The villages are collecting Rs 10 per livestock the Maldharis possess to fund a legal battle if need arises.

The government has responded by saying that the grasslands are government property and they cannot be handed over to the community. They note that these grasslands have degraded significantly over the last few decades and that the government's first priority is to restore them for which the working plan is necessary.

Source: Kumar Sambhav Shrivastava. 'Maldharis demand FRA titles over grasslands' *Down to Earth*, 09/02/12.

Proposal to expand Kutch Bustard Sanctuary by 37 sq km



The Forest Department has proposed to increase the area of the Kutch Bustard Sanctuary from the present 2.03 sq km to nearly 40 sq km and have asked the revenue department for the concerned land. The area is located in the Abdasa taluka of Kutch district

The FD has also asked the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to declare an eco-fragile zone as a buffer to the sanctuary (*PA Updates* Vol. XVII, No. 5 & 4) and requested the revenue department to stop allotting land-use change permission, mostly for farming, in the area.

Source: Adam Halliday. 'Forest dept. wants to expand Indian bustard sanctuary area', www.indianexpress.com, 10/02/12

Contact: Dy. Conservator of Forests, Kutch Bustard Sanctuary, Kachchh West Division, Old Remand Home Building No. 39/1, Bhuj – 370001, Gujarat. Tel: 02832-220937. Fax: 02832-250227

MAHARASHTRA

Gangewadi grassland included in GIB Sanctuary

The 198 ha Gangewadi grassland has been included in the Great Indian Bustard (Nannaj) Sanctuary. This includes 50 ha of land of the Pimpla-Budrukh Village of Tuljapur Tehsil in Osmanabad District and 148 ha of land of Gangewadi village of South Solapur Tehsil in Solapur district.

A notification to this effect was issued on February 28, 2012.

Source: Govt. of Maharashtra notification dated 28/02/12.

Contact: Dr Pramod Patil. Tel: 09960680000. Web: www.projectbustards.org

ORISSA

Census indicates 13 pc decline in birds at Chilika Lake

A bird census conducted in Chilika lake in the month of January has shown a 13 percent decline in birds this season as compared to the previous year. 804,452 birds were spotted at the lake this time against last year's number of 924,578. Scientists attributed the lesser number to the high water level in the lake on

account of untimely heavy rains seen in the region in December.

At least 90 officials and experts were engaged in the count that spotted 169 species of birds, 103 of which were migratory. Last year the number of species sighted was 180, of which 114 were migratory.

Source: 'Census indicates 13 pc decline in birds at Chilika lake', http://post.jagran.com/, 22/01/12

UTTAR PRADESH

Metro station to be named after Okhla Bird Sanctuary



A Metro railway station on the proposed Noida-Kalindi Kunj Line is to be named after the Okhla Bird Sanctuary. The station was earlier to be named as 'Amity University' as the station is located in close proximity of the campus. According to Noida Authority officials, naming the Metro station after the bird sanctuary is aimed at promoting wildlife and to attract a large number of tourists.

The station will fall between the Botanical Garden and Kalindi Kunj Metro stations.

Source: http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org. in/news/okhla-bird-sanctuary-gets-metro-address

The Important Bird Areas Update is a new section that is being brought out in collaboration with and support from the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), the Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

IN THE SUPREME COURT

PA related matters in the Supreme Court (SC) the Central Empowered Committee and the National Green Tribunal in December 2011 and January 2012

- Disappearance of tigers from the Panna Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh
- The issue of maintenance and repair of roads in protected areas in Madhya Pradesh
- Related to the constitutional validity of the Mount Abu Ecosensitive Area, Rajasthan

'In the Supreme Court' is based on the Forest Case Update, which is a web-based initiative to provide information and updates on developments related to forests and wildlife in the Supreme Court of India.

Contact: Ritwick Dutta & Kanchi Kohli. Forest Case Update Editors, E-180, Greater Kailash 2, New Delhi-110048. Email: forestcase@yahoo.com Web:

Member Secretary, Central Empowered Committee, II Floor, Chanakya Bhawan, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110021 Tel: 011-

26884921 /23 /26, Fax: 24101925

www.forestcaseindia.org





Workshop

Fishery-Dependent Livelihoods, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity: The Case of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in India

Press Release 3 March 2012, New Delhi

A two day workshop titled Fishery-Dependent Livelihoods, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity: The Case of Marine and Coastal Protected Areas in India was organised on March 1-2, 2012 by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF).

The workshop provided a good opportunity for dialogue between government agencies, fishing community representatives, non-governmental organisations, environmental groups scientists The fishing community representatives reported severe loss livelihood in protected areas (PAs) like Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, Gahirmata (Marine) Wildlife Sanctuary and Gulf of Mannar (Marine) National Park and Biosphere Reserve. It was further observed that the small and traditional fishing communities are being increasingly marginalised due to exclusionist conservation measures in the protected areas and the destructive developmental activities all over the coast. Discussions led to an consensus on the need to balance conservation and livelihoods based on sustainable use of resources.

