



Vol. XXV, No. 2

April 2019 (No. 138)

## **LIST OF CONTENTS**

### **EDITORIAL**

When millions could be forced to move!

### **NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES**

#### **Assam**

Deopahar notified as reserve forest; SC orders demolition of wall of Numaligarh Refinery  
761 people and 249 elephants deaths in conflict between 2010 and 2018 in Assam

#### **Delhi**

Population of Golden jackal doubles in Asola Bhatti WLS in five years

#### **Gujarat**

MoEFCC launches a three-year project for lion conservation

#### **Haryana**

WII to survey leopard population in Aravalli range

#### **Kerala**

Snares laid in plantations for Wild boar and deer killing leopards in Wayanad

#### **Madhya Pradesh/ Gujarat**

Tiger from Ratapani WLS photographed in Gujarat; reported dead a few days later

#### **Maharashtra**

Increase in wild buffalo population in Kolamarka CR  
Reconsider railway upgradation through Melghat Tiger Reserve: CEC to NBWL  
BMC corporators demand permission to use roads through SGNP  
FD ignores fact-finding committees' reports in Avni case; gives "clean chit" to shooter Asghar Ali Khan

#### **Odisha**

Decline in dolphin numbers in Odisha

Hundreds of dead baby sharks seized; seven arrested in Gahirmatha

Around 600 dead Olive ridley turtles washed ashore in Gahirmatha

#### **Tamil Nadu 12**

Farmer sentenced to two years of imprisonment for electrocuting elephant

#### **Telangana 13**

Vigil to be increased against illegal electric fences and snares

#### **Uttarakhand 13**

Rajaji TR director, forest officials named in investigation on poaching  
15 tourists fined for stepping out of safari vehicles in Corbett TR

### **NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA 14**

Wildlife clearance rates: 65% by the NDA; 45.5% by UPA II

Cybercrime monitoring workshop to curb wildlife trade

More than 54,000 ha forest land diverted for development projects in five years: Minister  
ZSI releases updated list of Indian amphibians  
Dr. Mewa Singh awarded 'Sunder Lal Hora Medal'

### **SOUTH ASIA 16**

#### **Nepal**

Nepal set to double its tiger population soon!

### **INTERNATIONAL NEWS 16**

Gaps in critical management across tiger range need urgent attention, say tiger-range governments  
Study reveals spatiotemporal patterns of three big cat species' attacks on humans

## **IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE**

### **Maharashtra**

NBWL clearance for bullet train through Thane Creek and SGNP

### **Punjab**

Punjab proposes ban on Aceclofenac

### **Tamil Nadu**

Carbon and methane emissions much higher than carbon sequestration at Pallikaranai wetland

### **Uttar Pradesh**

More than 19,000 birds of 62 species in Haidarpur wetlands of Hastinapur WLS

## **16 MYANMAR**

Nanthar proposed as a Flyway Network Site

## **OBITUARY**

A champion environmental journalist – Darryl D'monte

**22**

## **FROM THE ARCHIVES**

**23**

## **PERSPECTIVE**

Say no to the Rampal power project in the Sundarbans in Bangladesh

**24**

## **Protected Area Update**

Vol. XXV, No. 2, April 2019 (No. 138)

Editor: **Pankaj Sekhsaria**

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

Illustrations:

**Ashvini Menon** (Visual Design Studio), **Shruti Kulkarni**,  
**Madhuvanti Anantharajan & Peeyush Sekhsaria**

Produced by

**The Documentation and Outreach Centre**

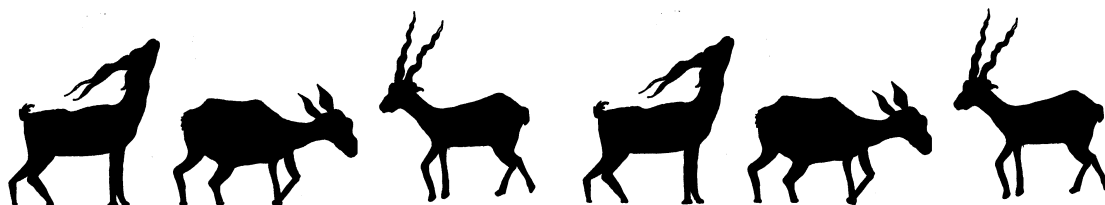
### **KALPAVRIKSH**

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

Tel/Fax: 020 – 25654239

Email: [pskhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:pskhsaria@gmail.com)

Website: <http://kalpavriksh.org/index.php/conservation-livelihoods1/protected-area-update>



## **Publication of the PA Update has been supported by**

**Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)** <http://fes.org.in/>

**Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust, C/o FES**

**Donations from a number of individual supporters**

## EDITORIAL

### When millions could be forced to move!

In less than two months from now there will be a new government in the seat of power in New Delhi and it is certainly a good time to look at what has happened in the last five years. It might be instructive, as a first step, to go back to the June and August 2014 issues of the *PA Update* (Vol. XX, Nos. 3 & 4) as both the editorials then had dealt with the hopes and fears for wildlife and the environment in the early days of the new government. The situation on the ground and the prognosis wasn't positive then, and there can be no denying that things have only become worse since.

There are two key developments in the last few weeks that underline this reality in a rather dramatic way. The most important and controversial of these has been the order of the Supreme Court in the matter of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) that could lead to the eviction of millions across the country. Estimates of those who could be affected vary from between one million to two million households and the scale of what this entails can barely be imagined. While the court has suspended its order till the next hearing it is significant that the Centre remained absent when the matter was being discussed and thus contributed to the eviction order being passed.

While everyone will agree that innocent people and rightful claimants should not be made to suffer, it is crucial that this be translated into action. There may be some who have been guilty of encroachment and/or of misusing the law – these are a relative minority and can be dealt at the local level. The situation surely does not justify a blanket order that will affect such a large population!

The debate in the matter has been intense and reflective of the multiple anxieties – of the loss of forest and biodiversity on the one hand and of the impact the eviction order will have on the forest dwelling communities and by

extension on conservation as well. There is evidence, for instance, that the FRA has been used in the fight against destructive projects and exploitative extraction. India, it must be remembered, is also committed by national and international law to make conservation a participatory enterprise and evicting millions is certainly not the best way to going about doing that.

Since the primary concern and contestation in the matter is over the forest lost because of rights granted under the FRA, it is noteworthy that no one seems to have a consolidated sense of how much forest land is at stake. The SC order of February 13, 2019 only lists the number of claims rejected but provides no idea of how much forest land will be recovered if the evictions do indeed happen. There are two other sets of data from the last five years that stand out significantly in this context.

In figures released recently by the government, the National Board for Wildlife cleared 519 of the 794 (a total of 65%) projects that came to it for approval between 2014 and 2019. The same period also saw the diversion of more than 54000 hectares of forestland for various development projects across the country (see pgs. 14 & 15). This diversion is something we know little about, there is little if any opposition to it and in many cases forests being given away are some of the best forests and wildlife habitats. Importantly it is the tip of the massive iceberg of diversion and destruction!

We are unable or unwilling to fight this loss because of a range of reasons. Perhaps we think, this loss is an acceptable co-lateral for the development it will bring, perhaps we have no means to fight the system, or perhaps we are just plain scared. The powerful might be getting away with larger destruction that will mainly benefit the haves, and yet the focus is on the millions who have been historically marginalized and who have very little anyway!

We need to step back, take a deep breath and ask some very important questions all over again!!

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ASSAM

#### **Deopahar notified as reserve forest; SC orders demolition of wall of Numaligarh Refinery**

The Assam Government has, through a notification dated January 19, 2019, notified Deopahar as a reserve forest under Section 17 of the Assam Forest Regulation 1891. The move comes after the January 18, 2019 order of the Supreme Court (SC) asking Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) to demolish the boundary wall that has been constructed in an elephant migration corridor.

On August 18, 1999, an area of 133.45 ha in Deopahar was notified as a 'Proposed Reserved Forest' in the Assam Gazette. The document had highlighted the area as a regular migratory route for elephants and other wild animals from Kaziranga National Park. A month before the notification however, NRL was dedicated to the nation by the then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The refinery went into production in the year 2000 and in 2011 built a boundary wall for its housing estate that lay in the path of the elephant corridor. A male elephant reportedly died of haemorrhage after bashing its head against the wall in an effort to break it in an incident that occurred in May 2015 and videos also captured elephant herds trying to frantically make sense of how to go past the barrier before dejectedly turning back.

