

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

The tiger tourism debate is on fire

In an order that will have far reaching consequences, the Supreme Court imposed a blanket ban on tourism in the core areas of tiger reserves with immediate effect on July 24. The order is up for review within three weeks but the stage has been set for a period of considerable turmoil in matters related to wildlife tourism, particularly that where the tiger is involved.

There has been wide coverage of the development in the print and electronic media and the virtual world too has come alive with opinions, claims, allegations and counter allegations. A large section of the wildlife conservation community has been quite outraged and this is an important comment on the political economy of wildlife conservation as also of the wildlife tourism industry.

One prominent wildlife photographer and hotelier posted a photo of a dead tiger on facebook with a prominent caption – ‘Tourism did not kill him – goat herders did’. Other comments have expressed indignation at a situation where villagers will be allowed to stay inside, but tourism will have to leave. It is noteworthy that wildlife conservation and tourism is implicated in an interesting and important overlap of interests. Those wanting conservation of wildlife are increasingly benefitting from it as tourism operators or then as consumers of a wild experience.

The case has been made for a very long time that tourism benefits wildlife because it constitutes non-consumptive use of the resource that can also benefit local communities in the process and 2ndly, that tourist presence denies poachers the chance to get at their quarry. The simplicity of these arguments conceals the fault lines of a situation that is far more nuanced and complex both, on the ground as well as in the policy domain. While conservation has been projected as an important national agenda, there is no denying that in the present paradigm it's majority stake is restricted to a small section of the urban middle and upper-middle class.

There is also much evidence of the hardships experienced by and atrocities inflicted on

local communities in the name of conservation. Ironically, the same paradigm is expected to benefit the same people from the same wildlife conservation, albeit through the tourism route. It is unlikely that the math will add up!

And this, as has been pointed out by many, is only a small part of the overall economic paradigm where everything is meant for consumption; where GDP and economic growth takes precedence over everything else and where even wildlife and conservation will have to pay for itself. Banning tourism is, perhaps, not the solution. If, however, the parameters of the debate and the discussions around conservation are themselves not re-negotiated, there is unlikely to be much progress.

For many proponents, tourism, if done sensitively, is part of the solution to the many conservation related challenges we face today. For the moment however, the shoe is on the other foot. The solution has become the problem and the SC order should be welcomed for the debate it has fostered and a new perspective it could potentially engineer.

Whether this results in a wash-out or in a shake-out is something we have to wait and watch. And for a change, this particular wait is unlikely to be a long one!

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ASSAM

Huge impact of floods on Kaziranga NP; over 500 wild animal casualties

Reports received in the first week of July indicate that the floods in the Brahmaputra have had a huge impact on Kaziranga National Park and the wildlife here. Carcasses of 538 animals including 463 hog deer, 28 wild boars, 16 sambar, 13 rhinos, 10 swamp deer, five porcupines, two hog badgers and one wild buffalo had been recovered. The toll is expected to rise as the flood waters recede and more bodies are located. About 20 of the hog deer casualties

were on account of being hit by vehicles as the animals crossed National Highway 37 to reach higher ground on the southern part, and two rhinos were killed by poachers.

Another 126 hog deer were rescued and 94 of these released in the wild after treatment at the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC), located in the park. Two rhino calves and two elephant calves rescued from floodwaters were being treated at the centre. CWRC volunteers also rescued four barking deer, three of which were released in the wild after treatment.

Frontline staff manning 16 of the total 152 anti-poaching camps in the park had to be shifted due to flooding, while four old camps had been extensively damaged. The floods have also damaged roads, bridges and other infrastructure in the park and huge funds would be needed for repair and reconstruction.

The flood waters entered the park area on June 26 and by midnight on June 28, the flow had peaked, submerging 80 per cent of its area, and only the natural and artificial highlands inside were spared. The migration of herds of hog deer and elephants and some rhinos had been noticed by the park authorities since June 22. The administration promulgated prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) along NH 37, and time cards introduced restricting speed limit to 40 km/hour to protect the migrating animals.

The floods have also claimed 100 human lives, while 16 others died due to landslip in the state. In all 56 children also lost their lives. Of the 31 lives lost in Barpeta district, 21 were children.

Source: 'Toll 538 as floods play havoc with Kaziranga wild life', *The Hindu*, 06/07/12.

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

Gibbon Conservation training for Assam and Arunachal Pradesh foresters

The Gibbon Conservation Centre and Aaranyak, in collaboration with the Assam and Arunachal Pradesh Forest Departments (FD) and with the financial support from the US Fish & Wildlife Service have planned to organize a week-long training programme for the foresters of Assam and



Arunachal Pradesh, in five batches during the year 2012. Each batch will consist of 20 participants.