Based on the discussions at the workshop, NFF seeks the following actions:

- Restoration of fishing rights in marine and coastal national parks and sanctuaries (PAs) established under the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WLPA), 1972
- Legal recognition of the rights of fishing communities to marine and coastal natural resources and to protect and manage them along the lines of the Forest Rights Act
- Clear guidelines on operationalising the provisions in the WLPA related to protecting the occupational interests of fishermen and on the right to innocent passage in PAs till all

fishing rights are recognised and restored under the WLPA

- All future Marine and Coastal PAs not to be declared under present WLPA in view of its inappropriateness for the purpose and to consider other suitable legal instruments
- Establishment of a formal coordination mechanism between the environment and agriculture ministries to ensure livelihood interests of fishing communities are protected in national parks and sanctuaries
- A review by the environment ministry of the extent to which marine and coastal PAs are consistent with the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in particular provisions related to governance, participation, equity and benefit sharing, prior to CoP 11 in Hyderabad in October 2012
- Putting in place, through a consultative process, an integrated, holistic framework for conservation of marine and coastal biodiversity that regulates particularly the large-scale environmental impact of ports, power plants, oil and gas exploration, tourism etc
- R.K. Patil (General Secretary) Pradip Chatterjee (Secretary)

Contact: National Fishworkers' Forum.

DISHA, NFF, 20/4, SIL Lane, Kolkata – 700 015, West Bengal. Tel: 033-23283989.

Email: matanhysaldanha@gmail.com



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Quick NEWS

Birdwatcher's delight

http://greenhumour.blogspot.in/201 ISSN 0974-7907 (online) 1/12/11-types-of-birdwatchers.html www.threatenedtaxa.org

An EIA Resource

and Response Centre (eRc), Nilgiris was launched recently. Contact: Tamilselvi Jayachandran, C/o Keystone Foundation. Phone: 04266-272977, 9443697541 Email: jtamilselvi@gmail.com

Marine National Park and Sanctuary, Kutch, Ecosensitive Zone Draft notification http://moef.nic.in/downloads/publicinformation/notif-marine-nationalpark-02032012.pdf

An Appeal

Wild animals destroying our crops, please help...

Radheshyam Mali from Ratlam district of Madhya Pradesh says wild animals like Nilgais are destroying their crops at night. This is happening in around 25 villages and they are not getting any help from the forest or agriculture department. He says agriculture is their only source of income and many farmers are under debt due to this problem and their children are suffering. He says Govt should help them somehow. Reach Radheshyam Mali at 09575463495

Source:

http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id =9697

For the much awaited Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel Report visit http://goafoundation.org

Journal of Threatened Taxa ISSN 0974-7907 (online) www.threatenedtaxa.org February 2012 | Vol. 4 | No. 2 | Pages 2333-2408 Date of Publication 26 February 2012

Reptilian and Amphibian

June 4-9 – Six day workshop at the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust and the Agumbe Rainforest Research Station. Call: 09840542337 OR 091 9445980950. Email: Programs@madrascrocodilebank.org

Dams, Rivers and PEOPLE, JAN-Feb 2012 at: http://sandrp.in/drp/DRP_Jan_Fe b_2012.pdf (637 KB file).

http://stopkaludam.org/

It threatens to displace 20000 adivasis and submerge 2100 hectares of land, including 1000 hectares of dense forest near Murbad in Maharashtra.

A Snow leopard *Panthera uncia* in Kargil http://wwfindia.org/?6920/Ca mera-traps-document-elusive-snow-leopard-in-Indias-Kargil

The Snow Leopard
Conservancy India Trust
www.snowleopardhimalayas.org
partners with the Ladakh
International Film Festival
www.liff.in June 2012. The Snow
leopard in the LIFF mascot; the
Snow Leopard Trophy will be
given to the best film made on any
endangered species in the world

House sparrow survey
WWW.citizensparrow.in
National Centre for
Biological Sciences and the
Nature Conservation
Foundation
Email: suhelq@ncbs.res.in

A new scientific paper based on waterbird migration study related to avian influenza has been published on the online journal PLoS ONE, http://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0030636.

This is the latest publication of ongoing international cooperative research effort initiated some years ago between FAO, USGS, WI, BNHS and Many Others

Donors required for Crane Conservation/ Information Centre Bhutan. http://www.kuenselonline.com/2011/?p=26558

Sea Turtles of India online
www.seaturtlesofindia.org
The website aims to serve as
a comprehensive
guide to sea turtles of the
Indian subcontinent. This
includes a state-wise
account of distribution, status
and threats, including maps,
references and organisations
working in those states.
And a lot more

A DECADE AGO

From the Archives

Protected Area Update 33 & 34,

February - April 2002

Call to declare Uppalapadu tank a bird sanctuary

A plea has been made for the declaration of the Uppalapadu tank located 7 kms from Guntur town a bird sanctuary. The Honorary Wildlife Warden of the region, Mr. M Rao has been pushing this idea with the Forest Department (FD) and other agencies for the last two years, but there has been no move in that direction yet.