Right to Information (RTI) activist Rohit Choudhury had first filed a petition in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in the matter in August 2015. The NGT had in August 2016 ordered the wall demolished. On March 13, 2018, NRL demolished a 289 m stretch of the wall and also filed a review application stating that its township had been cleared by the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority and there was no need to demolish the entire wall as

it was not a part of the Deopahar Reserve Forest (DRF).

The NGT said on August 9, 2018, that the area where the wall had been built and the area where the proposed township is to come up is a part of the DRF and a re-hearing on merits is not permissible. The NGT concluded that it did not find any ground for review of the order dated August 24, 2016. On January 18, 2019, a two-judge bench of the SC then ordered NRL to demolish whatever was left of the wall. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXV, No. 1; Vol. XXIV, No. 3; Vol. XXIII, No. 1 and *PA Update* 27).

Source: Rajat Ghai. 'Numaligarh elephants' home restored: Deopahar notified as reserve forest after 20 years', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 04/02/19.

#### **761 people and 249 elephants deaths in conflict between 2010 and 2018 in Assam**



A total of 761 people and 249 elephants have died in human-elephant conflict between 2010 and 2018 in the state of Assam. The

information was provided in the state assembly recently by the Assam forest minister, Parimal Sulkabaidya, in response to a question by Congress Chaygaon MLA, Rekibuddin Ahmed.

The Dhansiri Wildlife Division recorded the highest number of human deaths (130), followed by Sonitpur West (82) and Goalpara (76). The year 2015 saw the most deaths (149). Three deaths have also been reported for this year already. The number of elephant deaths has been 25 in 2010, 15 in 2011, 28 in 2012, 22 in 2013, 32 in 2014, 22 in 2015, 32 in 2016 and 46 in 2017. The highest number of elephant deaths during this period was because of electrocution (92), followed by train accidents (54), accidental deaths (38), poisoning (30), poaching (20), and injury (15).

People also lost their houses and crops in human-elephant conflict during this period.

Altogether 1021 houses and 1954 *bighas* of crop were destroyed in 2017-18 while the corresponding numbers in 2018-19 were 2034 and 5661. The total area of cropland destroyed by elephants between 2010-11 and 2018-19 was 40973 *bighas*. Rs. 85.74 crore ex gratia has been released in the past eight years on account of the conflict.

In an effort to deal with the conflict, the minister informed that the forest department had formed anti-depredation squads whose members have been equipped with torchlights, searchlights, fire crackers and kerosene. He said in some areas, solar fencing has been used to keep elephants at bay. He also informed that there is no stone quarry near elephant corridors in Kaziranga National Park. There are some quarries in Karbi Anglong district, but these, he pointed out were more than two km from the elephant corridors of the national park. He further added that there are no guidelines regarding distance between elephant corridors and stone quarries.

Source: 'Man-jumbo conflict toll in Assam crosses 1000', [www.telegraphindia.com](http://www.telegraphindia.com), 08/02/19.

## DELHI

### Population of Golden jackal doubles in Asola Bhatti WLS in five years

A long-term wildlife census being carried out in the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) since 2014 has reported a doubling (from eight animals to 19) in the population of the Golden jackal here.

The census was started to keep track of the numbers of species here and more than 250 field surveys have been conducted seasonally, both during the day and at night, along a permanent eight km transect since 2014. Surveys were also conducted around 28 random areas during this period.

Scat investigations have revealed that *Zizipus jujube* makes up a major portion of the jackal's diet, especially in young adults, as the

fruiting time coincides with their period of attaining maturity. Their prey base also includes rodents and hares.

The sighting of the jackal has become quite common and a jackal safari has also been started in the sanctuary.

Source: 'Golden jackal numbers double in Asola', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 17/02/19.

## GUJARAT

### MoEFCC launches a three-year project for lion conservation



The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has launched a three-year Asiatic Lion Conservation Project in collaboration with the Gujarat State Government. The Rs. 98-crore project, for which the MoEFCC has allocated Rs. 59 crores, spans three years - 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 and will focus on better management of the lion habitat, disease control and veterinary care.

An amount of Rs. 17 crore for the implementation of the project in its first year was released by Union Minister, Harsh Vardhan at the launch. The project will use modern information and communication technology including GPS-based animal and vehicle tracking, automated sensor grid with movement sensors, night vision capability and real-time monitoring and report generation. Rs. 80 crore will be spent on specialised veterinary hospitals and ambulances for lions.

Source: Sylvester Tamang. 'Asiatic Lions In Gujarat's Gir To Get More Protection As Centre Allocates Rs 59 Crore For Their Upkeep', [www.indiatimes.com](http://www.indiatimes.com), 09/02/19.

## **HARYANA**

### **WII to survey leopard population in Aravalli range**

The Haryana Wildlife Department has decided to rope in the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) for estimation of the leopard population in the state. The Aravalli mountain range that covers Bhiwani, Mahendragarh, Rewari, Gurgaon, Mewat, Faridabad and Palwal in Haryana is considered to have an estimated population of about 50 leopards. The leopard survey in this region had been proposed three years ago but could not be carried out on account of a shortage of funds.

There have been some recent incidents of injuries and/or mysterious death of leopards in the state. In May 2018, a one-and-a-half year old female leopard was found dead with injury marks on her neck in Gairatpur Bas village. In October 2017, a leopard entered into the Maruti Suzuki plant in Manesar and could be rescued only after a 36-hour long marathon exercise by wildlife authorities. Another four-year leopard was found dead in the vicinity of Bhango village around the same time and in another incident in March 2017, a leopard was rescued from Durga Colony in Sohna.

Source: 'Wildlife department to rope in WII to conduct estimation of leopard population in Haryana', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 24/01/19.

## **KERALA**

### **Snares laid in plantations for Wild boar and deer killing leopards in Wayanad**

Snares made using clutch and brake cables of motorcycles to trap wild animals like Wild boars, Spotted deer and Sambar have killed two leopards and injured another in the South Wayanad Forest Division during the past two months.

In the latest leopard casualty caused by metal wire snares, a carcass of an adult male

leopard was found in a coffee plantation at Manjilamkolli near Kalpetta on February 6. A two-year-old female leopard had been killed after it got trapped in a snare inside a rubber estate at Nellimalam near Meppadi on December 2. The forest department (FD) had also rescued a leopard, which had got stuck in a snare in a tea plantation at Arapetta near Meppadi on January 22. It was released back to the wild after a day. All the three incidents had taken place inside private plantations located near forests.

In an earlier incident, a five-year-old male tiger had died in the Kurichiad range of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary following injuries after its neck got stuck in a snare in September 2013.

Forest officials said that most of the private plantations, which often become additional habitat for leopards, are dotted with snares mostly laid by local residents along animal tracks. Leopards and other animals, which walk these paths, are increasingly getting caught in them. The FD has formed a special anti-snare squad to search the estates and deal with the problem. It has, also, warned estate owners that they will be held responsible and will have to face legal action if snares are found from their lands during the combing exercise. The FD has, already, registered cases under the Wildlife Protection Act against the owners of the plantation where the leopard was found ensnared on February 6. Two persons who had laid the trap were also arrested on February 7.

Source: 'Snare trouble for big cats in Wayanad', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 08/02/19.

## **MADHYA PRADESH/ GUJARAT**

### **Tiger from Ratapani WLS photographed in Gujarat; reported dead a few days later**

A male tiger that was originally from the Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh was photographed in Gujarat in February 2019. The distance travelled by the animal was about 300 km. Forest officials confirmed that the tiger,



which left MP in 2017, was staying in Gujarat for a few months, most probably since August 2018. Camera trap images confirmed that this is the same tiger that was spotted close to Nagda hills of Dewas in Madhya Pradesh in January 2017.

The animal is believed to have moved from Ratapani via the forested tracts of Bagli and Udaynagar. In November 2017, the tiger was seen at Manglia in Indore district and then Barnagar in Ujjain district. There were further sightings at Petlawad in Jhabua district, close to the Gujarat border after which it wasn't detected for a long time — until the recent sighting in Boriya in Gujarat.

Wildlife officers and environmentalists are stunned at how the tiger crossed densely populated regions without any conflict with humans. Throughout this journey, the tiger lived and moved very close to human habitations. He avoided people and survived, most likely, on livestock and wild animals like wild pigs and nilgai. Conservation professionals said that this long-distance dispersal has revived hope for tigers in Vindhyaachal landscape.

