

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Editor: **Pankaj Sekhsaria**

Editorial Assistance: **Reshma Jathar, Anuradha Arjunwadkar**

Illustrations: **Madhuvanti Anantharajan, Peeyush Sekhsaria**

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Ideas, comments, news and information may please be sent to the editorial address:

**KALPAVRIKSH**

Apartment 5, Shri Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004, Maharashtra, India.

Tel/Fax: 020 – 25654239. Email: psekhsaria@gmail.com Website: <http://kalpavriksh.org/protected-area-update>

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## EDITORIAL

### An officer and a wildlife researcher

Talk to a wildlife researcher and the one topic most likely to come up is the huge difficulty s/he faces in dealing with forest officers. The litany of complaints can be endless – no responses to research proposals or permits to conduct research; inordinate delays if permits are eventually granted; permissions denied for no ostensible reason, leave alone an explanation; and harassment and allegations, particularly when research results show the managers in poor light

Almost every scientist who has tried to study the wild has had a couple of such experiences. A few years ago a well-known research team was hounded out of the Panna Tiger Reserve for calling the bluff of tiger numbers in the reserve. More recently, another researcher made public his experience and his frustration in getting permits from the Maharashtra Forest Department for a project seeking to study the state of the endangered Forest owl in Central India and only a few weeks ago two young researchers from the Indian Institute of Science were arrested for ‘hunting’ in the Panna Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh - they had been found with a couple of scorpions, a skink and a skink’s tail in their possession. The law, as they say is an ass, but surely this is not about the law alone. There are deeper and more serious issues at stake here.

There is the other side to the story as well and one that can be got easily from that other side. Talk to those in the forest service, those who work as managers and legal guardians of the forests and wildlife and another list of complaints emerges quite consistently: researchers who focus on esoteric questions that have no relevance for management of or conservation in the landscape they are studying; researchers who are interested in little more than their permits, research results and papers; and researchers who make endless demands on the already stretched infrastructure and then leave without as much as sharing their research findings.

This is bound to end in a stalemate, particularly with each side talking past and not to, each other. Jairam Ramesh, when he was at the

environment and forests ministry, had tried resolving this stalemate through proposed amendments to the research clauses in the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA). Nothing surely seems to have come of that. That a solution should be found to this problem is stating the obvious; the bigger challenge would be to find the means and the mechanisms to do this. The first and perhaps the most important step would be to start discussing the issues. It is only when experiences and expectations are laid out openly that there can be a possibility of finding common ground.

It is in this context that the recent issue of the wildlife magazine *Sanctuary Asia* (Vol XXXII, No. 2) makes very relevant reading – the lead feature has prominent field biologists reflecting on their profession, those from their community and on their relationship with others including the forest department. In her recent book on the history of conservation in India, (*Conservation at the Crossroads*, Permanent Black 2010) field biologist Ghazala Shahabuddin has outlined a well-thought-out and detailed roadmap for research in wildlife, and only in the last issue of the *Protected Area Update* (Vol. XVIII, No. 2, April 2012) Sonali Ghosh shared her experiences of being both a forester and a researcher and made a plea for collaboration, even noting that the grass can be green on both sides.

It is in the continuation of such articulations and in joint effort alone that some important bridges can be built. These, in fact, need to be built urgently if the wildlife and wilderness that they claim to represent and care for are to survive into the future. The last thing that is needed is a skirmish between an officer and a wildlife researcher!



## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### **Tiger Reserve status for Kawal WLS**

The Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary has been notified as a tiger reserve (TR) by the Andhra Pradesh state government. The core area of the reserve will be spread over an area 892 sq km while the buffer zone will cover 1123 sq km in the Adilabad district. Approximately 21 habitations located within the buffer zone have been excluded from the TR.

The state Forest Department (FD) has decided to post a field director of the rank of a conservator for the new sanctuary. Also, a scheme seeking funds for the project is being sent to the Centre.

The Telangana Joint Action Committee has, however, taken a strong objection against the declaration of Kawal as a TR, stating that it would dislocate the people living in the area. The FD has responded saying that the apprehensions of the political parties and organisations were unfounded as there would be no relocation of people for the reserve.

Source: 'Kawal is now a tiger reserve', *Deccan Chronicle*, 11/04/12.

Contact: **DFO Wildlife**, Kawal WLS, Jannaram,  
Dist. Adilabad - 504 205. Andhra Pradesh.  
Tel: 08739-236224

### ARUNACHAL PRADESH

#### **35 species recorded in camera-trapping exercise in Namdapha NP**

A recent camera trapping exercise has revealed the existence of 35 species of birds and animals, including tigers and leopards in the Namdapha Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve (NWSTR). The two-month exercise spread over February and March, earlier this year, was carried out by the a Guwahati-based NGO, Aaranyak, with the logistic support provided by the NWSTR.

Four camp sites at Happy Valley, Hornbill Farm base with base camp at Deban were set up for

the purpose. Eighty cameras were installed at multiple locations identified as potential tiger habitats covering almost 25% of the total geographical area of the reserve.

The entire observation drill cost around Rs 19 lakh. This included procurement of stationary, camp equipment, ration and payment of wages to porters who were engaged for transportation of material to the various base camps.

The first picture of an adult male tiger was captured by two cameras in the Namdapha Tiger Reserve (TR) on March 20. The exact location of this has not been revealed for fear of the information being used to poach the animal.

The other species photographed during the exercise were the following: Sambar, Barking deer, Serow, elephant, gaur, Wild boar, Hog badger, binturong, Khaleej pheasant, Marbled cat, Himalayan black bear, leopard, Large Indian civet, Small Indian civet, Common Palm civet, Yellow Throated marten, Crestless porcupine, Crested porcupine, Brush Tailed porcupine, Spotted linsang, Asiatic wild dog, Clouded leopard, Malayan sun bear, Red goral, Crab eating mongoose, Rat bandicoot, Capped langur, Stumped tailed macaque, Assamese macaque, Fish owl, Peacock pheasant, Leopard cat and the Asiatic golden cat.

The exercise, however did not go smoothly, though. On several occasions the frontline staff and members of Aaranyak were fired upon at Bulbulia and Kodboi areas and their base camps destroyed by suspected poachers. One of the major threats faced by the authorities is said to be the organised poaching of tigers by Lisu families living in the area.

It is believed that the same set of people also fired at a high level team led by PCCF (wildlife & biodiversity) on February 28. They are also suspected to have stolen 24 memory cards and eight of the 80 cameras set up as part of the exercise. A few iron-made Burmese traps had been set up all along the routes that had pug marks of tigers. The National Tiger Conservation Authority, meanwhile, has constituted a five-member fact-finding team to find out the exact ground situation in Namdapha in view of the attacks

on census officials and theft of equipment. The team, headed by an official of the National Board for Wildlife has been asked to submit its report within a month.

According to the Field Director of the reserve, a well-equipped and regular tiger protection force is essential in order to tackle the activities of miscreants and poachers. The reserve that is spread over an area of nearly 2000 sq km of area, has only about 60 employees to administer, monitor and protect it.

Source: Samudra Gupta Kashyap, 'Poachers from Myanmar pose hurdle to tiger census', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 21/03/12.  
Tongam Rina, 'Tiger sighting at Namdapha amidst continuing threats to conservation', *The Arunachal Times*, 03/04/12.  
'Camera traps capture tiger in Namdapha reserve', [www.rediff.com](http://www.rediff.com), 04/04/12  
'Camera trapping reveals 35 species in Namdapha Sanctuary', *The Sentinel*, 05/04/12.  
Roopak Goswami, 'Tiger sighted in Namdapha - Big cat spotted on camera, pug marks promise more', *The Telegraph*, 05/04/12.

Contact: **Aaranyak**, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati – 781028, Assam. Tel: 0361-636768 / 266087. Fax: 266087.  
**Field Director**, Namdapha NP, PO Miao - 792122, Arunachal Pradesh. Tel: 03807-22249. Fax: 22249  
**CWLW**, Forest Department, Itanagar – 719111. Arunachal Pradesh. Tel: 0360 – 222310 / 224370. Fax: 0360 – 222351/223556

## ASSAM

### **Assam forest staff allowed use of fire arms; other measures for forest protection**

The Assam government has decided to arm forest guards with sophisticated weapons like AK-47 rifles and self loading rifles (SLRs) and have instructed all forest officials in each district to ensure immediate closure of all illegal saw mills.