The course consists of daily lectures and field exercises. A wide range of related topic areas is to be covered in the training programme. These will include biodiversity in north-east India and its conservation; primate conservation in north-east India with special reference to the Hoolock gibbon; gibbon census; gibbon data collection, maintaining and reporting; techniques of floristic study; gibbon habitat characteristic and restoration, population and habitat monitoring, gibbon rescue and rehabilitation; Global Positioning System - use in the field, and legal orientation (wildlife laws and their application).

The first batch of the training programme was inaugurated on May 22, 2012 by Dr. Dilip Chetry, Executive Director, Gibbon Conservation Centre.

Source: 'Gibbon Conservation training to forest staff', www.assamtimes.org, 06/06/12.

Contact: **Dr. Dilip Chetry**, Gibbon Conservation Centre, Meleng, Mariani, Jorhat – 785634. Tel: 09435043982 / 03771-244378. Email: chetryd@rediffmail.com

New tiger reserve in Karbi Anglong district

Assam has proposed the setting up of a tiger reserve covering 1,050 sq km in the eastern Bokajan subdivision of Karbi Anglong district. Four wildlife sanctuaries and five reserve forests will be included in the area, which is connected to Kaziranga National Park.

The plan will be implemented in collaboration with the Tiger Foundation of India (TFI) and leaders of the local autonomous council. The Forest Department (FD), meanwhile has been instructed to

prepare a detailed project report. The Assam Forest Minister, Mr. Rockybul Hussain, will hold another round of discussions with FD officials, representatives of the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature - India and the TFI, after which the proposed project would be finalised.

The state has also planned two other important programmes for Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao — one to curb *jhum* cultivation and the second, a mass plantation scheme. Farmers involved in *jhum* cultivation will be centred in an area and involved in some other ways of cultivation.

Source: Sarat Sarma, 'Move to set up tiger reserve', *The Telegraph*, 06/06/12.

Contact: **DFO**, Karbi-Anglong East Division, P.O. Diphu, Dist. Karbi-Anglong, Assam. Tel: 03671-272237(O), 272310(R)

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

GOA

White-water rafting inside Mhadei WLS



The Goa government plans to start white water rafting on the Mhadei river inside Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Sattari taluka. The Goa Tourism Development Corporation (GTDC) has, reportedly, received the necessary permission from the Forest Department for the same along Surla village bordering Goa-Karnataka.

Southern River Adventures and Sports Private Ltd, a company owned by British national John Pollard, will be managing the facility. The same company has been managing a similar such facility upstream near Dandeli village in Karnataka.

GTDC plans to develop a special package for adventure sports lovers, who can visit the sanctuary and stay at the hotel at Mayem.

Source: 'Goa government to start white water rafting in Mhadei river', www.ndtv.com, 12/06/12.

Contact: **I/c Mhadei WLS, C/o Chief Wildlife Warden**, Wildlife Wing, Junta House, Panaji 403001, Goa. Tel: 0832 – 224747 / 223508 / 278891. Fax: 224747

GUJARAT

Gujarat FD in dilemma; paying compensation to those who harass lions



There have been a couple of cases in the recent past where some locals harassing lions around Gir were killed by the big cats, and the forest department (FD) had to pay compensation to the families of the victims.

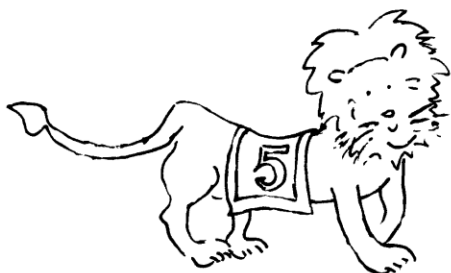
On April 17, a lion attacked and killed a 35-year-old man in Dholadri village in Rajula taluka of Amreli district after his friends and he pelted stones at the lion feeding on a cow. They snatched away the prey which enraged the animal. Even though the compensation is paid to only those who are killed by accident and have not harassed the lion, Rs. 1.5 lakh compensation has been paid in this case.

In another incident, a lion attacked two people who were part of the group harassing it near Otha village, some 20 km from Mahuva in Bhavnagar district on May 29. The group had ventured too close to the animal and cornered it. No complaints were filed under the Wildlife Protection Act in both the cases.

FD officials say they face a dilemma - they would like to book people who harass the animal but they fear that taking legal action would lead to loss of sympathy of the locals eventually affecting the conservation efforts. Wildlife activists, however, believe stringent action should be taken against those harassing lions. They have expressed the need to increase patrolling in the areas where lions are found in good numbers outside the sanctuary.

Source: Vijaysinh Parmar, 'No complaints against those harassing lion', *The Times of India*, 31/05/12.