This was the first time a tiger was spotted in Gujarat in three decades. According to FD records, tigers were last seen in the Dangs in 1989, when their population was estimated to be 13. The 1992 tiger census had reported the extinction of the animal from the state.

Reports with photographic evidence a few days later suggested, however, that the tiger had died. The exact reason has not been confirmed but it is being suggested that the animal may have died because of starvation caused by a shortage of food.

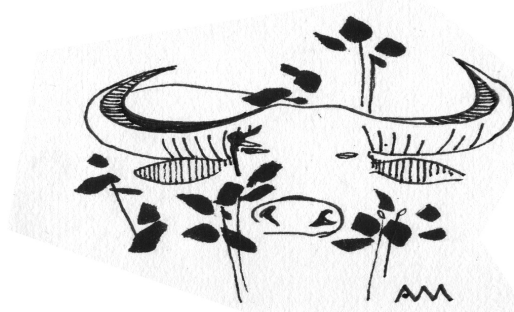
Source: 'Tiger spotted in Gujarat walked all the way from Ratapani in MP', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 14/02/19.  
'300km epic tiger trip, & not a human touched', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 13/02/19.  
'Tiger staying in Gujarat since August 2018', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 17/02/19.

'Gujarat forest department spotted a tiger after 3 decades', [www.apnlive.com](http://www.apnlive.com), 13/02/19. 'Tiger staying in Gujarat since August 2018', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 17/02/19.

Mayank Aggarwal. 'Tiger dead: The big cat that walked from MP to Gujarat dies mysteriously', [india.mongabay.com](http://india.mongabay.com), 01/03/09.

## MAHARASHTRA

### Increase in wild buffalo population in Kolamarka CR



The number of wild buffaloes and calves in the Kolamarka Conservation Reserve (CR) has increased from 16 and 22 in 2015 and 2016 respectively to 30 in 2017. In 2018, the area was reported to have around 35 of these animals. A fresh count will be undertaken later this year.

Tushar Chavan, deputy conservator of forest (DCF), Sironcha Forest Division, said that there are around three herds in the area, up from the previous one. These buffaloes move within the Indravati Tiger Reserve located across the Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra boundary. They shift to Maharashtra when the water of river Indravati recedes after the monsoons.

Senior forest officials said that better protection measures, habitat development strategies and involvement of local communities has led to a rise in the population of the endangered animal in the wild in Gadchiroli district (*PA Updates* Vol. XXII, No. 6 and Vol. XXI, No. 5). They said they have involved local communities in conservation by pointing out the benefits from tourism and the employment

potential in the area if the species were protected. The community hunting by locals has been stopped and development work including setting up solar high-masts in hamlets and the provision of solar pumps undertaken in the villages. Village eco-development committees have been established and local youth have also been roped in for enumerating these animals.

Source: Dhaval Kulkarni. 'Maharashtra: Gadchiroli district sees rise in buffalo population', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 15/02/19.

### **Reconsider railway upgradation through Melghat Tiger Reserve: CEC to NBWL**

The Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has asked the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) to reconsider the approval it had granted in January 2017 for the upgradation of railway line through the Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR).

This follows the hearing by the CEC of two petitions filed in the matter by Akot-based environment lawyer Manish Jeswani and Prasad Khale of the Conservation Action Trust (CAT), Mumbai. The CEC told the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) that since the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have said that 'avoidance' of the project through the tiger reserve is the best mitigation, the MoEFCC should now again take up the matter with NBWL to reconsider the project. Over 15 officials from the state forest department, NTCA, railways, MoEFCC and scientists from WII were present during the hearing. South Central Railway, which is implementing the project, has promised to file a reply in the matter. The railways were asked to submit documents on right of way (RoW).

Union highways minister Nitin Gadkari and railway minister Piyush Goyal had both agreed, in June 2018, to go ahead with the project through the tiger reserve as no clearances were required as the RoW belonged to railways. A day after the meeting between the

two ministers, the Railway Board issued a letter to start work on the project as forest clearances were not needed.

However, the state government, in its reply to CEC on January 16, 2019, countered the railways submission that it does not attract the provisions of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (FCA) under the RoW. A senior MTR official has also pointed out that MoEFCC had on December 5, 2017 clarified that since the RoW is part of the critical tiger habitat, the FCA will be applicable. (Also see *PA Update* XXIV, No.4).

Source: 'NBWL asked to reconsider Melghat rail line decision', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 01/02/19.

### **BMC corporators demand permission to use roads through SGNP**



Elected representatives of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) have demanded that they be allowed to use roads inside the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) as an alternative to the clogged Western Express Highway (WEH).

Shiv Sena corporator from Borivali, Riddhi Khursange, had on January 18 written to Mayor Vishwanath Mahadeshwar and a group of leaders of the BMC, asking them to take up the issue. She is one of 18 corporators from Magathane, Dahisar and Borivali who have



written to the authorities in the matter. They also met chief conservator of forest (CCF), SGNP, Anwar Ahmad, requesting him to allow their vehicles on SGNP's internal roads to reach Bhandup, from where they can use the Eastern Freeway to reach the BMC head office opposite the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus.

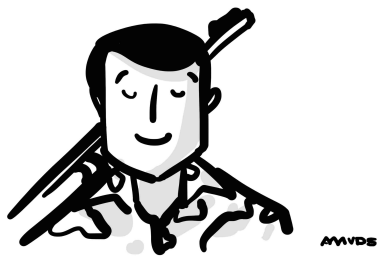
Khursange has argued that they have several meetings to attend including those of the general body and various works committees in the BMC head office and they are often delayed. He noted that they end up spending three to four hours in traveling on account of the clogged roads. He also noted that the forest and police departments are already using these roads and they be allowed as well because their problem is a genuine one.

Currently, almost all major arterial roads in Mumbai have been trenched or barricaded for construction of the Metro or for other projects. According to data from the regional transport office, vehicular traffic in Mumbai has shot up by 50 per cent over five years, from 21.87 lakh vehicles registered in the year ending March 2013 to 33.35 lakh vehicles in March 2018. Over the same period, road length in Mumbai continued to hover around 2,000 km. This means traffic density has risen from 1,050 vehicles per km to 1,650 vehicles per km.

A senior SGNP official said while expressing concern over the demand that this will increase the risk for wild animals. Honking will also affect them. There have been instances in the past where animals like deer and monkeys have been hit by vehicles. It has also been noted that if the elected representatives are allowed to use SGNP's internal roads, this will set a precedent and more people will come forward with the same demand.

Source: Laxman Singh. 'Mumbai: Corporators eye SGNP internal roads as an alternative to WEH', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 30/01/19.

## **FD ignores fact-finding committees' reports in Avni case; gives "clean chit" to shooter Asghar Ali Khan**



The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) has closed the case against Asghar Ali Khan in the T1 aka Avni tigress shooting incident. The Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) and investigation officials have written to the Hyderabad police commissioner, stating that the case of T1 tigress has been investigated, resolved and closed. In the letter dated January 30, 2019, officials said that no violation of the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) or Arms Act (AA) was observed. The ballistic report confirmed that the bullet that killed T1 was fired from the licensed weapon of Asghar Ali Khan.

However, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)-appointed committee and state-appointed expert committee have found severe violations by Asghar Ali Khan. While the NTCA has written a strongly worded letter to the Maharashtra chief secretary, stating his office should intervene, the state-appointed committee report has noted down a number of inconsistencies in the matter. It has also called for revising NTCA guidelines/standard operating procedures related to problem tigers for decision-making. The report also asked the state to formulate, in consultation with experts, its own set of practical guidelines for managing tigers that are a threat to humans.

The FDCM managing director Dr. N Rambabu said, meanwhile, that the investigating officer, who gave the clean chit to Asghar, is not the final authority. The state report is with the government, which will take a final call after consulting the relevant legal authorities.

\*\*\*

### Findings of the state-appointed committee

The state-appointed committee report said that Khan appears to have clandestinely removed the weapons as well as scheduled drugs used in the operation without informing the authorities. This opens the possibility of such important evidence being tampered with. Therefore, appropriate cases should be immediately registered against Khan under WPA, AA and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985.