The forest force will now be at par with the police and all forest staff - from frontline staff to the level of Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) - will be able to use firearms to fight poachers and to protect wildlife. The government

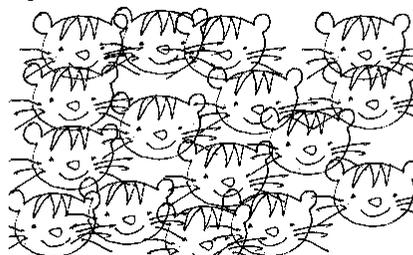
has placed orders for procuring sophisticated arms and ammunition through the State Home Department.

In order to ensure closure of many illegal saw mills that have been operating across the state, the government has decided to reward the officials, who implement the closures.

The forest department has also planned to plant 1.68 lakh saplings in about 11,000 hectares of forest and non-forest lands across the state. It has planned to involve NGOs, civil society groups, and schools in the state for wider reach and success of the plantation drive.

Source: 'Assam to get strict against forest exploiters', *The Assam Tribune*, 19/04/12.

### **118 tigers in Kaziranga NP in the last three years**



According to a report 'Tigers of Kaziranga National Park' which was released recently, the annual monitoring of tigers here using camera traps during 2009, 2010 and 2011 has recorded a total of 118 adults, sub-adults and cubs. The figure includes six identified tigers that died during the period of the study. The report has been published by the NGO, Aaranyak.

The results of camera trapping for the year 2011 have also been published by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (Status of Tigers in India, 2011). It was estimated that the population of tigers in the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve was 106 with a minimum of 81 and a maximum of 131.

Aaranyak is reported to have pointed out that stringent protection provided in KNP for rhino conservation over the years has benefited the tiger and its prey species as well. It has been noted that this growing

population has to disperse to other suitable habitats in Assam and adjoining states and it is, therefore, essential to maintain corridors for their movement.

Source: 'Camera traps record 118 tigers in KNP in 3 years', *The Assam Tribune*, 03/05/12.

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

### **Serious water shortage in Gibbon WLS, Orang NP in March**

A serious water shortage was reported from the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary and the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) NP in the month of March.

Scarcity was serious in three compartments of the Gibbon WLS forcing animals such as deer and elephants to move out of the forests in search of water. A few years back, a few deer that had strayed out of the park had been killed by tea garden labourers. The forest department (FD) was on high alert to ensure that the animals remained safe.

At least three channels — Doria Ali Jan, Meleng Jan and Cheni Jan — the main sources of water in the sanctuary had dried up. These three rain-fed channels are tributaries of the Bhugdoi river which flows from the neighbouring Nagaland hills. A small amount of water was left in an artificial pond that was constructed a few years back at the border of compartment numbers 4 and 5.

A similar situation was seen in the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) NP on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Water had dried up in five water bodies inside the park and also in many parts of the Panchoi river which flows through it. The FD has planned to de-silt the water bodies and also dig two large water bodies inside the park this year to help tide over this annual water problem.

Source: 'Drying sanctuary thirsts for rain - Water crisis forces animals to stray dangerously in search of a drink', *The Telegraph*, 22/03/12.

Contact: **DFO**, I/c Gibbon WLS, Jorhat Division, P.O. Jorhat, Dist. Jorhat – 785001, Assam. Tel: 0376-32008(O), 320456(R)

**DFO**, Orang NP, Mangaldoi Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Darrang - 784125, Tel: 0914-22065(O), 22349(R)

### **Rainwater harvesting for Gibbon WLS**



The forest department (FD) has taken up a project to harvest rainwater from three rain-fed channels that flow through Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary from the hills in neighbouring Nagaland. Doria Ali Jan, Meleng Jan and Cheni Jan — the channels, which are tributaries of the Bhugdoi river and are the main sources of water for the denizens of the park — dry up during winter forcing the animals to stray out of the sanctuary for water. The sanctuary is surrounded by 10 tea gardens and over 15 villages and, hence, animals are in danger of being attacked.

According to the divisional forest officer (DFO), Rs. 6 lakh has been sanctioned by the government to construct three anicuts in the middle of each channel. Anicuts would be constructed in the compartment numbers 2, 3 and 4, as these are the most water stressed of the five compartments in the sanctuary. A few years back, two anicuts were constructed along the border between compartment numbers 2 and 3 and numbers 4 and 5 and these have turned out to be beneficial.

Source: Wasim Rahman, 'Rain water harvest project in Gibbon - Project aimed at preventing animals from straying', *The Telegraph*, 25/04/12.

### **Elephant population rises in Assam**

The elephant census this year in Assam has recorded a total of 5,620 elephants with an increase of 374 animals as compared to 5,246 elephants recorded in the 2009 census. The age-wise composition of the elephant population is as follows: adults – 51% , sub-adults – 20%, juveniles – 12% and calves – 17%.

The report also noted that the 25 protected areas — 20 wildlife sanctuaries and five national parks recorded 3,054 elephants while other forest areas including reserve forests, proposed reserve forests, district council reserve forests and un-classed forests, were found to be sheltering 2,516 elephants. The census also recorded 50 elephants in revenue areas.

Among the sanctuaries and national parks, Kaziranga National Park (NP) had the highest elephant population with 1,165 elephants. Manas NP followed, recording 945 elephants, and it has the highest density among the NPs with 189 elephants per 100 sq km. Kaziranga's density was found to be second highest with 135.63 elephants per 100 sq km while it was lowest at a little over 5 elephants per sq km in the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) NP.

Source: 'Assam records rise in jumbo population', *The Shillong Times*, 02/04/12.

### **Increase in rhino population in Assam**

A census carried out in March, earlier this year, has shown that the rhino population in Assam has increased to 2505 animals.

The break-up of numbers is as follows: Kaziranga NP – 2290, Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) NP – 100, Pabitora WLS – 93 and Manas NP – 22.

The census was carried out under the supervision of the state's Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife). Officials of the forest department and wildlife NGOs like WWF-India, WTI, Aaranyak, and Green Guard Nature Organization also participated.

Source: 'Assam's one-horned rhino population rises by 250', *The Times of India*, 10/04/12.

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

## **BIHAR**

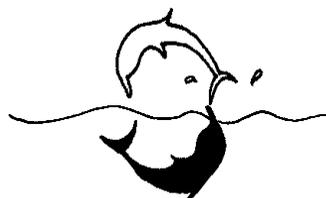
### **River dolphin research centre at Patna**

The Bihar government is planning to set up Asia's first Gangetic River dolphin research centre in Patna, where dozens of dolphins can still be seen in the stretch of the River Ganga near the state capital. The centre would carry out research activities on

the dolphin and also conduct a census in rivers in Bihar.

The research centre was reportedly, suggested by the Planning Commission and is said to have received an 'in principle' approval by the state government.

The river dolphin was declared India's national aquatic animal recently (*PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 6; Vol XII, No. 2 and No. 43) and is threatened by loss of habitat and by hunting for its flesh and oil.



Source: 'Asia's first dolphin research centre to come up in Bihar', *The Asian Age*, 16/04/12.

## **JAMMU & KASHMIR**

### **Camera traps to be used to study wildlife in J&K**

The Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) Wildlife Department has decided to use camera traps to study and monitor wildlife in the state's protected areas including the conservation reserves. The state has procured 30 camera traps for the purpose and the first two were installed recently in the Ramnagar Wildlife Sanctuary near Manda zoo.

A training programme in handling and using these camera traps was organised for field staff by the Wildlife Warden, Jammu at the Nature Interpretation Centre, Manda. The field exercise and demonstration was conducted in the Ramnagar WLS where the officials were involved in handling, setting and deploying camera traps in the field by a trained camera trap engineer from Dehradun and the Wildlife Warden, Jammu.

Source: 'Wildlife Dept to use Camera Traps for recording animal diversity', *Daily Excelsior*, 24/04/12.

## Concrete threat to Dachigam National Park

Mushrooming concrete tenements in the Harwan area bordering Dachigam National Park (NP) are posing a threat to the hangul and other wildlife here. Equipped with electricity supply, bio-gas plants and solar lights, these over 150-odd brick-and-mortar homes in Mulnar village are squeezing the wildlife habitat areas, say park officials. Mulnar mainly had mud-and-wood 'dhoks' (huts) belonging to the local Gujjar population before the eruption of militancy in 1990. The land here was allotted to people under the grow-more-food programme for agricultural and not for residential purposes. Over the years, however, the vast agricultural fields bordering the park have transformed into a village with a number of concrete structures.