Group formed to oppose lion shows around Gir



A group of wildlife enthusiasts and some NGOs working in Saurashtra have come together to take up cudgels against the illegal lion shows organized in the revenue areas outside Gir Sanctuary. About 20 wildlife lovers from Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Amreli and other places attended the meeting held in Ahmedabad in June, where they decided to launch a drive against this practice and for the effective conservation of lions.

During the meeting it was decided that pamphlets will be distributed to create awareness about the illegal shows and also to conduct a medical health checkup camp in Lathi area where such shows are organized.

The group has decided to meet once in a month to review the situation. It will also hold meetings with gram panchayats and get an assurance from sarpanches that they would not allow any outsider to enter their village for lion shows even if the person happens to be a relative of any of the villagers.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik, 'Activists join hands to stop lion shows', *The Times of India*, 12/06/12.

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

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Great Himalayan NP on the way to getting world heritage tag

A team of evaluators from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) will visit the Great Himalayan National Park (NP) in Kullu district from October 3 to 12 to survey the park's biodiversity. The experts will evaluate the nominated property on the ground and discuss its nomination as a world heritage site with the relevant national and local authorities, local communities, NGOs and other stake-holders. The IUCN panel would then review the recommendations of the field evaluators in December and the IUCN will then present the results and recommendations of its evaluation process at its annual session in June/July.

The October visit to GHNP will be the first visit of IUCN experts after the park was short-listed for UNESCO's World Heritage status in 2009.

The Kaziranga NP and the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam, the Keoladeo NP in Rajasthan, the Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers NPs in Uttarakhand and the Sundarbans NP in West Bengal are other areas in India that are already on UNESCO's world heritage list.

Source: 'Great Himalayan National Park vies for World Heritage',

www.zeenews.com, 13/06/12.

Contact: **Director**, Great Himalayan National Park, At Shamshi - 175125, Dist. Kullu, Himachal Pradesh. Email: dirghnp@vsnl.com

Chief Wildlife Warden, Himachal Pradesh, Talland, Shimla - 171001. Tel: 0177-2624193

KARNATAKA

5000 acres of revenue land in corridor connecting Bandipur and Mudumalai gets Reserve Forest status



Sustained pursuance of the case by a few bureaucrats and wildlife activists has ensured that revenue land of over 5,000 acres, falling in a critical wildlife corridor at Kaniyanapura has been declared a Reserve Forest (RF). These forests comprise an important connection between the Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka and the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu.

A quick survey of the area in 2001 by wildlifer, Mr. Sanjay Gubbi and volunteers from the Vanya and Aranya wildlife groups had reported an area of 9,662.3 acres as being under forest cover. The report was then submitted to the government recommending that these areas be declared RF. Finding that an area of 5,599.05 acres was not diverted to private use, the Forest Department (FD) proposed to the government that this be declared a RF under the Karnataka Forest Act, 1963. A notification under Section 4 of the Act was subsequently issued in February 2012 for declaring this a RF.

Source: Subhash Chandra N S, 'Officials, civil society join hands to restore wildlife corridor', *Deccan Herald*, 18/06/12.

Contact: **Field Director**, Bandipur TR, Aranya Bhawan, Ashokapuram, Mysore – 570008, Karnataka. Tel: 0821-2480901(O).

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

KERALA

Kadar settlement to be relocated from the Parambikulam TR

The settlement of the Kadar tribe at Kuriyarkutty, located inside the core area of Parambikulam Tiger

Reserve, is to be shifted to Vazhachal as per the wishes of the majority of this tribal group. The authorities had been trying to shift them for long but only 72 of the 78 families had agreed to the resettlement scheme.

There are two options before the tribal families under the Central government's scheme. One is to accept Rs. 10 lakh per family and leave, while in the other; they will be provided with a house, land to cultivate and Rs. two lakh as fixed deposit in a bank for each family. 40% of the Kadar families are known to have chosen the first option and the remaining, the second option.

In addition to the 78 families, each person aged above 18 years will be considered as a separate family. Thus, 130 Kadar families will be resettled in Vazhachal, in an uncultivated plantation under the Forest Department.

Source: 'Tribal settlement to be shifted from tiger reserve', *The Hindu*, 27/06/12.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Parambikulam Division, P.O. Thunacadavu (Via) Pollachi Dist. Palakkad-678661, Kerala. Tel: 04253-267233

80 tigers counted in Wayanad WLS

A recently concluded tiger monitoring exercise conducted by the Forest Department (FD) and the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature - India in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) has revealed that it is home to nearly 80 tigers including 10 cubs. This makes Wayanad home to the largest population of tigers in South India, after Karnataka's Bandipur Tiger Reserve.

Camera trapping was the primary method used to count the tiger population. Nearly 1200 photographs of tigers were taken during the four-month exercise executed with the help of 32 cameras that were used simultaneously in each forest range of the sanctuary.