The other inconsistencies pointed out by the report are as follows:

1. Asghar and his team's self-defence theory: From the reconstruction of the movement of T1 and final position of the body of T1, it was moving away from the road and vehicle on its traditional walk path while it was shot. It appears that the decision of interpreting the sideways movement of the tigress, allegedly after the dart hit her, was the personal judgement of an inexperienced person rather than of someone who has darted tigers and knows how they react when they are darted. (NTCA had also found that the claims made by the shooter that he shot the tigress in self-defence were false).
2. The team dragged the tigress off the road, covered it with a bedsheet and waited for the support teams to arrive even before a spot *panchnama* was carried out.
3. At least 45 minutes had passed since the time T1 was shot when they moved the tigress. Therefore, it is difficult to understand why did they wait for such a long time to drag the dead tigress off the main road if as per their claim, they truly feared that villagers will start gathering.
4. On inquiring about the reasons, Khan could not provide satisfactory answers. Additionally, the committee members observed that the alleged sequence of events — right from the sighting of the tigress, darting and shooting — raises serious questions about the claims made by Khan and the team members that led to shooting.
5. Khan does not remember which of the two guns he was carrying was used to shoot the tiger, with the other one resting on his lap. He also could not remember the specification of the two weapons in terms of their make/type other than that they were non-prohibited bore weapons.
6. Khan's explanation as to why the ejected empty cartridge was not collected and deposited with the FD in the immediate minutes after the tigress was allegedly darted and then shot, was not convincing. It is difficult to understand how the empty cartridge, which would have identified the weapon and used in ballistic tests was so carelessly 'lost' within minutes after the tiger was shot and five people on the scene looking for it.
7. Neither the firearms nor the tranquillizing projector with the unused second dart in it containing three ml of drug was deposited with the FD despite repeated official requests and reminders. This raises serious doubts about the motives of Asghar and Shafath Ali Khan, who own these weapons.

\*\*\*

### Experts express concern over 'clean chit'

- Director of The Corbett Foundation, Kedar Gore, said that both fact-finding committees have concluded that there have been violations in this case. Despite these reports, the FD has given a clean chit to the duo.
- Tiger expert Dr. Ulhas Karanth, who was part of the state-appointed committee, said that the report should be made public right away.

The principal chief conservator of forest, wildlife, office kept the report, which was submitted on December 5, 2018, under wraps for over two months and, did not even share it under Right to Information queries. The NTCA-appointed committee's report is in the public domain.

- Environmentalist Stalin D has alleged that there has been a huge cover up at the behest of some big political entity. He noted that a severely punishable crime under the

Wildlife Protection Act has been reduced to a petty non-cognisable offence to protect the guilty.

\*\*\*

#### Union minister's comments...

Union minister Maneka Gandhi has come down heavily on state forest minister Sudhir Mungantiwar and former chief wildlife warden AK Misra regarding the killing of T1. She said that both the committees have pointed out the lies and criminal illegalities of shooters Asghar Ali Khan, Shafath Ali Khan and the forest officers.

She has pointed out that when the state enquiry committee was formed, Mungantiwar wanted only his people on it; he did take on board one person recommended by her but went against his advice. Gandhi also said that Misra retired with full benefits instead of action being taken against him.

Source: 'Maharashtra closes case against Hyderabad shooter in tigress T1 death', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 07/02/19. Ranjeet Jadhav. 'Tigress Avni (T1) was killed in hurry', [www.mid-day.com](http://www.mid-day.com), 08/02/19. 'Asghar guilty of unauthorized T1 killing: State panel report', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 09/02/19.

## **ODISHA**

### **Decline in dolphin numbers in Odisha**



A recent annual census of dolphins in Odisha has revealed that their population has declined

from 469 in 2018 to 259 this year. The census was carried out by the state's forest and environment department in January and covered important aquatic ecosystems in the state – Chilika lake, Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary and

its nearby areas within Bhitarkanika National Park (BNP) and the mouth of Rushikulya river.

The state's largest dolphin population of 126 was reported from Gahirmatha. However, it is a smaller number than the 307 sighted in 2018. After Gahirmatha, Chilika had the next largest population at 113, followed by Rushikulya with 15 dolphins and finally, Balasore district with five individuals.

The species sighted during the survey included the Irrawaddy, the Bottle Nose and the Humpback dolphins. A total of 130 Irrawaddy dolphins were sighted during the census across the state. Out of these, 113 were sighted in Chilika, where 162 animals had been sighted last year and 123 in 2017. In Gahirmatha, 14 Irrawaddy dolphins were sighted while in Balasore district, the number was three.

Of the 16 Bottle Nose dolphins seen in the state, two were sighted in Balasore with the remaining 14 in Gahirmatha. A total of 113 Humpback dolphins were sighted, 98 of which were in Gahirmatha and 15 in Ganjam.

Source: Ashis Senapati. 'Dolphin numbers have shrunk in Odisha, reveals Census', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 15/02/19.

### **Hundreds of dead baby sharks seized; seven arrested in Gahirmatha**

In an operation carried out on the night of 22 January 2019, the Coast Guard seized a trawler carrying 250 dead shark babies and arrested seven fishermen aboard the vessel for poaching within the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary. The species of sharks found on board included Bull, Spot-tail and Hammerhead sharks.

Biswajit Mohanty of the Wildlife Society of Odisha noted in this context that the shark population in the waters off Odisha's coast was on the verge of extinction as a large number of marine fishermen illegally kill hundreds of them, particularly baby sharks. He also noted that traders from West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and other areas take away many quintals of baby sharks from the state under the very noses of the fishery and forest officials and a large number of local

fishermen earn extra money by supplying sharks clandestinely in fish packages.

The population of sharks has declined over the years due to several reasons including over-exploitation and unsustainable fishing practices. Due to the high demand of shark fins in the shark fin-soup industry, it has been reported that fins of sharks captured mid-sea are removed on the vessel itself and the de-finned sharks are thrown back into the sea to die a painful death. This practice, prevailing on board shipping vessels, has led to difficulties in the enforcement of the provisions of the law since it becomes difficult to identify the species of sharks from the fins alone.

Source: Ashis Senapati. 'Fishing trawler with dead sharks seized in Odisha', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 22/01/19.

#### **Around 600 dead Olive ridley turtles washed ashore in Gahirmatha**



Carcasses of around 600 Olive ridley turtles and two dolphins were washed ashore in the last week of January 2019 along the coast of the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary – on the beach stretch from Hukitola to Eakakula.

The forest range officer of Gahirmatha said that the state government has imposed a ban on fishing activities inside the sanctuary from November 1, 2018 to May 31, 2019 to protect the sea turtles. Forest officials have already arrested around 380 fishermen and seized 83 fishing vessels on charges of illegally fishing in Gahirmatha.

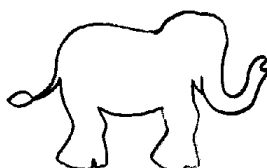
However, it is suspected that the turtles were killed after being hit by trawlers who continue to fish in these waters or after being entangled in fishing nets at sea. (Also see *PA*

*Updates* Vol. XXIV, No. 2, Vol. XXIII, No. 1; Vol. XXII, Nos 6 & 1; Vol. XXI, No. 1; Vol. XX, No. 1 and Vol XIX, No. 6))

Source: '600 dead Olive Ridleys wash ashore in two days in Odisha', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 31/01/19.

#### **TAMIL NADU**

##### **Farmer sentenced to two years of imprisonment for electrocuting elephant**



The Coimbatore Judicial Magistrate sentenced a farmer to two years of rigorous imprisonment for electrocuting a wild elephant in 2009. The court had, in 2014, sentenced him to three years imprisonment. But after the farmer went on appeal against the order, the court reduced it to two years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 5,000.

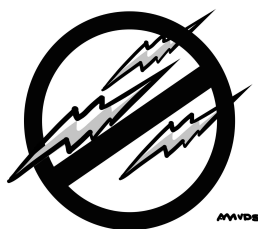
Forest officers had found a dead wild elephant in a field owned by Raju Kumarappa Gowder at Periyanaickenpalayam in March 2009. The carcass was lying right next to the electric fence erected around the field. The fence was transmitting higher power than the permitted level. Gowder was arrested after a preliminary investigation and remanded to judicial custody. The postmortem found that the elephant was in good health but had died of cardiac arrest. A portion of the trunk showed burn signs, proving that it was a case of electrocution.

With the assistance from the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited, the FD also proved that the farmer had illegally powered his electric fence with the electricity provided to him for domestic consumption.