According to one opinion, the 200-hectare sheep breeding farm inside the park is also restricting the grazing area for hangul. The Chief Minister has reportedly directed that the sheep breeding farm should be relocated within three months. Some veterinarians have, however, claimed that the removal of the farm will only endanger wildlife existence in the park. They argue that the farm acts as a buffer between the village and the park and its removal will increase incidents of animals straying into human settlements.

Source: 'Concrete threat to Dachigam National Park', <http://www.greaterkashmir.com>, 18/03/12.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Dachigam NP, C/o. Chief Wildlife Warden, J&K State Tourist Reception Centre Srinagar – 190001. Tel: 0194-2492627  
**CWLW**, Forest Department, Manda Deer Park, Manda, Near Hotel Ashok, Jammu - 180001 Jammu & Kashmir.

## KARNATAKA

### Road connecting Mysore and Mananthavadi to bypass Nagarhole NP

The Karnataka government has given its nod for the construction of an alternative road connecting Mysore and Mananthavadi, bypassing the Nagarhole National Park (NP). Five years ago it was proposed to construct a 28.5 km road between Mysore and Mananthavadi to connect Karnataka with Kerala. 14 km of the proposed road was to

pass through the Nagarhole NP. The road that was to be constructed as part of the Karnataka State Highways Improvement Project (KSHIP) was opposed by wildlife groups on the grounds that the section inside the national park would cause serious damage to the forests and the wildlife here. It was also pointed out that an alternative road was possible for at least 10 km out of the 14 km through the NP.

The KSHIP, however, turned down the idea of the alternative on the grounds that it was an expensive proposal and that the land for the alternative stretch was under the control of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department (RDPRD). The then Additional Chief Secretary had also directed the KSHIP not to go ahead with the work. After sustained efforts by wildlife experts and wildlife officials including the field director of the park, the RDPRD transferred the land required for the alternative road to the public works department in August 2010. The government finally released Rs. 18 crore for the alternative road in April earlier this year and work is reported to have gained momentum since then.

The proposed alternative road, besides helping wildlife conservation in the Park, also provides connectivity to several nearby villages such as Udbur, Gundatthur, Kharapura, Belthur, Malali, Magge, KR Pura, Hosaholalu, and Honnammana Katte. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, No. 1 and Vol XVI, No. 1)

Source: Subhash Chandra N S, 'Government okays alternative route linking Mysore to Mananthavadi', *Deccan Herald*, 30/04/12.

Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests**, Nagarhole NP, Wildlife Division, Hunsur, Dist. Mysore, Karnataka. Tel: 08222-252041(O), 252070(R)

### Power line in Kudremukh NP to be dismantled as 'conservation swap' for new power line in Nandikur

The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the

Karnataka Forest Department have initiated a 'conservation swap' to settle a controversy involving a forest corridor. Under this initiative, a 25-km-long wildlife corridor disrupted by a 220 KVA power transmission line in the Kudremukh National Park (NP) has been restored in lieu of an 8.3 km stretch of forest for a new power line elsewhere. The 220 KVA line in Kudremukh was originally supporting the now defunct Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd's (KIOCL) mining operations. Mining in the area has been shut down on the orders of the Supreme Court following a case by local wildlife conservation groups (*PA Updates* Vol. XVI, No. 6 and Nos. 54, 52, 34, 30-25 and 23-20).

In another case the Karnataka Government had sought forest clearance in early 2010 for permitting a power line to supply power from the Udupi Power Corporation's Thermal Power plant in Nandikur. Since the proposed 400 KVA power line cuts through 8.3 km forest stretch in the Chikmagalur district, a field inspection was conducted by an FAC expert committee. Based on the committee's report, the FAC panel had proposed the conservation swap. To compensate for the new loss of this 8.3-km wildlife corridor, the state government was advised to dismantle the existing 25-km power line passing through the Kudremukh National Park.

Due to objections from KIOCL the recommendation was not implemented. Work on the new power line was meanwhile started and local groups sought an intervention of the FAC in the matter in October 10, 2011. The FAC viewed the violations seriously resulting in an undertaking by the state government providing for the existing power line through Kudremukh to be dismantled before the Udupi Power Corporation transmission line got commissioned. On April 17, the physical dismantling of the Kemmar-Kudremukh power line began after alternative power was provided to a few affected villages on the eastern edge of the park.

Source: Shubhadeep Choudhury, 'Unique 'conservation swap' in Karnataka; Wildlife corridor restored to National Park in lieu of land for power line', *The Tribune*, 02/05/12.  
 Contact: DCF, Kudremukh Wildlife Division, Karkala, Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka. Tel: 08258-221183(O), 221004(R). Fax: 08258-221183

**Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka,**  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 18<sup>th</sup> Cross, Malleshwaram,  
 Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel:  
 080-3341993.

## MADHYA PRADESH

### IISc researchers held for 'hunting' at Panna TR



Two researchers from the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, were arrested on charges of

alleged trespass and hunting inside the Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR) in the month of April. The duo was arrested with a specimen of a skink, a tail of skink and two specimens of scorpions. Their vehicle, parked on the national highway passing through the TR, was also seized by the field staff. They were working on a Department of Science and Technology funded project titled, 'Testing the 'Out-of-India' hypothesis through molecular phylogeny of lizards in peninsular India'' and were surveying the fauna of central India.

Ishan Agrawal and Aniruddha Datta Roy, both PhD students in their mid-20s, were released on bail after spending two days in jail and a day in detention. Their two local contacts were also arrested.

The reserve authorities maintained that the four were found 150 to 200 metre inside the reserve and could not satisfactorily explain their presence there at 10.30 pm. They said that the researchers admitted to searching for wildlife and had not taken any permission.

The researchers, however, claimed that one of them was relieving himself and the rest were standing guard. The students' research guide has called the charges "a load of lies" and said that the forest staff isolated the four by taking their mobile phones away.

The latest is not known.

Source: Milind Ghatwai. 'IISc researchers held for 'hunting' at Panna TR', *The Indian Express*, 15/04/12.

Contact: **Field Director**, Panna National Park, Panna – 488001, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07732-252135. Fax: 07732-252120.

**K Praveen Karanth**, IISc, Email: karanth@ces.iisc.ernet.in

### **Gujarat gives the 'cheetah' reason to refuse lions for Kuno Palpur WLS**

The Gujarat Government that has been refusing to relocate lions from Gir National Park (NP) to Kuno Palpur NP for a while now (*PA Updates* Vol. XV, Nos. 4 & 3 and Nos. 50, 46, 43, 34, 33, 32, 26, 22 & 20), is using the cheetah reason to support its stand. It has argued that the lions will kill the cheetahs that are to be brought in as part of the cheetah relocation project (*PA Updates* Vol. XVI, No. 5 and Vol. XV, No. 5) from Namibia.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) had recently allowed the translocation of nine cheetahs from Namibia in a phased manner for being released in the wild in Kuno Palpur. The project will cost around Rs. 50 crore. A technical report from the Wildlife Institute of India and Wildlife Trust of India had suggested that lions should be relocated only after the cheetahs have settled down in Kuno Palpur.

A similar argument has also been put forth by the Gujarat Government that has pleaded for suspension of any plan to relocate lions to Kuno Palpur until the safety of the cheetahs was ensured. (Also see National News for story on SC stay on the project for the reintroduction of the cheetah).

Source: Chetan Chauhan, 'Cheetahs help Gujarat govt plead lion case in SC', *Hindustan Times*, [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 06/04/12.

### **NHAI proposes to reduce width of the road passing through Pench TR**

After a delay of four years over environmental clearances, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has come up with a solution to widen NH 7 through the Pench Tiger Reserve (TR).

In 2008, the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) had moved the centrally-empowered committee of Supreme Court (SC) seeking a ban on NHAI's plan to upgrade NH 7 from two-lane to four-lane on the periphery of Pench-Mowgli Sanctuary in Seoni

district (*PA Updates* Vol. XV, Nos. 4 & 1). WTI had alleged that the project would damage the delicate ecosystem of the tigers in the TR.