The tanks biggest claim is the fact that a large number of pelicans (species not stated) have been nesting here for at least three years now. The FD has said that the nesting of the pelicans is a very recent phenomenon and has started because of the drying up of the Nellapattu lake in Nellore due to consecutive years of drought (also see story above). They have appointed a 'scientific officer' who will observe the area to see if the pelicans come to nest regularly, following which some decision regarding sanctuary status will be taken. The other birds that are found in the tank area include cattle egrets, open-billed storks, white ibis and night herons

The other issue is the fact that the people in the surrounding area use the water of the tank for domestic purposes. They have been complaining that the bird excreta in the water causes skin rashes and other ailments. As a result, recently some acacia and ficus trees were uprooted resulting in the shrinkage of the nesting areas for the birds. The Collector of the region has been approached with a request to find alternative arrangements for water for the people.

Source: R Umamaheshwari. 'State ignores plight of pelicans', *Deccan Chronicle*, 13/10/2001

Ban on fishing marine species relaxed

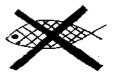
Bowing to public and political pressure, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) partly relaxed its ban on hunting and trading in sharks and 52 species of molluscs. The ban had been imposed a few months ago in an attempt to

protect populations of some of these species that are reported to be severely threatened (see *PA Update* 33)

The revised notification by the ministry still accords protection to 10 shark species including the whale shark. Of the 52 species of molluscs, the hunting and trading ban has been lifted on 28, while the ban on sea cucumbers and sea horses remains.

The relaxation of the ban order came in response to large scale protests in different parts of the country. The blanket ban, it was argued would affect the livelihoods of tens of thousands of fisherfolk and lakhs that were indirectly dependant on fishing for survival.

The MoEF is reported to have consulted a number of research and scientific organisations before the partial relaxation of the ban. These include the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), the Fisheries and Zoological Surveys of India, the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and the Government's Fisheries Commissioner.



Source: 'Review ban on shark trade, Centre told', *The Hindu*, 24/11/2001.
'Shark hunting ban raises a stink', *The Times of India*, 26/11/2001.
Chandrika Mago. 'Ban on fishing sharks eased', *The Times of India*,



10/12/2001.

PERSPECTIVE

<u>The grass can be green on both sides!</u> Musings of a forester turned researcher

It was a wet monsoon day of July 2009 and the three days of continuous rains at Manas had taken a toll on the electric and telephone lines at the forest office. Connecting to the internet was next to impossible and the only way I could meet the deadline for the scholarship was to take the help of the NIC centre at the Deputy Commissioner's office. Call it destiny, but here I am sitting in this plush office in the United Kingdom where infrastructural impediments are unheard of and undertaking research on Manas; a landscape that posed many research questions yet did not provide the requisite tools to interpret them.

Recently there have been a spate of articles where the researchers have questioned the "authoritarian role of forest officers and their scientific expertise, which they claim is a far cry from the current standards of international wildlife research". Without adding much fodder to this debate, I would only like to suggest that a win-win situation can be achieved only with a synergy of both sides.

If researchers complain about red tape and bureaucratic ignorance, field managers can be equally empathized with for the unending pressure of 'managing' forests, people and politics. The complexity of the working environment often creates a distance from research writing, which in the absence of a structured incentive structure gradually forces the separation of the invaluable field expertise and experience from the world of research.

Although it would be unfair to say that only issue-based research should be carried out in a resource crunched country such as India, a dynamic link between wildlife management goals and academic research will go a long way in strengthening our PAs. For instance, while

From Kalpavriksh Apt. 5, Sri Dutta Krupa 908 Deccan Gymkhana Pune 411004

managing the Chakrashila WLS, we worked in close collaboration with the two local colleges at Kokrajhar and students and teachers were encouraged to conduct short/long term research in the sanctuary. The facilitation generated goodwill and some of this research has also found its way into the wildlife management plan of the PA and papers published in national journals. We also facilitated the functioning of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the Wildlife Trust of India and their veterinarians from a forest camp and this led to the creation of a temporary wildlife rescue centre and the rehabilitation of the world's first ever captive bred clouded leopards cubs into the wild. Similarly collaboration at the state level with NGOs such as Aaranyak, ATREE and WWF-India has recently provided a comprehensive database on tigers and co-predators in Manas and other PAs of Assam.

While there is a proactive dialogue and policy at the national level to involve local people in forest management (as in case of JFM), the need to build in the component of research and engagement of local academic and scientific bodies will be crucial to management of PAs. Only then will the grass be greener on both sides with possibilities of fruitful learning from each other

- Sonali Ghosh is an Indian Forest Service Officer and is currently doing a PhD on Tigers in the Indo-Bhutan Manas Landscape from Aberystywth University

UK.

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