A few decades ago, when elephant poachers posed a serious threat to the forests of the region, the officials of the Wayanad WLS implemented stringent measures to check poaching under the aegis of Project

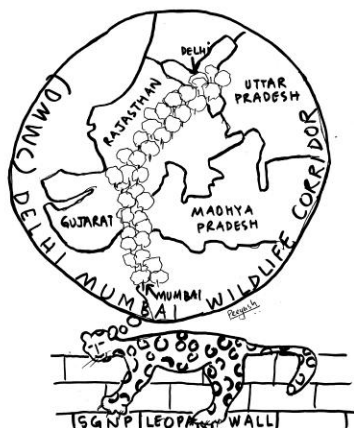
Elephant. The measures, which included setting up anti-poaching camps inside the sanctuary and intensified patrolling, curbed poaching and also helped to multiply the herbivore population. This, say forest officials, seems to have helped in the development of a healthy habitat for the tiger.

Source: E.M. Manoj, 'Tigers find a safe haven in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 05/06/12.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Wayanad Wildlife Division, P.O. Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad-673 592, Kerala. Tel: 0493-2620454

MAHARASHTRA

State clears the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor through Sanjay Gandhi NP



The Maharashtra state government's wildlife advisory board has cleared a part of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor that is to pass through the Tungareshwar area of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). The Chief Minister, Mr. Prithviraj Chavan, has reportedly asked for that part of the rail corridor that passes through Tungareshwar area to be elevated so as not to disturb wildlife movement. He has also asked for installation of chain-link fences along the existing railway track that runs through the sanctuary to ensure safety of the animals and for underpasses for use by the animals.

The 1483 km Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor is a USD 90 billion project to be executed with financial and technical aid from Japan.

Source: Yogesh Naik, 'State clears freight corridor via SGNP', www.mumbaiirror.com, 08/06/12.

Hi-tech digital cameras to be installed in Sanjay Gandhi NP

The Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) authorities are all set to install five hi-tech cameras that will enable monitoring of animals on a real-time basis. The cameras are also capable of instantly emailing pictures to the authorities.

There already are 10 camera traps installed in SGNP and these new cameras will be in addition to these. It is hoped that these hi-tech cameras will also help in tackling illegal activities in the forests here. The cameras were procured and custom-fitted by the Navi Mumbai based Solar Spectrum Energy Systems.

Source: Virat Singh, 'SGNP to get hi-tech cameras that can mail animals' photos', *Mumbai Mirror*, 25/06/12.

Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests**, SGNP, Borivili (East), Mumbai – 400066, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-28860362, 28860389(O), 8862780(R) Email: sgnpsmumbai@gmail.com

Rare plant 'spiderwort' rediscovered in Chandoli NP

Belosynapsis vivipara, commonly known as spiderwort, was reported recently from the Chandoli National park. The last time it was reported was in 1851, when it was first collected at Parva Ghat in Maharashtra. It was believed that the plant had gone extinct. The re-discovery was made jointly by a team that comprised researchers from the Agharkar Research Institute, Pune; the Art, Commerce and Science College, Lanja in Ratnagiri; University of Pune, Pune; Botanical Survey of India, Howrah; and the Botanical Survey of India, Western Regional Centre, Pune.

Parva Ghat where the 1851 specimens were found lies at the junction of Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, while the latest discovery was in the northern-most extension of the northern Western Ghats of Maharashtra. The distance between the two points is sizable and it is hoped that a thorough study of the area lying in between could lead to similar discoveries.

The recent study found about 100 such plants growing on large tree trunks in the riparian forest patches of Male and Patharpunj villages in Chandoli NP, which forms the northern-most distribution of this vulnerable species.

Source: 'Researchers discover rare plant species', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 05/07/12.
Contact: **DCF (WL)**, Chandoli/ Radnagari WLS, Forest Department, Kolhapur 416002, Maharashtra

Kin of tiger kill victim in Bor WLS compensated by FD, NGO

The kin of a tiger-kill victim in the Bor Wildlife Sanctuary were given compensation both by the Forest Department (FD) and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI).

Sitaram Wadhve, a daily-wage forest labourer posted in Pendhri beat of the sanctuary, died in a tiger-attack on April 19, while he was filling a water hole in Chichkhori area. His family was given Rs. Two lakh from the Forest Welfare Fund and Rs. One lakh under WTI's insurance scheme for all field staff of PAs in the state.

Source: Source: 'Wildlife Trust of India gives 1L to Bor tiger attack victim kin', *The Times of India*, 07/06/12.