So far, the SC has not given any relief to NHAI. Now, NHAI has come up with a fresh proposal. It plans to provide 13 underpasses for animals over a stretch of 9 km and to reduce the highway width while widening the road through the reserve. It aims at restricting construction activity on the 9 km stretch inside the TR to a bare minimum.

The plan is to reduce the width of four-lane highway from 60 metres to 20 metres. This width would be achieved by reducing the width of the central median to 0.6 metres. The paved portion along the highways would also be reduced.

As per a senior official of the Ministry for Road Transport and Highways, the proposed width is not too small. In Kerala, where there were land acquisition issues, highway width was reduced from 60 metres to 45 metres.

The present proposal is reported to have got a favourable response from the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

Source: Nidhi Sharma, 'NHAI finds solution to widen India's longest highway NH 7 through Pench Tiger Reserve', [www.economictimes.indiatimes.com](http://www.economictimes.indiatimes.com), 06/04/12.

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  
**CWLW, MP**, Van Bhawan, Tulsī Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0755-2674206/2674337. Fax: 2766315

## **MAHARASHTRA**

### **Jaw traps near Tadoba Andhari TR get tigers, injure forest guard**

A tiger was killed and another injured after being trapped in iron jaw traps laid by professional trappers in the Palasgaon range

in the buffer zone of the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in the last week of April. The tiger that was found dead was believed to have been clubbed to death by the poachers. One forest guard was also injured while approaching the dead tiger when his leg got trapped in a jaw trap.

Multiple iron jaw traps were found to have been laid in compartment no. 559 under Vanmali beat of Palasgaon range and the trapped tigers were found by forest staff who went to the area as part of a camera-trapping exercise. Tranquillizing experts were summoned to the spot to rescue the still alive but trapped tiger. It was finally tranquilised eight hours after it was first seen and an alert was issued for the poachers who are believed to belong to the Baheliya and Bawariya communities.

Source: 'Tiger dies in trap, another found trapped near Tadoba', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 27/04/12. Belinda Wright. Email dated 27/04/12.

Contact: **Field Director**, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Project, Mul Road, In front of Sanchiti Chamber, Chandrapur – 442401, Maharashtra. Tel: 07172-51414(O), 56382(R)

### **Zero-garbage plan for Matheran Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani ESAs in state**

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has sought funds from the Union Government to make the hill stations and Eco-sensitive areas (ESAs) of Matheran, Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar - zero-garbage destinations within a year.

The project is inspired by the Katraj zero-garbage ward project in Pune, which was implemented last year and is based on using garbage to generate electricity. The estimated cost of the project in Matheran and Mahabaleshwar is approximately Rs two crore each.

MTDC has roped in Pune-based NGO - Janwani, which implemented the zero-garbage concept in Katraj with help from the Pune Municipal Corporation. The NGO will undertake a study of the spots and come up with a feasible proposal. The pilot project would be taken to other destinations in the state depending on the results here.

The idea is to segregate garbage at source with active participation from those who create

garbage, like residents and hotels. Wet garbage can then be converted into compost, biogas or pellets for fuel, while plastic can be converted into plastic granules and boards (used as low-quality ply) while the remaining plastic waste can be converted into paving blocks. A customized system of garbage collection will be employed to minimize mixing of garbage and making its disposal easy.

Source: 'Plan to make hill-stations garbage free', <http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, 18/03/12.

## **RAJASTHAN**

### **Minister orders halt on the construction work inside Sariska TR**

State Minister for Forest and Environment, Ms Bina Kak has ordered an immediate halt on the construction of anicuts with the use of earth-moving machinery inside the Sariska Tiger Reserve (TR). The forest department (FD) had embarked on a project for constructing 28 water harvesting structures to provide water to wildlife. Work on these had started in June 2010 and was going on on 22 of them. 15 of these were scheduled for completion in April 2012.

The total cost of the project is Rs 1,146.07 lakh. In May, 2009, NABARD had sanctioned the project with financial assistance of Rs 1,088.77 lakh and the state's share in it was Rs 57.30 lakh.

Concern was raised that the construction work had been causing disturbance to wildlife and this was brought to the notice of the minister. Following her intervention, work has been stopped at Nangalhedi, Thadthadi (Alokenath), Shreedhar, Nala, Chawkiwala Johda, Adhirunjhadi (Baghera Audhi) and Cheeldi.

Source: 'Stop construction work in Sariska: Kak', *The Times of India*, 11/04/12.

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

## **Agitators shut down Sariska TR for a week in March**

An agitation by villagers living on the periphery of the Sariska Tiger Reserve forced the closure of the reserve for a week in the month of March. The stir, led by the Bharatiya Kisan Union, also ensured that no tourist was allowed to enter the forest area. The villagers even went to the hotels in the sanctuary premises threatening guests.

The situation turned so bad that even the staff members were not allowed to enter the park from the main gate. The villagers, who were pressing for a charter of 14 demands — including repairs to State Highway No.13 between Bhartrahari and Thana Gazi and State Highway No.29 A —sealed the main gate and even padlocked the offices of the reserve officials. At one point, after four foresters were beaten up by a group in the Talvriksha range, Field Director Raghuvveer Singh Shekhawat was asked by his seniors to keep away from the reserve.

Part of the resentment is also related to the ongoing process of re-locating the human habitations from inside the park (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII. No. 2 and Vol. XVI, No. 3). The agitation was withdrawn temporarily following talks between the villagers and the Alwar District Collector who promised to look into the villager's demands also conduct a new survey to assess the status of their land holdings.

The immediate provocation for the agitation is believed to be a recent ruling by the Rajasthan authorities that the land in the villages located inside the reserve and those on the periphery would not be registered unless a No Objection Certificate is procured. The Sariska reserve has 17 villages in its 400 sq km area, while there are over 157 villages in the periphery. These areas are bound by the rules, under Section 20 of the Wildlife Protection Act, and various recent Supreme Court rulings. Forest officials have said that the ruling is related to regulations not allowing land registration, that came into existence way back in 1987.

Source: 'Villagers around Sariska reserve protest relocation', *The Times of India*, 29/03/12.  
Sunny Sebastian. 'Sariska opens after week-long shutdown', *The Hindu*, 05/04/12.

## **TAMIL NADU**

### **Gram sabhas oppose creation of the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve**

Gram sabhas in all 19 tribal-majority panchayats in the region comprising the proposed Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve recently passed separate resolutions opposing the creation of the tiger reserve. The resolutions said the forest department (FD) had not consulted the local communities on the project, though Section 38 V of the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) makes it mandatory to do so.

The WLPA stipulates that approval from the gram sabha is essential before tiger reserve status is awarded to a reserve forest area. In addition, the government is required to constitute an expert panel to study the impact of declaring an area a tiger reserve on the local community and the findings must be discussed in the gram sabha in the presence of forest officials, environmentalists and social scientists. Before local communities are asked to shift out of a reserved area, authorities are required to seek the opinion of the gram sabha on whether it believes the people can co-exist with the wildlife. Also, relocation packages and compensation plans have to be approved by the gram sabha, which has the right to reject proposals of the government.

The Bhavani Sagar MLA, PL Sundaram said that the FD was all set to create the tiger reserve but the local communities have not been part of the process at all. The MLA had prompted the concerned gram sabhas to adopt resolutions condemning the forest department's move. He, along with representatives of 10 panchayats in Thalavadi, six in Sathyamangalam and three in Bhavani Sagar also planned to meet the Chief Minister of the state with a request to restart the entire process by taking the local community into confidence and abiding by the applicable laws. They would also press for the implementation of the Forest Rights Act in Sathyamangalam to protect tribal groups living in the forest fringes from forced

eviction. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 2 & 1 and Vol. XVII, No. 6).

Source: 'Tribal villages oppose tiger reserve in Sathyamangalam', <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/03/05/12>.

Contact: **S. Mohan Kumar**, Tamilnadu Pazhangudi Makkal Sangham, Sathyamangalam, Erode District, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 09443082372  
**CR Bijoy**, Coimbatore Human Rights Forum. Email: cr.bijoy@gmail.com

## UTTAR PRADESH

### Two proposals totaling Rs. 6.6 crore for Dudhwa NP

The Dudhwa NP authorities have sent a Rs. Rs. 3.5 crore proposal to the state government for the development of the Dudhwa National Park (NP). It entails the development of Katarniaghat, Dudhwa and Kishanpur as a whole and includes provisions for more facilities for visitors and the forest staff. For visitors the focus will include the development of roads, accommodation facilities and the canteen. For the staff, one area of focus will be their residential quarters that are presently in a bad shape and need to be maintained.