Source: 'Farmer sent to jail for electrocuting elephant', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 31/01/19.

## TELANGANA

### Vigil to be increased against illegal electric fences and snares



The Telangana state forest protection committee has decided to increase vigil against illegally erected

electrified fences and snares. The move comes after the recent incidents of death of humans and wild animals from electrocution, including from the use of electrified snares by poachers who killed a tiger in the Kawal Tiger Reserve (KTR) (*PA Update* Vol. XXV, No. 1)

Officials of the power distribution companies in the state were invited to a meeting, which discussed the issue, among several others. This meeting, attended by senior state government officials along with forest and police department heads, decided to recommend the setting up of two specially trained and armed special tiger protection force (STPF) companies, comprising 112 personnel, one for KTR and the other for the Amrabad TR.

The meeting decided that the forest department will take the help of the two power distribution companies in all forest areas to monitor tripping of power, which usually occurs when an animal or a human comes in contact with such a fence. It was also decided that if forest personnel find person/s illegally drawing power through wire hooks, they will inform the local power department officials who will then book cases under provisions to curb pilfering of power.

Source: Balu Pulipaka. 'Vigil to be increased against illegal electric fences, snares', [www.telanganatoday.com](http://www.telanganatoday.com), 22/01/19.

## UTTARAKHAND

### Rajaji TR director, forest officials named in investigation on poaching

An inquiry report of a tiger and leopard poaching incident from 2017 has named 11 Uttarakhand Forest Department officials and workers, including Rajaji Tiger Reserve (RTR) director Sanatan Sonkar, for allegedly fabricating information and hiding evidence of the poaching.

Bones, skins and flesh belonging to two tigers and two leopards were seized in Motichur range of RTR on March 22, 2018, following which the forest department (FD) filed a first information report under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, and started an investigation under the supervision of chief conservator of forest (CCF), Manoj Chandran. On February 13, 2019, the investigation report was submitted to the state government, the FD, and the Dehradun Court of the Judicial Magistrate as well as the Uttarakhand High Court.

The report has named RTR director Sanatan Sonkar, wildlife warden Komal Singh, range officer Anoop Gosain, forester Ashok Singh and forest guard Pravesh Kumar. The investigation also says that wildlife warden Singh tortured one of the victims using electric shocks to get a false statement and fabricate evidence.

Following is text from the report, which highlights the events: "After receiving information on the poaching, Sanatan Sonkar allegedly forced his subordinates to frame a couple of social activists. He tried to hide evidence recovered from the spot. His alleged crimes fall under sections 107 (abetment), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence), 202 (intentional omission to give information of offence) of the Indian Penal Code."

CCF Chandran first sought permission from the then forest secretary, Ranvir Singh, on August 18, 2018, to charge the above-mentioned officials for tampering with evidence. However, Ranvir Singh removed Chandran from the investigation and made Sanatan Sonkar the head of the investigation. The forest minister Harak

Singh Rawat intervened and removed Sonkar in December 2018 and removed Ranvir Singh from the position of forest secretary. At present, there is no one who is heading the investigation. No orders for charging the people named in the report have been issued either.

Sonkar is reported to have said that since Chandran was no more the investigation officer, his investigation report had no meaning.

Source: Ishan Kukreti. 'Rajaji Park director, forest officials named in poaching probe', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 15/02/19.  
'Uttarakhand poaching: Rajaji Tiger Reserve director, 10 forest officials named in probe report', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), date?

### **15 tourists fined for stepping out of safari vehicles in Corbett TR**

The Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) administration has slapped a fine of Rs. 5,000 each on 15 tourists for stepping out of safari vehicles. The tourists, who hailed from Hisar and Panipat in Haryana had taken a day safari to the Jhirna zone of the reserve. The group complained to the administration that the guide and the Gypsy drivers had misbehaved with them. The inquiry carried out by the CTR administration however found that the tourists had stepped out of the vehicles inside the protected area, which had led to an altercation with the guide and the drivers. The tourists then walked back.

Tourists have been fined by CTR authorities for violating guidelines in the past as well. In October 2018, a tourist from Delhi was fined Rs. 25,000 and a case was registered against him under the Indian Forest Act 1927 for flying a drone near the boundary of CTR in Mohaan area. In March 2018, four students of IIT-Kanpur along with a professor accompanying them were fined Rs. 40,000 for operating a drone in the restricted Bijrani zone of the reserve.

Source: '15 tourists get off Corbett vehicles, fined Rs. 5,000 each', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 10/02/19.

### **Wildlife clearance rates: 65% by the NDA; 45.5% by UPA II**

A report put out recently by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) shows that the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) under the current NDA government granted wildlife clearance to 65% (519 of 794) of the projects that came to it for approval. The previous UPA II government, had in comparison, cleared 45.5% (260 of 571) of the projects it had received for consideration. From 2009 to 2013, the UPA recommended 260 of the 328 that came into its purview and deferred nearly 243 projects after 2013. The rate of rejection of the NDA government was negligible, with only 1.1% projects disallowed between June 2014 and May 2018. Sanctioned projects proposals impacted 24,329 ha of forest and wildlife zones in the country, both inside and outside protected areas (PAs).

The centre has explained the rise in approvals saying that the earlier NBWL clearance was needed only for PAs. However, once the Supreme Court declared a 10 km buffer area outside national parks and wildlife sanctuaries as eco-sensitive zones, proposals in these areas also needed to be examined by the NBWL. As a result, the number of proposals rose to more than double. Secondly, the increased clearances were due to streamlined processes. Problematic projects are now usually dealt with at the level of state and what ultimately comes to NBWL is one that has already passed scrutiny.

The CSE report notes that on some occasions, projects were cleared despite the minutes recording arguments against them, and in others cases, the committee did not wait for the detailed findings of the project site inspection committees before granting approval. The former union environment minister Jairam Ramesh also noted that many proposals that



were rejected during UPA-II tenure have been cleared under the current government.

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'NDA government green-lighted 65% infra projects; activists sound red alert', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 18/02/19.  
Jacob Koshy. '99.82% projects in forests got nod', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 13/02/19.

### **Cybercrime monitoring workshop to curb wildlife trade**

TRAFFIC in partnership with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Police Radio Training School (PRTS), Indore, and the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature - India organized a cybercrime monitoring workshop, on February 2, 2019, at Kohora in the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve (KTR). 30 forest officials from five wildlife divisions – Eastern Assam, Nagaon, Bishwanath, Mangaldoi, and Sonitpur were trained for cyber monitoring, and investigation tools and techniques.

The training was held as part of a joint programme titled 'CyberCLAW' through which specialized trainings are conducted for forest officials for combatting wildlife crime in cyber space. The workshop in Kaziranga was the second in the series with the first one having been organized on 26-27 December 2018, in the Corbett TR for the forest officials of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The workshop in KTR was imparted by experts in the field of monitoring cybercrime through sessions on intelligence, investigation, and search and seizure techniques, communication device investigation, cybercrime scene management, digital intelligence collection, wildlife forensics, telecom surveillance and Call Detail Record (CDR) analysis and IPDR – (CDR of IP address) analysis.

Source: 'Fight against wildlife crime goes online: Assam Forest Department learn new skills to crack wildlife cybercrime', [www.windia.org](http://www.windia.org), 07/02/19.

### **More than 54,000 ha forest land diverted for development projects in five years: Minister**

In the last five years, 54,648 ha of forestland was diverted for over 2,988 development projects across the country. The information was provided in the Lok Sabha by Mahesh Sharma, minister of state for environment, forest and climate change in response to a question asked by Om Birla, the Bharatiya Janata Party member of parliament from Kota, Rajasthan.

The maximum diversion was in Madhya Pradesh where 12785 ha was diverted for 241 development projects. This was followed by Telangana where the total diversion was 9420 ha. Other states that witnessed huge diversion were Odisha with 4968 ha, Maharashtra with 3797 ha, Andhra Pradesh with 3474 ha, Chhattisgarh with 3793 ha, Uttarakhand with 2850 ha, Rajasthan with 2834 ha Gujarat with 2009 ha, Haryana with 1529 ha, Punjab with 1524 ha.

Source: 'Nearly 55,000 hectare forest land diverted across the country for development projects', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 09/02/19.

### **ZSI releases updated list of Indian amphibians**

An updated list of Indian amphibians with 432 species was released recently on the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) website. 19 of these species have been listed as 'critically endangered' and 33 species as 'endangered'.