Contact: **DCF, Pench National Park**, I/c, Bor WLS Near Govt. Press, Civil Lines, Nagpur-440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 - 2524727(O), 2227282(R). Fax: 2539226

State notifies Umred-Kharangala WLS and Kolamarla Conservation Reserve

The Maharashtra government has notified two new protected areas in the Vidarbha region of the state. One is the 189.29 sq km Umred-Kharangala Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) near Nagpur and the other is a 187 sq km conservation reserve in Kolamarla, Sironcha of Gadchiroli district specifically for the conservation of wild buffaloes. These along with the recent additions to the Bor and Nagzira WLSs and the Navegaon National Park (*PA Update* Vol. XIII, No. 2) have increased the PA coverage in the region by over 500 sq km.

The new sanctuary will include 22 reserve forest compartments (61.57 sq km) of Kuhi, Bhiwapur and Paoni ranges, 53 protected forest

compartments (116.42 sq km) including 11 compartments of the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM), 0.94 sq km of revenue forest land and 10.36 sq km of private land. There are four villages inside the sanctuary and these are slated for relocation. A provision of Rs. 25 lakh has already been made for water holes and protection in the new sanctuary.

These are also the forests where a tigress had fallen into a canal of the Gosikhurd dam project in October 2011. She was rescued and later released in the wild with a radio collar. Confirmation that the area acts as a corridor came when the tigress was observed moving towards Tadoba.

The total number of PAs in the state has now gone up to 40. The notification of new PAs was necessitated after the government last year de-notified over 7,000 sq km of the Nannaj Sanctuary, leading to depletion in total PA area of the state.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, No. 2; Vol. XVII, No. 5; Vol. XVI, Nos. 5, 3 & 2; Vol XV, No. 6; Vol. XIV, No. 4; Vol XII, No. 3; Vol. XI, No. 5 and No. 29)

Source: 'State's newest sanctuary is 50 kms from city', *The Times of India*, 09/06/12,

'Maharashtra to get new Tiger Corridor in Umred', *The Times of India*, 08/06/12.

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

Proposal to drill deep bores inside Chandoli NP, Koyna WLS to study reservoir triggered seismicity



Bores varying in depth from 1 km to 10 km are to be drilled at various sites inside the

Chandoli National Park and the Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary to study reservoir triggered seismicity (RTS). The proposal is linked to the fact that thousands of earthquakes have been experienced in Maharashtra's Koyna region following the impoundment of water in the Shivaji Sagar reservoir in 1962. More than 225 quakes of 4-6.3 magnitude on the Richter scale have been recorded in a pocket of 600 sq km in the past 50 years. The creation of a second reservoir at Warna, about 20 km from Koyna, in 1993 made the RTS more pronounced.

Scientists are now looking at this situation as an opportunity to understand earthquakes and this is to be done by drilling deep boreholes in the region. In March 2011, Minister for Earth Sciences Mr. Ashwani Kumar said that an MoU for the same had been signed in January 2011 with the German Research Centre for Geosciences on behalf of the International Continental Scientific Drilling Programme (ICDP) for an initial period of five years.

The same month, 70 experts — 26 of them from abroad — attended a workshop at the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI) on 'Deep Scientific Drilling to Study Reservoir Triggered Earthquakes at Koyna' to chalk out a project for studying the physical, geological and chemical processes and properties of this quake zone in real time. Funded by the Centre, the project involves drilling a seven km deep borehole and the cost was pegged between Rs. 200 and Rs. 400 crore. A few of the proposed drilling sites are inside Chandoli National Park, which, along with Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary, constitute the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. The results from the experiments that will be conducted will not be available till about a decade later.

In April, earlier this year, NGRI's senior principal scientist and project leader sought permission for site reconnaissance in the Chandoli National Park from the state Forest Department (FD). The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife (PCCF) Maharashtra gave the permission and also forwarded the letter of permission to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) which then referred the project to the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL). According to the PCCF, his permission was purely for reconnaissance purposes and it did not allow any scientific experiment, digging or removal of stones.

The NGRI team, meanwhile, conducted a survey from 29-31 May. Officials explain that the teams will continue to examine different sites for feasibility. It will take another two years to pinpoint the most suitable site and start drilling. They have said that they are trying to avoid the Sahyadri TR but if there is a need to drill there, then they will seek all the necessary permissions.

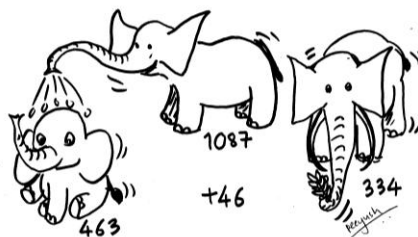
Concern has, however, been expressed over the impact this will have on the forests and the wildlife here. The drilling will require heavy machinery. Road construction and vehicular movement apart, this will necessitate supply of water and electricity to the core of the tiger reserve through pipelines and power pylons. Aggressive chemicals are often used to clean materials brought up in drilling mud and these, it is feared, will cause substantial chemical pollution of the area.