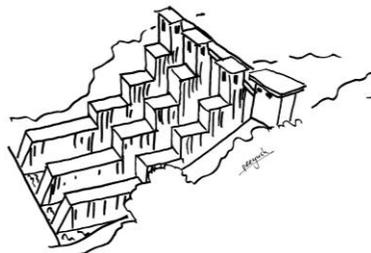
The state tourism department, meanwhile, has sent a separate Rs. 3.10 crore proposal to the Government of India for various developments in Dudhwa. In this proposal, an amount of Rs 12 lakh has been earmarked for the development of roads, Rs 4 lakh for a watch-tower, Rs 7 lakh for fencing, Rs 41.5 lakh for the illumination of the tourist destination, Rs 77 lakh for the development of the forest rest houses, Rs 61 lakh for the modernization of the Tharu cottage, Rs 30 lakh for the development of the lodges, Rs 8 lakh for the upgradation of canteens, Rs 20 lakh for the renovation of the old interpretation centre, Rs 6.50 lakh for the procurement of equipment related to tourism, Rs 23.50 lakh for signage and Rs 13.30 lakh for the upgradation of the existing Natural Interpretation Centre.

Source: Sharmila Krishna, 'Dudhwa national park's development on cards', *The Pioneer*, 05/04/12.

Contact: **Director**, Dudhwa National Park, Dist. Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 05872-252106. Fax: 05872-252106

## UTTARAKHAND

### WII recommends scrapping of 34 big dams in Uttarakhand



A report prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has recommended that 34 dams on the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi rivers - the two main tributaries of the Ganga - should not be allowed to come up as they will cause irrevocable harm to biodiversity in Uttarakhand. The report, prepared at the behest of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), also recommends maintenance of a minimum ecological flow at different points along river stretches. If the suggestion is accepted, these power projects will have to function at a lower than planned production level.

The report was published before the meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) that had been called after Mr G D Agarwal, former member-secretary of the Central Pollution Control Board and a professor at IIT Kanpur, went on fast to demand that construction of dams in Uttarakhand be stopped and the river be allowed to flow freely.

The projects on the 'red list' include the 530 MW Kotlibhel II, the 250 MW Tamak Lata on Dhaul Ganga, the 320 MW Kotlibhel IB on Alaknanda, the 381 MW Bharon Ghati and the 195 MW Kotlibhel IA on Bhagirathi. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 2 & 1; Vol. XVII, No. 5, and Vol. XVI, Nos. 5 & 2).

Source: Nitin Sethi, 'Scrap 34 dams on Ganga: Green panel', *The Times of India*, 17/04/12.

## **Electronic round-the-clock surveillance of Corbett NP**

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has launched a pilot project for surveillance in the Corbett National Park (NP) using high definition cameras. The cameras monitor the area 24X7 and send images even during the night.

The project E-eye (electronic eye) is a software-based system which has 10 high resolution thermal and infrared cameras mounted on towers spread across the 350 sq km area of the park, particularly where it borders the state of Uttar Pradesh. The cameras capture images of objects weighing more than 20 kg and generate alerts if they are crossing the boundary. The cameras can capture the thermal and normal image of the body mass irrespective of forest density and inclement weather conditions. The alerts are sent to the control room in the park and the NTCA office in Delhi. The cost of the project is around Rs. 3.5 crore.

According to the NTCA, staff shortage was making it difficult to patrol the entire area of the park and installation of cameras has brought down the incidence of infiltration in the area drastically. The NTCA will monitor the system for a year before replicating the project in sensitive areas in the other tiger reserves of the country.

The NTCA was helped in this project by a Pune-based company, Binomial Solutions Private Ltd, set up by a group of young engineers and management graduates. The company is also working with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to develop a parallel system for counting of tigers.

Source: 'E-eye to keep a tab on tigers in Corbett', *The Times of India*, 24/04/12.

Contact: **Field Director**, Corbett Tiger Reserve,  
Ramnagar-244715, Nainital, Uttaranchal.  
Tel: 05947 – 285489. Fax: 285376

## **Court orders 'complete silence zone' in a radius of 500 m around Corbett NP**

Acting on the directive of the Uttarakhand High Court, the state government has declared a 'complete silent zone' in a radius of 500 metres around the Corbett National Park.

A two-judge bench of the high court gave the directive responding to a PIL filed by a local

NGO, the Ramnagar Himalayan Yuva Grameen Vikas Sansthan. The NGO had asked for a directive to limit noise levels in the vicinity of the park. The Sansthan also flagged concerns about encroachment on the forest area by mushrooming resort owners who hold events like parties and marriage receptions.

Source: DS Kunwar, 'Blanket ban on noise pollution around Corbett', *The Times of India*, 26/04/12.

## **Road-widening plan may affect revival of the Gola corridor**

A large part of forest land along the traditional Gola elephant corridor is expected to be used to expedite the widening of the Haldwani-Bareilly-Rampur road via Lakuwa. The proposal is still in the initial stages and the approval of authorities, including that of the state Forest Department (FD), has been sought.

It is feared that if the proposal goes through the efforts being made for the revival of the Gola corridor that extends from the Yamuna to the Sharda on the Tanakpur-Nepal border may be seriously hit. Three forest divisions, including Haldwani, Terai East and Terai Central, are expected to be affected by the project, though only the Terai East forest division is expected to lose about seven hectares of land. It would also give rise to vehicular movement resulting in its further deterioration.

There is almost no wildlife movement through the traditional Gola elephant corridor on account of human habitation here. Apart from increasing vehicular movement and commercial activity, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police camp, the Indian Oil depot and rise in mining activities in the area have added to the difficulties for the local wildlife.

Source: Rajendra S Markuna, 'Haldwani-Rampur road widening a big threat', <http://www.dailypioneer.com>, 28/03/12.

### SC stays cheetah reintroduction project



The Supreme Court has ordered a stay on the implementation of the Cheetah Reintroduction programme. A forest bench comprising Justices KS Radhakrishnan and CK Prasad restrained the government from going ahead with the Rs. 300 crore project (*PA Updates* Vol. XVI, No. 5 and Vol. XV, No. 5) in the wake of questions being raised about a ‘totally misconceived’ venture that was pushed without consulting the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).

The issue of relocating cheetahs was raised during the hearing in the matter of the reintroduction of lions from Gujarat’s Gir National Park and surrounding areas to the Palpur Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh pursuant to a decision taken by the NBWL (Also see news from Madhya Pradesh on Kuno Palpur).

During the hearings, the bench was informed that the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has decided to introduce African Cheetahs from Namibia into the same habitat proposed for the relocation of lions. This had prompted senior advocate PS Narasimha, the *amicus curiae* in the case, to file an application seeking a stay on the implementation of the same. Mr Narasimha pointed out that the proposal for reintroduction of cheetah has not been placed before the Standing Committee of the NBWL, nor was a considered decision taken in this regard.

He has stated in an application that scientific studies show that the African Cheetahs and Asian Cheetahs are completely different, both genetically and also in their characteristics. It was also pointed out that the reintroduction of the cheetah was against IUCN guidelines on translocation of wildlife species.

Source: ‘Supreme Court stays Cheetah reintroduction project’, *The Hindu*, 08/05/12.

### Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Award–2012

The Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Awards – 2012 were given recently in Delhi. Those awarded were:

**Aditya Singh:** A prolific photographer and conservationist who has been part of numerous conservation projects in the Ranthambhore landscape. He has also assisted the forest department with anti-poaching measures and the NGO Tiger Watch with biodiversity surveys.

**Ananda Kumar:** A wildlife biologist with Nature Conservation Foundation, Ananda Kumar has been carrying out research work in the Anaimalai hills of Tamil Nadu for the past 17 years. His field research and conservation activities have been on elephant behavior, human-elephant conflict and rainforest restoration.

**Joseph Vattakaven:** Currently the Science Program Coordinator, Tiger Conservation, for World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India, Joseph’s efforts have brought about crucial policy interventions to stop unsustainable development in wildlife corridors.