The ZSI has, in collaboration with other institutions, been updating this list periodically since 2009. In 2009, the total number of species listed was 284. In 2010 it was 311, in 2011 it was 314, in 2012 and 2013 it was 342, in 2015 it was 384 and in 2017 it was 405 species. The current list bears the names of 432 species, the year of discovery and their International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List status. The list describes 19% of amphibians as data deficient species and 39% as not assessed by the IUCN.

The list has been compiled by several scientists including KP Dinesh from ZSI, Pune, C Radhakrishnan from Calicut, BH Channakeshavamurthy from ZSI Calicut, P Deepak from Mount Carmel College, Bengaluru, and NU Kulkarni from the Mhadei Research Centre.

Source: Prakash Kamat. '19 amphibian species are critically endangered: ZSI list', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 21/01/19.

### **Dr. Mewa Singh awarded 'Sunder Lal Hora Medal'**

Dr. Mewa Singh, recognized internationally for his work in the area of animal behaviour, ecology and wildlife conservation, has been awarded the prestigious Sunder Lal Hora Medal by the Indian National Science Academy (INSA), New Delhi.

Dr Singh is a Distinguished Professor (for life) at the University of Mysore and a Jagdish Chandra Bose National Fellow of the Science and Engineering Research Board. He has worked extensively in different parts of the country including the forests of the Himalayas, the Western Ghats, the Eastern Ghats and the Nicobar Islands.

INSA instituted this medal in honour of Dr. Sunder Lal Hora, Director of Zoological Survey of India, known for his Satpura Hypothesis in ecology. The medal, instituted in 1955, is given once in three years to a scientist for his/her outstanding contributions in the area of animal sciences.

Source: 'Dr. Mewa Singh awarded Sunder Lal Hora Medal', [www.starofmysore.com](http://www.starofmysore.com), date?



## **SOUTH ASIA**

### **NEPAL**

#### **Nepal set to double its tiger population soon!**



Nepal is the first country set to meet the goal of doubling tiger populations by 2022 that was agreed upon at the St Petersburg Summit in 2010. The goal named as Tx2 aims to accomplish the task by international collaboration on ecosystem preservation as well as by guarding the wildlife against poachers.

The tiger population in Nepal at the time of the summit was estimated to be 135. A national survey, conducted between November 2017 and April 2018 showed that the number of tigers in Nepal is now 235.

Source: Al Restar. 'Nepal Doubled Its Tiger Population, Making It The First To Accomplish TX2 Goal', [www.z6mag.com](http://www.z6mag.com), 06/02/19.

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **Gaps in critical management across tiger range need urgent attention, say tiger-range governments**

Tiger-range governments agreed on the urgent need to address critical management gaps across the tiger's range at the third Stocktaking Conference on the Global Tiger Recovery

Programme that was held in India in the last week of January 2019. The meeting was organized by Global Tiger Forum in collaboration with the Global Tiger Initiative Council, National Tiger Conservation Authority (Government of India), Wildlife Conservation Trust, Wildlife Trust of India, and Worldwide Fund for Nature. It was the latest collective step in the process that began at the 2010 St. Petersburg Tiger Summit, where 13 tiger-range governments committed to Tx2 – a goal to double the global wild tiger population by 2022.

Governments reported on the current status of national tiger recovery efforts, highlighted the challenges faced and shared best practices. Increasing challenges with poaching, lack of capacity, and habitat loss were highlighted as key barriers to tiger recovery among Southeast Asian governments.

While Thailand continues to report relatively stable tiger numbers, Malaysia reported a drop. The International Union for Conservation of Nature's most recent assessment, in 2014, stated that Myanmar had no known breeding population. However, evidence of breeding has been obtained from three areas in Myanmar. These areas amount to less than 10% of potential tiger territory in Myanmar.

The meeting also recognized the Ramnagar Forest Division as a site that has achieved CA/TIS accreditation. CA/TIS (Conservation Assured Tiger Standards) is a standard used to ensure best management practices in tiger conservation sites.

Source: 'Urgent attention needed for global tiger recovery efforts, as Southeast Asia reports worrying gaps', [www.wfindia.org](http://www.wfindia.org), 30/01/19.

### **Study reveals spatiotemporal patterns of three big cat species' attacks on humans**

A recent study published in the *Journal of Applied Ecology* reveals that lion attacks led to more human fatalities, persisted for a longer time and extended over larger areas than tiger or leopard attacks. The study titled 'Species-

specific spatiotemporal patterns of leopard, lion and tiger attacks on humans', was initiated by lion expert Craig Packer and ecologist Nicholas M. Fountain-Jones and analysed 908 attacks on humans by these species in India, Nepal, and Tanzania. This includes 319 lion attacks in southern Tanzania between 1989 and 2008 that were spread over an area of 42,500 sq. km; 67 leopard attacks between 1993 and 2003 in Maharashtra spread over an area of 4,100 sq. km and 329 leopard attacks between 2004 and 2014 in Himachal Pradesh spread over an area of 19,100 sq. km.

The tiger attacks were studied in India and Nepal — 94 attacks over an area of 2,400 sq. km in Maharashtra between 2005 and 2010; and 88 in 2,300 sq. km around the Chitwan National Park in Nepal between 1979 and 2006.

The study revealed that lion and tiger attacks were disproportionately located in residential woodlands habitat with 10–100 people per sq. km, and lions also attacked more people in areas with recent loss of tree cover.

In future, this technique could be used by relevant agencies to warn local people of risks from further attacks within a certain time and distance following an initial incident by each species, the study suggests.

Source: Jyoti Shelar. 'Decoding patterns of lion, tiger and leopard attacks on humans', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 16/01/19.



## THE STATE OF WILDLIFE IN NORTH-EAST INDIA: 1996-2011

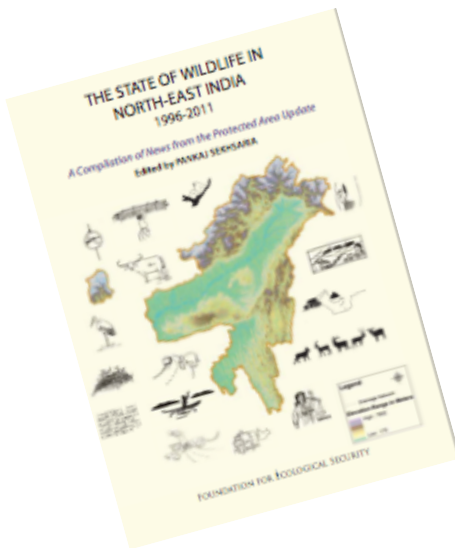
A Compilation of news from the Protected Area Update

- 295 pp, 100 line drawings

- Price: Rs. 250+ postage

To procure a copy write to the editor at

[psekhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com)



**List of Contents:** North East India Regional News; News from the States: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura.

**Perspective & Opinion:** The Print Media's Kaziranga obsession – An analysis (Mehak Siddiqui & C Rajesh Reddi); A case study of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in western Assam (Sonali Ghosh: Snow leopards in the land of the rising sun (Yash Veer Bhatnagar); Karbi Anglong: A little known wilderness of Assam (Anwaruddin Choudhury); Elephants and other memories of the Garo Hills (Nimesh Ved); Dams in the North East (Neeraj Vaghlikar) and Community conservation of wildlife (Neema Pathak)

### Annexures

COMING SOON....