Source: Jay Mazoomdaar, 'Tigers may soon feel the tremors', *Teelka*, 16/06/12.

Contact: **Asst. Conservator of Forests** (Wild life), Forest Department, Koynanagar, Taluka Patan, Satara – 415207, Maharashtra.
Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra State, Dr. Ambedkar Bhawan, 4 & 5th Floor, M.E.C.L. Building Seminary Hills & Campus, Nagpur – 440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-2526758 / 2530126. Fax –2510671. Email: cfwl@nagpur.dot.net.in -

ORISSA

Elephant population rises in Orissa



Despite the death of 149 elephants, mostly due to poaching and electrocution during the last two years, the population of elephants in Orissa has increased to 1930. This comprises

334 tuskers, 1087 females, 46 animals of unknown sex and 463 calves. The previous census, conducted in 2010 showed the elephant population at 1886 comprising 332 tuskers, 1064 female, 42 of unknown sex and 448 calves. While the population rose in five regions - Angul, Rourkela, Baripada, Berhampur and Bhubaneswar - the number has declined in the three regions of Bhawanipatna, Sambalpur and Koraput. No elephant was sighted in seven other divisions.

The male-female ratio of elephants in the state was 1:3.33, while the national average is 1:4. While 51 elephants died in 2009-10, the casualty figure in 2010-11 and 2011-12 was 83 and 66 respectively. At least 21 elephants have died in 2012.

The three-day elephant census was carried out in 38 forest divisions on June 1, 2 and 3, 2012 and about 7,000 people were involved.

Source: 'Pachyderm population on the rise in Odisha', www.pragativadi.com, 29/06/12.

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

RAJASTHAN

Ranthambhore and Sariska TR buffer zones notified

The buffer zones of the Ranthambhore and Sariska Tiger Reserves have been notified. As per the notification issued under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, a 298 sq km of buffer area has been added to the Ranthambhore TR while it is 392 sq km for the Sariska TR.

The Forest Department (FD) has said that the consent of villagers has been taken before earmarking the buffer zones, as some land also happens to be revenue land.

Source: 'Ranthambhore, Sariska buffer zones notified', www.economictimes.indiatimes.com, 10/07/12.

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

UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister for promotion of wildlife tourism in the state

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr Akhilesh Yadav has directed the Forest Department (FD) to take steps to promote wildlife related tourism in the state. While reviewing the various schemes and projects of the FD, he told the department to chalk out a plan for the development of National Chambal Sanctuary, Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Sarsai Nawar and Sita Dwaar to promote tourism as well create employment opportunities for local people.

The CM also asked for the development of Lake Bahosi Bird Sanctuary, Kannauj, and the Nawabganj Bird Sanctuary and to provide upgraded facilities to tourists. He has asked the FD to speed up the work on the Lion Safari in Etawah, for which the government has already sanctioned Rs. five crore in this year's budget. To promote tourism in Dudhwa, he said, the watch-towers, forest rest houses and roads in the park should be renovated. Besides, a sum of Rs. five crore has also been sanctioned for the development of the Dudhwa National Park (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 3).

Source: 'Forest department to promote eco-tourism in Uttar Pradesh', *The Times of India*, 28/06/12.

Contact: **Director**, Dudhwa National Park, Dist. Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 05872-252106. Fax: 05872-252106
Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, LUCKNOW - 226 001. Tel: 0522-206584(O), 237715 & 223015(R). Fax 0522-222061/ 206188

WEST BENGAL

Special Tiger Protection Force for Buxa Tiger Reserve

A Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) comprising of local people and foresters will

be formed in the Buxa Tiger Reserve (TR) under the guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). The Forest Department (FD) plans to pick 112 youth aged between 18 and 25 from among the villagers to launch the force, which will be headed by an Additional Divisional Forest Officer. The youth will be divided into four groups. Each group will have a Range Officer and two Beat Officers.

The youth will be trained in forest rules and provided with arms to take on poachers and timber smugglers. The main task of the STPF will be to prevent timber smuggling by road and by water ways in the reserve. It would also gradually build an intelligence network on wildlife related crimes in the region.

Source: 'Local hands to protect tiger', *The Telegraph*, 25/06/12.

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

139 humans killed in elephant attacks in West Bengal in the last two years

A total number of 139 people were killed in elephant attacks in West Bengal over a two year period of January 2010 – 2012. Of these the deaths in North Bengal was 88 while the remaining 51 deaths were reported from South Bengal. Another 425 people were also injured by wild elephants in this period.

The information was provided recently in the state assembly by the State Forest Minister, Mr Hiten Burman. He also noted that the state had disbursed a compensation of about Rs 1.44 crore for the loss of human lives and injuries in elephant attacks. Rs one lakh is given in cases of death of a person and Rs 50,000 to each of those rendered immobile.