**Arpit Deomurari:** is the Deputy Manager, Bioinformatics, Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Anand, and has a keen interest in Avian Research. His work on the web portal, Indian Biodiversity Information System, is an exhaustive bibliography of different species and makes available reliable information on biodiversity on a single platform.

**Amod Mohan Zambre** is pursuing a master dissertation project assessing the impacts of global warming induced coral mortality on corallivorous fish in the Lakshadweep archipelago. He has also worked extensively on arachnids and reptiles, and is also a passionate wildlife photographer.

Source: *TigerLink*, March 2012

## Awards for tiger reserve management

Awards were given recently for various aspects of tiger reserve (TR) management. The Panna, Kanha and Satpura TRs in Madhya Pradesh were awarded under thematic areas of active monitoring, habitat management and village relocation respectively, while Kaziranga TR in Assam, Dudhwa TR in Uttar Pradesh and Pakke TR in Arunachal Pradesh were given the awards for effective anti-poaching mechanisms. Corbett TR in Uttarakhand was recognised for use of modern technology for monitoring and the Sunderban TR was commended for effective management of human-tiger conflict.

The awards were given during the two-day meeting of the field directors of TR that was held in the first week of May. Various conservation issues including protection, the extremist threat, phase-IV monitoring and compliance of effective management were discussed at length in this meeting. A book 'Fundamentals in Wildlife Management' written by Dr Rajesh Gopal, Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority was also released by Environment Minister Ms Jayanthi Natarajan on the occasion.

While addressing the officials the minister stressed on the need for raising the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) and that most states were lagging behind in this exercise. She noted that 100% central assistance was also being provided to certain states such as Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Orissa for the deployment of the STPF, but the results are yet to show. She, however, applauded the efforts of Karnataka that has emerged as the first State in the country to deploy STPF.

Source: 'Tiger conservation: MP bags maximum awards', *The Pioneer*, 03/05/12.

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

## GoI-UNDP India Biodiversity Awards

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have instituted national awards for biodiversity management. The awards of Rs. 50,000 and citations will be given to outstanding cases of biodiversity management that

have been in existence for at least 5 years in four categories:

1. Community stewardship: Community-led biodiversity management by autonomous community institutions
2. Decentralised governance: Biodiversity management by local self-governments and local level statutory institutions
3. Co-management: Biodiversity management by Joint Forest Management Committees, Eco-development Committees and similar Government-supported community institutions
4. Protected Areas: Effective and innovative management practices by management agencies of protected areas.

The awards will be presented during the 11th Conference of Parties (CoP 11) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which will be held in October 2012 in Hyderabad.

For more information contact

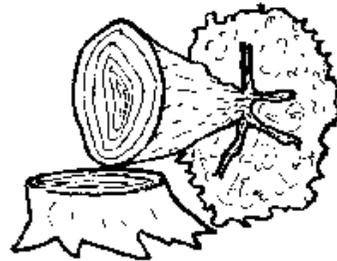
Email:

biodiversity\_awards@nrmindia.co.in

## SOUTH ASIA

### BHUTAN

#### Timber smuggling in Royal Manas NP from across the border



Smugglers from across the border with India are reported to be indulging in large-scale felling and smuggling of timber in the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan. Since 2011, the three range offices in Umling, Manas and Gomphu have seized more than 200 logs, 40 bulls, 45 bullock carts, hand-made trailers,

hundreds of axes, cross-cut saws and khukris. Park officials have said timber smuggling was rampant and uncontrollable because of the porous border, especially in the area between Kanamukura river, Kukulung and Tindopnai under Umling range. The smugglers are reported to be mostly from Koylamyla village, an Indian border settlement near Kanamukura and Kukulung.

In the last week of March, earlier this year, park officials encountered a group of timber smugglers who were just about to fell trees. The men scampered away with their tools, leaving behind 10 bulls drawing five carts. The carts were burnt at the site and the bulls were seized.

It has been noted that it is particularly in winter and spring that the smugglers enter the forest in groups, fell trees overnight, and smuggle them by means of bullock carts and hand-pulled trailers. In summer, the swollen rivers serve as a means to transport timber. The Bhutanese officials have said that they face a serious staff shortage and this impedes their capability to deal with the timber smugglers.

Source: Dawa Gyelmo. 'Timber smugglers come and go almost at will', <http://www.kuenselonline.com>, 12/04/12.

## NEPAL

### **Fires hit forests, wildlife in Nepal; neighbouring PAs in India also affected**



Large fires in the last week of April and early May are reported to have seriously impacted forests and wildlife in Nepal. Nearly 225 forest areas were affected with the worst hit being the Bardiya National Park, where the fire spread to nearly 70% of its area. Officials said that based on past experience, their estimate was that around 40% of

small mammals, 60% of insects and significant number of birds have been lost in the fire. Bigger animal such as elephants and tigers may, however, have managed to escape.

Other prominent protected areas that were affected included the Chitwan National Park and Parsa Wildlife Reserve. Nepalese forest officials have said that they are ill-equipped to deal with such fires and need more resources and equipment for this.

Protected areas in neighbouring India – particularly the Dudhwa and Valmiki Tiger Reserves were also affected by the fires but these were reportedly brought under control before too much damage could be caused.

Source: Navin Singh Khadka Nepal forest fires 'cause big wildlife loss' [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 03/05/12.

### **First rhino poaching incident this year in Chitwan NP**

The first rhino poaching incident of the year was reported from the Chitwan National Park in early April. Poachers reportedly gunned down a female rhino on the western side of the park. While park authorities were able to recover the horn, no arrests were made in the connection.

Source: 'Killing of a rhino', *The Kathmandu Post*, 04/04/12.

## PAKISTAN

### **Disease threatens endangered Markhor population**

An outbreak of foot and mouth disease is threatening the Kashmir Markhor in the Toshi Shasha game reserve near Chitral city. Markhors contract the killer disease from goats, which graze illegally in the grassland. A local veterinary doctor has confirmed that goats and markhors drank water from the same streams and ponds at higher altitudes and therefore, their convergence at a common place led to the transmission of the disease.

A conservation worker from Seen village near the game reserve is reported to have said that presence of goats in the game reserve had threatened markhor conservation. The Wildlife Department officials are accused of trying to hush up the deaths to conceal dereliction of duty. Local community workers have claimed to have seen many markhor carcasses in the river.

A local resident slaughtered an ailing markhor from Sharisham area for meat though, under the prevailing rules, he was bound to take it to local veterinary hospital. Last year, carcasses of

many markhors killed by unidentified poachers were taken to the hospital.

WWF had sent a team of veterinary specialists from Veterinary Research Institute, Peshawar, to the game reserve last year to learn about markhor diseases but local inhabitants have claimed that its findings were never made public.

Source: Zahiruddin, 'Foot and mouth disease endangers markhors in Chitral game reserve', *Dawn*, 21/04/12.

### **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 its 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 an 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 just 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 do let me know. Please also circulate this widely on other networks that you might be part of and send us 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**

### **ASSAM**

#### **Large scale encroachment of lakes in Kamrup district**

A joint inspection by Kamrup district officials and members of the NGO, Save Guwahati Build Guwahati, has found massive encroachments in the five notified waterbodies in the region – the Silsako Beel, Sarusola Beel, Borsola Beel, Deepor Beel and Bondajan. Those guilty of encroachment include government employees and a senior police official. Cases will be registered against them according to the provisions of the Guwahati Waterbodies (Preservation and Conservation) Act, 2008.

70-80 bighas of land in the Silsako Beel were found to be illegally occupied. The encroachments have seriously reduced the water retention capacity of this and the other four lakes, resulting in an acute problem of water logging and flooding. Authorities have already demolished a garage illegally constructed by a private company at Chatribari in the Sarusola Beel.

Source: Sumir Karmarkar. 'Lake encroachers to face legal action', *The Telegraph*, 28/03/2012.

Contact: **DFO**, Assam State Zoo Division, I/c  
Deepor Beel WLS R.G. Baruah Road,  
Guwahati – 781024. Tel: 0361-261363(O),  
263331(R)

### **GUJARAT**

#### **Road proposed through Kutch Desert Sanctuary**

The Gujarat Government has proposed a road through the Kutch Desert sanctuary that experts argue will negatively impact the mud flats, the wild ass and the flamingoes that are found here. It is proposed that an elevated road pass through Tangdi Bet and also close to the Dholavira ruins, the fifth largest site of the Indus valley civilization.