## WILDLIFE AND PROTECTED AREAS IN MAHARASHTRA

News and information from the Protected Area Update (1995-2015)

Published by

Rainfed Books, Kalpavriksh and the Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust

- **Editor's Note**

- **Protected Areas in Maharashtra – a brief introduction**

- **Section 1: News and Information from protected areas**

- **Section 2: Analysis and Perspective:**

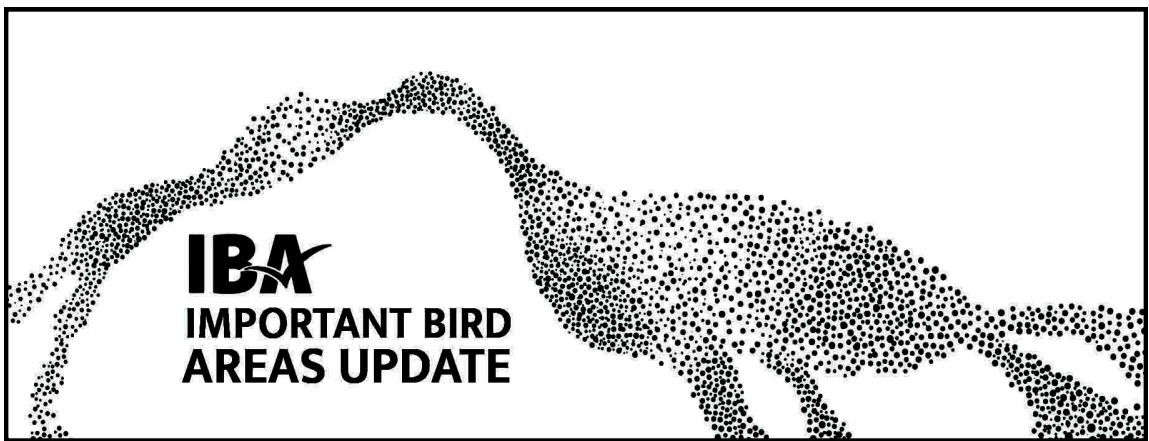
1) Media reporting on the protected areas in Maharashtra -

A thematic analysis (Trupthi Narayan and Pankaj Sekhsaria); 2) Wildlife coverage in the Marathi Print Media – a practitioner's perspective (Reshma Jathar); 3)

Dividing lines- tribal rights and tiger reserves (Shiba Desor); 4) Rocky plateaus: Little understood treasures of the Western Ghats (Aparna Watve) and 5)

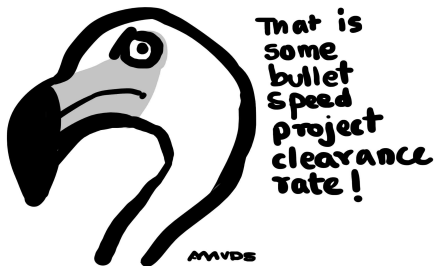
Community Conserved Areas in Maharashtra (Neema Pathak Broome with Sneha Gulgutia, Shruti Mokashi, Kavya Chowdhry, Sarosh Ali and Rupesh Patil)





## MAHARASHTRA

### NBWL clearance for bullet train through Thane Creek and SGNP



A committee chaired by Union environment minister, Harsh Vardhan, recently accorded wildlife clearance to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed train corridor that will run through the Thane Creek Flamingo Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP).

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has however laid down certain pre-conditions for the bullet train project in lieu of the clearances being granted. These include paying Rs. 10 crore (two per cent of Rs. 500 crore—the component of the project in Mumbai) for habitat improvement of the sanctuary, barricading the work site to ensure that no debris falls outside the project area and providing a site and funds for penal plantation of at least five times the number of mangrove plants anticipated to be lost in this project.

Largely funded by a soft loan from Japan, the Rs. one trillion Mumbai-Ahmedabad

bullet train project has a track-length of 508 km. It will originate at the Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai and terminate at Sabarmati in Ahmedabad. It involves diversion of 3.2756 ha of forestland from the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary and 97.5189 ha of land close to the boundary of the protected area. It also involves diverting 32.75 ha of forestland and 77.30 ha of non-forestland from SGNP and 0.6902 ha of forestland and 4.7567 ha of non-forest land from the Tungareshwar WLS.

A person privy to the process said that the clearance wasn't part of the original agenda of the meeting; the file for the same was brought in through the intervention of the minister.

Source: Jacob Koshy. 'Bullet train gets green light via flamingo haven, national park', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 06/02/19.

## PUNJAB

### Punjab proposes ban on Aceclofenac

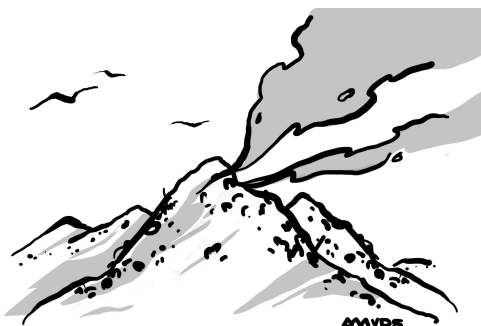
After banning the veterinary drug Diclofenac, Punjab has now proposed a ban on the use of Aceclofenac. The drug, a painkiller administered to cattle has also been shown to have a detrimental effect on vultures. The ban proposal is to be taken up by the Punjab State Board for Wildlife and if approved, the matter will be sent to the cabinet for a final decision.

Source: Aman Sood. 'Wildlife board wants ban on vet drug threatening vultures', [www.tribuneindia.com](http://www.tribuneindia.com), 30/01/19.



## TAMIL NADU

### Carbon and methane emissions much higher than carbon sequestration at Pallikaranai wetland



The Pallikaranai wetland is emitting 8.4 gigatonnes of methane and 18.4 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide per year while the carbon sequestration rate is a negligible 0.0020 gigatonnes per year, a study conducted by Anna University researchers has claimed. The study was carried out by a team led by A Ramachandran, former director, Centre for Climate Change and Adaptation Research, Anna University.

Researchers installed flex towers at select locations of the wetland and calculated hourly emissions of carbon dioxide and methane for close to one year. The main source of methane here is the five-decade-old dump yard and this establishes the fact as to why it catches fire often. According to Ramachandran, more than carbon dioxide it is the emission of methane here that is problematic. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas and is a cause for major concern globally. The study shows that a high concentration of methane is observed during summer and the emissions are lowest during the north-east monsoon.

On the World Wetland Day held recently, the state government, forest officials and the environmental experts emphasised the need to restore the wetland. The state government has announced that the 695 ha of Pallikaranai will be restored under the National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change. It has also made a budgetary allocation of Rs. 25 crore as seed money.

Pallikaranai is among the 11 wetlands in Tamil Nadu chosen under the five-year National Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Birds and their Habitats along Central Asia Flyway (2018-2023) (*PA Updates* Vol. XXIV, Nos. 6 & 5). It is one of the 94 sites identified under the National Wetland Conservation and Management Programme and is also one of three such wetlands in Tamil Nadu; the other two being Point Calimere and Kazhuveli. The forest department is also trying to get it declared as a Ramsar site. A proposal has already been submitted and is under the active consideration of the Central government.

The marsh that covered an area of 6,000 ha in the 1900s is now only about 10% of its original size. The Care Earth Trust document blames the fragmentation of the marsh on construction of institutes like the National Institute of Ocean Technology, Centre for Wind Energy Technology and the Perungudi dump yard and sewage treatment plant. Development of information technology corridors and residential complexes too has taken a huge toll.

Source: SV Krishna Chaitanya. 'Ecological scare: Pallikaranai marsh emitting 8.4 gigatonnes of methane every year', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 03/02/19.

## UTTAR PRADESH

### More than 19,000 birds of 62 species in Haidarpur wetlands of Hastinapur WLS

More than 19,000 birds of 62 species were recently counted in the wetlands and backwaters of river Ganga in Bijnor. The bird census was conducted in Haidarpur and surrounding wetlands, which are a part of the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and was carried out by a joint team of officials from the forest department and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) India.

The Haidarpur wetlands are spread over 70 sq. km area. They fill up with water during the monsoon because of the overflow from river Ganga but then get disconnected when the water level in the river recedes.



Source: 'Ganga wetlands in Bijnor hosting 19,000 birds of 62 species', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 16/02/19.

## MYANMAR

### Nanthar proposed as a Flyway Network Site

The Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association (BANCA – BirdLife in Myanmar) has proposed to the Myanmar government to nominate Nanthar and its adjoining wetlands as a Flyway Network Site – part of a network of protected wetlands under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership. BANCA has been working in the Nanthar Island area to protect the Spoon-billed sandpiper, the population of which is said to be no more than 456 birds.

Nanthar Island is a crucial wintering site for the bird. It covers a fairly large area of approximately 3600 ha, and the island and the nearby Mayyu Estuary in Rakhine state host up to 12% of the global population of Spoon-billed Sandpipers.

BANCA assessed the socio-economic situation of the local people and concluded that most people did not really depend on shorebird hunting for their livelihoods, but instead used them to add variety to their own diets. To combat this problem, BANCA teamed up with local partner Rakhine Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association to conduct education and awareness activities.

Both BANCA and the local people of Nanthar are said to be in agreement now that the habitat, which is also a breeding site for a number of species of marine turtles, should be protected.