Additionally, elephants are estimated to have damaged crops over an area of 8,054 hectares in this two year period and the compensation disbursed for crop loss was Rs 2.85 crore.

The same two year period also saw the death of 63 elephants. Of the 49 elephant deaths in North Bengal, 27 were natural and the rest accidental, but in South Bengal of 14 deaths, seven were natural and as many accidental.

The total elephant population in Bengal is said to be 652 elephants, of which a majority of 529 is found in North Bengal. The state government is also reportedly planning two elephant rescue centres of 100 acres each - one in South Khayerbari in North Bengal and the other in Nayagram under West Midnapore district in South Bengal. Arrangements are also being made to increase the number of 'Kunki elephants' in the state.

Source : '63 elephants die in 2 years in Bengal', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 21/06/12.

Dudhwa NP to get six *kunkis* from Jaldapara WLS



Six elephant calves - aged between two and five years - that were rescued from various places and raised in Jaldapara are to be permanently shifted to Dudhwa National Park (NP) in Uttar Pradesh for forest patrolling. Relocation would be carried out by the end of June though it will be another three to four years before they can take on full-fledged patrolling duty.

Of these six calves, Balasundar was rescued from the banks of the Balasun river in 2007 and Rohini was found in Rohini tea garden in 2008. Titi was rescued from the Torsha river in 2009 and Teesta from the Teesta river the same year. Urmi was found in 2010 from Charabari village near Bagdogra and Saili was rescued from Saili tea garden in 2008.

Jaldapara has 60-odd *kunkis* of whom 30 are on forest duty now. Before this,

in 2007, six female *kunkis* from Jaldapara were relocated to Dudhwa NP for patrolling and two were relocated to a zoo in Japan in 2006.

Source: 'Six Jaldapara jumbos to be shifted - Calves to take up kunki duties in Uttar Pradesh', *The Telegraph*, 02/06/12.

Contact: **DFO**, Jaldapara WLS, Cooch Behar Division, P.O. & Dist. Cooch Behar, West Bengal. Tel: 03582-227185. Fax: 227185. Email: dfocob@dte.vsnl.net.in
CWLW, Government of West Bengal, Vikas Bhawan, North Block, Salt Lake, Calcutta 700 091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3346900/3583208. Fax: 3345946. Email: wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

India seeks US\$ 30 million from World Bank for wildlife management, protection



India has asked for financial assistance of around \$30 million from the World Bank for protection of wildlife and habitat management through regional cooperation with its South Asian neighbours. The money, requested as a loan from the regional window of World Bank's International Development Association, will be used in building capacity to tackle illegal trade of animal parts in the region.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has prepared an Environmental and Social Management Framework for the detailed wildlife project, through which the money will be utilised. The government's Wildlife Crime Control Bureau would utilise the funds to strengthen itself and also enhance sharing of information and technical expertise with other countries.

Bangladesh has already initiated such a programme with World Bank assistance and Bhutan would soon be following in their steps.

Source: Avishek G Dastidar, 'Wild life protection: India seeks \$30-mn World Bank loan', *The Indian Express*, 25/06/12.

CII signs MoU with the World Bank for tiger conservation

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the World Bank to improve the dialogue on sustainable development and conservation between business, conservation stakeholders and decision-makers in policy.

The new initiative that will also promote tiger and biodiversity conservation is called the India Wildlife Business Council (IWBC). Its objective will be to reverse the massive dwindling of the tiger population owing to rapid industrialisation, habitat fragmentation, poaching and illegal trade.

Source: Narayan Lakshman, 'CII-World Bank tiger conservation platform announced', *The Hindu*, 29/06/12.

SC Bans tourism in core areas of tiger reserves

In an order passed in the last week of July, the Supreme Court (SC) has banned all tourism in core areas of tiger reserves. The order was passed on a petition by conservationist Ajay Dubey that sought a directive to the states to notify the buffer and peripheral areas of tiger reserves to prevent tourism in the core areas.

In April, the court had asked the states of Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Karnataka and Maharashtra to issue the notification. Except for the states of Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Arunachal Pradesh none of the states have filed affidavits or notified the core areas yet.

The court has now given all the states another three weeks to notify the core

areas and file their affidavits. If the affidavits are still not filed at the end of these three weeks the court will initiate contempt proceedings and impose fines of upto Rs. 50000 on them. The court also said that the tourism guidelines put out by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (see accompanying story) will be taken up by the court in three weeks' time. The matter has been listed for its next hearing on August 22.

Source: J Venkatesan. 'Tourism in core areas of tiger reserves banned', *The Hindu*, 25/07/12.