The government has claimed that the road will promote both, border safety and tourism.

Source: 'Road through flamingo sanctuary',  
Sanctuary Asia, April 2012.

#### **Over 87000 birds counted in the Khijadia Bird Sanctuary**

A bird census conducted in and around the Khijadia Bird Sanctuary in the last week of January 2012 counted over 87000 birds belonging to 185 species. This is much higher than the 41437 birds from 119 species that were counted in the last census in 2008.

A significant feature of the count this time was the presence of 49 black-necked storks, which is significantly higher than the six storks (including two chicks) spotted here a decade ago in 2002.

Source: Vijay Sinh Parmar. 'Black-necked stork numbers up in Khijadia Bird Sanctuary',  
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com,02/04/12>.

### **KARNATAKA**

#### **Vulture sanctuary planned in and around Ramdevarabetta RF**

The Karnataka Forest Department (FD) has proposed the creation of a vulture sanctuary over an area of about 22 sq km in and around the Ramadevarabetta Reserve Forest (RF) located about 50 km from Bengaluru on the road to Mysore. This will cover the RF which is spread across five sq km and has nine cliffs, as well as the adjoining rocks and scrub jungle. It will also include the cliffs of Ramanagaram, famous as the location of the super-hit Hindi film Sholay.

12-15 Long-billed vultures are found on the cliffs here and there is a possibility that detailed surveys will reveal more. The FD plans to cut down the present rock-climbing activities on the cliffs for fear of the disturbance this must be causing to the vultures here.

Source: Amit S. Upadhye. Ramanagaram's Sholay Rocks to home first vulture sanctuary of India, <http://www.asianage.com>, 08/03/12.

## **KERALA**

### **Birders seek protection for the Kattampally Wetlands IBA**

Bird lovers and experts have expressed the need for comprehensive protection for the Kattampally Wetlands which is one of the 24 IBAs in the state. It has been noted that the area has been facing serious problems as a result of large-scale reclamation and fragmentation including the construction of approach roads for three bridges in the area.

The state finance minister KM Mani had announced during his recent budget speech that the biodiversity-rich area of Munderikkadavu which is part of the Kattampally wetlands will be developed into a bird sanctuary. Birders here have, however, noted that the proposed bird sanctuary at Munderikkadavu would serve the purpose only if it was envisaged as part of a holistic plan to conserve the entire wetland ecosystem in the area.

Many of these birders were part of a recent seminar organized by the Munderi panchayat that had recommended the protection of Munderikkadavu and nearby areas that form the catchment of the Kattampally river and to develop them into a bird sanctuary with the involvement of local bodies. That report prepared in January described the Kattampally wetland area as a 'biodiversity treasure house' having thousands of birds including nearly 60 species of migrants.

Source: Mohamed Nazeer. 'Sanctuary plan greeted with caution', <http://www.thehindu.com>, 20/03/12.

## **MAHARASHTRA**

### **Vulture festival held at Phansad WLS**

A one day vulture festival was organized in April at the Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary by the NGO Srushtidnyan in association with the Thane Wildlife Division of the State forest department (FD) and Indian Birds Conservation Network. The aim of the initiative was to celebrate the success

of the efforts of the Thane Wildlife Division and to raise awareness among the villagers to ensure no use of Diclofenac for veterinary purposes.

The activities conducted during the festival included bird-watching and a visit to the vulture restaurant in the sanctuary, where White-rumped vultures are often seen feeding. Later in the day, a statue of the White-rumped vulture made by local artist, Mr. Narvankar, was unveiled in the presence of 200 children from nearby villages. A number of activities were then conducted for the children. These included screening of the film 'The Vanishing Vultures', drawing the vulture, making of vulture masks, tattoo printing of vultures and playing nature education games.

People from nearby villagers, particularly from Supegaon collaborated actively with Srushtidnyan for the organizing of this festival. The Yashwant Social Centre of Borli village also helped in the organization.

Source: 'Vulture festival', Report by Srushtidnyan, 12/04/12.

Contact: **Prashant Shinde**. Email: [srushtidnyan@gmail.com](mailto:srushtidnyan@gmail.com), Tel: 09594271511/ 09969077074.

### **Navi Mumbai airport less than 10 km away from Karnala Bird Sanctuary; FD withdraws forest clearance**

The forest clearance granted to the Navi Mumbai airport has been withdrawn by the Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) of Thane circle on grounds that the airport is located less than 10 km away from the Karnala Bird Sanctuary. The clearance was granted on the grounds that the airport would be located more than ten km from the sanctuary as per the rules of the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Following pressure from Mumbai based activists who actually measured the distance, the CCF and his team resurveyed the area and found the distance less than what had been claimed by the nodal agency, the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO). CIDCO will now have to seek fresh permission from both the state and central

wildlife boards.

Environmental groups have also noted that the airport site has 130 hectares of forest for which a special permission will have to be taken. Additionally, they point out that the airport will adversely affect the Matheran Eco-sensitive area as also the 2000 year old rock cut Elephanta caves.

The proposed airport is also facing a land acquisition problem. It requires 2,042 hectares of land of which 1,405 hectare is already with CIDCO but 485 hectare is privately owned. These private parties are demanding much larger compensation packages, thereby forcing infrastructure companies to question the viability of the entire project.

Source: Rashme Sehgal. 'Airport forest nod revoked', <http://www.deccanchronicle.com>, 03/03/12.

Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests** (Wild life)  
Thane, L.B.S. Rd, Naupada Near High Way  
Naka Thane-400602

## TAMIL NADU

### 121 vultures found during census in Nilgiris district



A three-day census in the North Division of the Nilgiris district revealed a total of 121 vultures of three different species. These included 73 White Rumped vultures, 46 Long Billed vultures and two Red Headed vultures.

The census was carried out from May 1-3 with the assistance of college students and NGOs, at Anaikatti, Seegur and nearby areas.

Source: '121 vultures found during census in Nilgiris district', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, 09/05/12.

### Rs 15.75 crore plan for Pallikaranai marsh

The Tamil Nadu state government has sanctioned a Rs. 15.75 crore five-year project for the conservation and restoration of the Pallikaranai marsh. Rs Five crore has been sanctioned for the project this year.

There is also a proposal for the creation of a Pallikaranai Marsh Conservation Society to route funds for the project. The conservation plan includes the removal of weeds, formation of bunds, dredging water courses and forming a nature trail alongside the boundary of the marshland. It has been proposed that the work be undertaken during the dry months of April, May and June.

At present, 317 hectares of land are with the Forest Department. The Chennai Corporation is expected to hand over another 170 hectares to it. Phase I of the Adyar creek restoration has already been completed.

Source: 'Pallikaranai marsh to get Rs. 5 crore', *The Hindu*, 28/03/12.

## UTTAR PRADESH

### 500-600 vulture nests spotted in the Terai region

Ornithologists working in the Terai region, including in Nepal have found several new vulture colonies, where nesting activity is on. The species that was spotted the most is the Slender-billed vulture. New nests have been spotted along the border of Katarniaghat and Dudhwa National Park, in Sampooranagar area along Sharda canal, in Pilibhit's Simhaura and along the Palia-Nighasan stretch. The total number of nests is between 500-600.

In the count held in May 2011, the maximum number of vultures were found in Sohelwa Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and the Kaimur WLS.

Source: Ornithologists spot 500-600 vulture nests in Terai region  
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, 02/04/12.

**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)**

## Quick NEWS

<http://cs-test.ias.ac.in/cs/Volumes/102/07/1041.pdf>

Impact of vehicular traffic on the use of highway edges by large mammals in a South Indian wildlife reserve' - published in **Current Science**

**agasthya** latest issue

[http://atree.org/newsletters/agasthya/Agasthya6\\_1/contents.html](http://atree.org/newsletters/agasthya/Agasthya6_1/contents.html)  
natural history, ecology and conservation of the Agasthyamalai region of the **WESTERN GHATS**

From <http://www.wii.gov.in>  
'Telemetry in Wildlife Science' - Wildlife Institute of India's latest ENVIS Bulletin covering the entire gamut of issues related to telemetry in wildlife studies in the country - contains 37 chapters, contributed by 101 authors.