Source: Shannon Anstee. 'Mud, glorious mud! Spoonie's winter wetland declared protected area', [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org), 31/01/19.

## Seeking your support for the *PA Update*

The *PA Update* needs your support and help to sustain itself. We are seeking donations and subscriptions and also happy to receive ideas of how further funds can be raised. Please do subscribe for yourself and also for others in addition to considering making donations.

Send a cheque in the name of **Kalpavriksh** to the editorial address. To get details for making an online transfer, write to the editor at [psekhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com)



## New google-group for the *PA Update*

The *PA Update* now has a new google-group. The creation was necessitated on account of the de-activation of the existing yahoogroup due to unavoidable reasons. The egroup will not be a discussion platform, but only for the mailing of the newsletter for those interested. Only one email a month on an average will be sent on the group. Readers who were on the earlier group or would like to receive the *PA Update* as a soft copy are requested to subscribe to this mailing list by visiting:

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/paupdate>

\*\*\*

## Obituary

### A champion environmental journalist - Darryl D'monte

Compassion for human beings and nature, and passion for journalism and action made Darryl D'Monte, a rare type of journalist like Anil Agrawal. A post graduate degree from England with experience in leading newspapers in the golden era of journalism could have brought in egotism and disregard towards 'the other'. But Darryl was always far away from the ivory tower and was very close to 'the common man'. He had a genuine quest of knowledge that made him a voracious reader who could easily mention a wide range of writers from Albert Camus and Edward Said to George Orwell and Gunnar Myrdal. He loved to refer to scenes from the films of stalwarts such as Sergei Eisenstein and Ingmar Bergman. He had a network that spread across the world - eminent writers, directors, scientists, union leaders and grass root activists were all part of Darryl's world. He could listen carefully to anybody but was very firm on his values and put them across gently and straight. This is why he was a universal.

Darryl left The Times of India to concentrate on environmental journalism. He founded the Forum of Environmental Journalists in India (FEJI) and the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (IFEJ). He used every opportunity to question development and displacement and wrote extensively and from a holistic perspective about a range of issues – tribals, forests, mines, industries, pollution, water and sanitation, biodiversity, extinction, environment extractionists and refugees. He was in regular touch with young journalists and learning as much from them as he was teaching them! He travelled to remote areas and this made his arguments and his writing insightful and very powerful. He brought plenty of issues onto the agenda of mainstream journalism that were otherwise invisible; he was amongst the earliest,

for instance, to lash out at manual scavenging and even initiated a fellowship to support a study on such a theme.

He had within him a wide range of stories, which he communicated with an elegant sense of humor mesmerizing any listener or reader. One cannot count the number of students attached to the Open University of Darryl – they came from all over - from Manipur and Srinagar, from Karachi and from Istanbul.

Whenever the state of the art of journalism was discussed, Darryl always narrated an incident. A leading newspaper in India needed an editor. An advertisement was published that gave an idea about the expectations of the management. This included excellent knowledge of international politics and financial matters. The person was also expected to have personal relations with high level influential personalities. Darryl added a quip where the last line of requirement of the editor would say - 'need not be journalist'.

Losing such a friend, philosopher and guide, is very painful. He will be deeply missed.

- **Atul Deulgaonkar** is an environmental writer and journalist.

Email: [atul.deulgaonkar@gmail.com](mailto:atul.deulgaonkar@gmail.com)



## **FROM THE ARCHIVES - 10 years ago**

*PA Update 78, April 2009*

### **RAJASTHAN**

#### **Another tigress shifted to Sariska from Ranthambore**

A 2<sup>nd</sup> tigress was airlifted from the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve to Sariska in February, making it the 3<sup>rd</sup> animal to be moved here in this manner. A male and a female have already been translocated here last year as part of an initiative to bring back tigers to Sariska after poaching had wiped them out here.

The young tigress, weighing 143 kg and in the age group of two to three-and-a-half years, was tranquilized at Guda in Ranthambore and shifted soon after into a specially made cage. The animal was then moved to Sariska in an Indian Air Force helicopter and was accompanied by Rajasthan's Chief Wildlife Warden R.N. Mehrotra, experts from the Wildlife Institute of India, the Field Director of Ranthambore NP, and member of the Rajasthan Wildlife Advisory Board, Mr. Rajpal Singh.

The tigress was released in the specially made enclosure and would be let out into the wild once it gets acclimatised to the new environment. The authorities plan to introduce two more tigers to Sariska as part of the present experiment, being carried out under the supervision of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) after a joint protocol was signed between the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the WII and the Rajasthan Forest Department.

Concerns have, however, been expressed over the fact that the translocation project is not following the terms of the protocol. The NTCA had, for instance, said that no animals could be moved from the core area of the Ranthambore TR and that only a 'young dispersing tigress who has not established her territory' could be translocated from here (see *PA Update* Vol XV, No. 1 and Vol XIV, No 5). The latest translocation, it

has been pointed out, was of a tigress that was well established in the Lahpur area of the park.

Forest officials, have said in response that the protocols are being followed and the particular tigress used to frequently visit the adjoining Sawai Man Singh Sanctuary.

Source: Sunny Sebastian. 'Another tigress for Sariska', *The Hindu*, 26/02/09

#### **Planning Commission releases Rs. 56 crore for water pipeline for Keoladeo NP**

The Planning Commission is reported to have recently released a sum of Rs. 56 crore to lay a 17 km long pipeline linking the monsoon fed Govardhan drain to the Keoladeo National Park. The work will be carried out by the Rajasthan Irrigation Department and is expected to take 17 months to be completed.

Between July and August, the peak monsoon period, the Govardhan flood drain gets over 2000 million cubic feet (mcft) of water, whereas the Keoladeo NP requires only around 550 mcft of water. It is hoped that this project, once completed will be a permanent solution to the water crisis in the park (see *PA Updates* Vol XIV, Nos. 5 & 1, Vol XIII, Nos. 6 & 1 and Nos. 54, 53, 50, 43, 40 & 39).

Over 35,000 wetland birds were counted in the park in January 2009, thanks mainly to a good monsoon in 2008. The figure for the preceding season was only 5000 birds.

Source: Neha Sinha. 'Pipeline plan to bring water, new life to Keoladeo', *The Indian Express*, 25/02/09.



## PERSPECTIVE

### **Say no to the Rampal power project in the Sundarbans in Bangladesh**

The Rampal power plant is a proposed 1320 megawatt coal-fired power plant at Rampal in Bagerhat district along the south-western coast of Bangladesh. Expected to be completed in 2022, it is a joint partnership project between India's state-owned National Thermal Power Corporation and the Bangladesh Power Development Board. The plant is to come up on an area of over 1834 acres 14 km north of the world's largest mangrove forests, the Sundarbans, which is both a UNESCO and a "Ramsar Site". It is apprehended that the plant would adversely affect the air, soil and water bodies of the Sundarbans during the short span of 25 years of the project life. As the forests get depleted and the water of the rivers, canals and creeks get polluted, livelihood of the forest dependent people, the *Bawalis*, *Mawalis*, *Jeles* and *Mundas* would also be in danger. Moreover, around two million forest-dependent people both in Bangladesh and India will be impacted.

Nearly 4,000 families have been displaced by the project with loss of private agricultural land and shrimp ghers, in addition to poor compensation. The situation of the landless people living there on rental basis is even worse. They were never consulted and the project authorities never obtained any prior informed consent from them. They have received almost no compensation and many complained they were forcibly evicted.

The team that studied the project, has in consultation with local stakeholders, academicians, environmentalists, and conservationists articulated an approach that can be considered "primitivist-environmentalists" meaning "dark green" or "eco-centric". This approach starts with the premise that it is the mother earth, which is more important than human progress and rapid economic growth. This is the only planet we have and this must be

conserved and protected posterity. Natural resources must not be exploited. We are to bank on renewable sources of energy and shun use of fossil-fuel based energy.

In view of serious impacts of this coal-fired power plant on the very sensitive ecosystem of the Sundarban forests and a series of protests at home and abroad against the project, it would be advisable that the government immediately suspends the project and puts a ban on future exploration and use of all fossil-fuel based energy.

It is apprehended that the Rampal power plant may turn into a "development disaster", if it is allowed to function in that highly sensitive ecosystem. This is something to be avoided at all costs.

**- Mahfuzul Haque** teaches at the  
Department of Development Studies,  
University of Dhaka.  
Email: drmahfuzulhaque@yahoo.com

To

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