**new quarterly newsletter**  
by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) <http://cza.nic.in/>  
contact [cza@nic.in](mailto:cza@nic.in)

2012 edition of the Student Conference on Conservation Science-Bangalore will be held between 2-4 August at the JN Tata Auditorium, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.  
[www.sccs-bng.org](http://www.sccs-bng.org)

From Aasheesh Pittie, Editor, *Indian Birds*, [www.indianbirds.in](http://www.indianbirds.in)  
[editor@indianbirds.in](mailto:editor@indianbirds.in)

Needed: "Pictures to decipher the various plumages of the

Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*. I request you to send me any photographs you have of this species, along with place and date. I assure you that all photographs that are used in any publication, will be fully acknowledged."

The 5th GREAT HIMALAYAN BIRD COUNT 2012 (27th to 30th October)  
<http://www.facebook.com/events/188319561285112/>  
email: [arch.birdcount@gmail.com](mailto:arch.birdcount@gmail.com)

**WGEEP**. For a series of news reports in the DNA on issues of the Western Ghats including those related to the Western Ghats Expert Ecology Panel write to journalist Subir Ghosh at [indianeditor@gmail.com](mailto:indianeditor@gmail.com)

The Western Ghats Portal team present the **Observation Interface** - a biodiversity observation recording module. This is a **citizen science** initiative, where users can contribute in different ways. The objective is to **crowd source biodiversity information** from scientists, amateurs and naturalists dispersed across various geographies.  
<http://thewesternghats.in/biodiv/observation/list>

Research Positions at ATREE <http://www.atree.org/node/623>  
**Integrated approaches** for adaptive resilience-based management of forests for supporting agro-systems in the

Sikkim-Darjeeling Himalayas and <http://www.atree.org/node/623> **Climate Change** and Water in Urbanizing Watersheds

The *Asia Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN)*, and ATREE are organizing a scoping workshop for recognizing the knowledge gaps that exists for forest canopies of the South Asian Region. They have invited preliminary (concepts) proposals in areas of biodiversity, ecological function/services, climate change and other related aspects. Contact **Dr Soubadra Devy**: [soubadra@atree.org](mailto:soubadra@atree.org)

**The Wildlife Trust of India** is hiring. For details visit: <http://www.wti.org.in/pages/jobs.html>

**SOS** - Save our Species has called for proposals. [http://www.sospecies.org/sos\\_projects/apply\\_for\\_a\\_grant/](http://www.sospecies.org/sos_projects/apply_for_a_grant/)  
The focus for the 'Threatened Species Grants' will on: Threatened tropical Asian vertebrates, threatened small marine mammals and threatened cycads

**TigerLink** new issue March 2012. Email: [tigerlinknetwork@gmail.com](mailto:tigerlinknetwork@gmail.com)

## A DECADE AGO

**Protected Area Update 37, June 2002**

### MAHARASHTRA

#### Study committees set up for Mahabaleshwar Eco-Sensitive zone

Three study committees and a technical panel were constituted recently to prepare reports regarding the Mahabaleshwar – Panchgani Eco-Sensitive Zone. They were constituted at a joint meeting of the regional planning board and the Central Government's High Powered Committee.

The committees will be submitting reports on the implementation of the revised regional plan while taking into account the limitations and constraints in the development of the two hill stations after these were declared as eco-sensitive in January 2001 (see *PA Update* 30 & 34).

Source: Nandkumar Dhavalikar. 'Fresh move to preserve Mahabaleshwar's ecology', *The Times of India*, 04/02/02.

#### Matheran declared as eco-sensitive zone

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has declared the hill station of Matheran and its surroundings as an eco-sensitive zone. The notification was issued on February 6 and it upholds an earlier Supreme Court ban on all vehicles inside Matheran except for an ambulance and a fire engine, and on new hotels in the hill station.

The Supreme Court had, earlier, in its order dated July 11, 2001 directed that the Matheran plateau be declared eco-sensitive under the Environment Protection Act (EPA) – 1986. The order had come on a petition that had been filed in 1995 by the Matheran Bachao Samiti.

It was also announced that a new master plan for the Matheran ESZ will be drawn up within two years and that there will be no change in the meantime in the existing land use pattern and building bye-laws at the hill station. Matheran is the second hill tract in the state to get protection after the Mahabaleshwar – Panchgani plateau which was notified as an ESZ on January 17, 2001.

In a further development, the MoEF has appointed an expert committee to frame guidelines to determine what makes a hill station environmentally sensitive and important enough to merit preservation. This, it is hoped will help in the process of other areas being identified and notified as ecologically sensitive.

Source: Gunvanthi Balaram. 'Matheran declared eco-sensitive zone', *The Times of India*, 22/02/02.

Vaishnavi C Shekhar. 'Hill stations may find it easier to get protection', *The Times of India*, 30/03/02

#### IN THE SUPREME COURT

PA related matters in the Supreme Court (SC) the Central Empowered Committee and the National Green Tribunal in February and March 2012:

- Related to the conservation of the Asiatic Wild Buffalo in the Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary, Chattisgarh
- Village roads passing through the Balaram Ambaji WLS, Gujarat
- Use of land in the Jawahar Sagar WLS, Rajasthan for a water supply project
- Related to the laying of an additional water pipeline in the Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, Rajasthan
- Permission for the construction of a dam in the Kumbalgarh WLS, Rajasthan
- Relocation of lions to the Kuno-Palpur WLS, Madhya Pradesh

'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, GK 2, New Delhi-48. Email:

[forestcase@yahoo.com](mailto:forestcase@yahoo.com) Web:

[www.forestcaseindia.org](http://www.forestcaseindia.org)

**Member Secretary**, Central Empowered Committee, II Floor, Chanakya Bhawan, Chanakypuri, New Delhi- 21 Tel: 011-26884921 /23/26, Fax: 24101925

**PERSPECTIVE**  
**On vets, zoos and wildlife conservation**

It is a little recognised fact in conservation circles but some of the most significant threats facing wildlife today are health related - illnesses that occur as a result of nutritional, behavioural or physiological stress; contact with toxic substances; exposure to exotic disease agents; or reduced immunity to endemic diseases. Biological hazards may result from contact with exotic or domestic species and humans (eg. as a result of eco tourism), or various human activities (eg pollution from industrial waste).

It is here that the role of the veterinarian is extremely important, far more than is generally given credit for. For a long time, the first thing that came to mind when one heard the word veterinarian was probably a herd of cattle, but such perceptions have changed with their increased role in wildlife conservation in recent times. This realization of the contributions of veterinarians has occurred at a time when diseases are recognized as significantly impacting species' conservation. Today, veterinarians work with captive and free-ranging animals to prevent and/or treat diseases that threaten species' survival. They are an integral component of the conservation team that provides preventive and therapeutic medicine, and helps ensure the proper psychological well-being, husbandry, nutrition and health care of the animals.

The role of zoos too has changed. As they have expanded their role, their conservation efforts have moved outside and with an increasing number of projects directed at the conservation of populations in-situ, the zoo veterinarian's role has also expanded. Be it elephants or frogs, snakes or salamanders, zoo veterinarians today have a number of roles within

in-situ conservation projects that ensure the maintenance of healthy and viable free- ranging populations of wildlife. Among these contributions are the acquisition of much-needed baseline health data, animal immobilization and handling for ecological studies, management of wildlife diseases within park borders, veterinary integration within the policy arena to ensure that health issues are addressed in park planning and conservation programmes, rapid response to epidemics within threatened species' populations, studies on domestic-animal reservoirs, the proper research and management approaches to zoonotic pathogens associated with possible wildlife reservoirs and control efforts for confiscated, rehabilitated and nuisance animals.

Programs such as wildlife rehabilitation, reintroduction, translocation and monitoring all highlight the fact that the health of captive and wild populations is often intimately linked. Many of the activities of the 'new' zoo are to ensure both in-situ (e.g., species' viability and protection) and ex-situ (e.g., captive-reproduction programmes) conservation and. The 'new' zoo has also ensured that there is a new role for the vets, and which, I dare is a role they are performing rather well!

- **Gowri Mallapur** is a veterinarian and Assistant Director, Madras Crocodile Bank Trust. Email: [Gowri@madrascrocodilebank.org](mailto:Gowri@madrascrocodilebank.org)

From

**Kalpavriksh**

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

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