Guidelines for tourism in protected areas

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has recently cleared a set of guidelines for tourism inside protected areas and submitted them to the Supreme Court in an ongoing case where several tour operators have pleaded that they be allowed to run their operations in core areas of tiger reserves.

All tourist operations within five km of the 600 plus protected areas in the country including tiger reserves will soon have to fork out a minimum of 10% of their turnover as a local conservation fee. This will be used to protect these areas and also to provide financial assistance to communities and people living around the PAs. All tourism operations running in core areas of tiger reserves and other critical wildlife habitats will be phased out in five years. Tourism will also not be allowed in the core area of any tiger reserve where forest dwellers have been relocated and the oustees will get priority in running tourism operations here.

However, small home-stay facilities run by local residents under approved eco-tourism plans won't be required to share their revenues. The state governments would be required to set up local advisory committees that would oversee the implementation of a state-level ecotourism strategy in each of the national parks and sanctuaries and monitor the tourist facilities within five km of the wildlife areas for adhering to the norms.

In the interim period of five years — even as tourism facilities are shifted out of the core areas of tiger reserves — the guidelines stipulate that state governments should give special space to community-based tourism in certain parts. In large wildlife areas, which are over 500 square km, about 20% of the territory would be allowed to be used for community-based tourism. For smaller parks and sanctuaries, 10% of the area can be used for

tourism for the interim five years. Pilgrimages inside national parks and sanctuaries too will be regulated, and the zones will remain open only on specific days — to be decided through an agreement between wildlife and temple authorities.

These norms were developed by a panel that included among others, the member secretary of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, Dr Rajesh Gopal and Director of the Centre for Science and Environment, Sunita Narain.

Source: Nitin Sethi. 'Tourism facilities near wildlife habitats to pay 10% of revenue', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 13/07/12.

Red list has 132 species of plants, animals as 'critically endangered' from India



The Red list of threatened species, prepared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), has listed 132 species of plants and

animals from India as 'critically endangered'. The critically endangered list includes 60 species of plants, 18 species of amphibians, 15 birds, 14 fishes and 10 mammals. The agency has listed 310 species as endangered ones, including 141 plants, 69 fishes, 38 mammals and 32 amphibians.

This year, the Saker falcon has been listed as endangered against the previous year's rating of vulnerable. The threat perspective faced by the River lapwing resulted in its classification as near-threatened from the earlier least concerned. The River tern has been moved to the near-threatened category from the least concern category and the Black-bellied Tern to the endangered from the near-threatened in the latest list. The Sinhoe's Storm-petrel, which was first sighted in India in Chavakad last year, has also been classified as the near-threatened. Last year, the species was classified in the least concerned category.

Of the total 63,837 species globally assessed, the IUCN classified 3,947 as critically endangered, 81 as extinct and 63 as extinct in the wild. In the lower risk categories, there were 5,766 species in endangered, 10,104 in vulnerable and 4,467 in the near threatened categories. Scientific data regarding 10,497 species was not available and hence classified as data deficient.

Source: 'Red list has 132 species of plants, animals from India', *The Hindu*, 21/06/12.

48 tiger deaths in the first half of 2012

The country has lost 48 tigers since January 2012. The largest number of tigers has been killed in the Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand and in the Tadoba Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra.

On May 15, Minister of Environment and Forests Ms. Jayanti Natarajan had disclosed that India had lost 32 tigers in the last five months. In the three weeks since her statement another sixteen tiger deaths were reported taking the total tally to 48.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has confirmed that 19 of these deaths are clear cases of poaching, while wildlife experts claim the number could be much higher.

Source: Rashme Sehgal, 'India has lost 48 tigers in 22 weeks', *The Asian Age*, 12/06/12.

NTCA asks for intensive monitoring in rhino-range states

In the view of rising incidents of poaching of rhinos, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has alerted the rhino range states of Assam, West-Bengal and Uttar Pradesh and asked them to institutionalize the monitoring mechanism of individual rhinos and record their daily location using GPS.

The NTCA has also appreciated the new rhino-monitoring mechanism set up in the Dudhwa National Park. The park has completed assigning numbers to its 28 rhinos on the basis of which day-to-day monitoring would be done. Assam and North-Bengal have also been asked to assign unique ID numbers to each rhino on similar lines.

A team comprising trained field staff is to be constituted for each range for the purpose of this exercise and each team will be equipped with GPS

and simple digital cameras. The members would regularly patrol the rhino area while photographing individual rhinos besides recording the GPS location.

NTCA has recommended the digitisation of the map of the protected area and rhino habitat while layering the forest cover and other salient geographical attributes besides beats and patrolling camps. The data will then be plotted on the map to keep track of the occupancy of the rhino and the pictures pooled to create a database of individual rhinos while assigning an unique identification number to each animal.

Source: 'NTCA wants States to get rhino IDs for safety', *The Pioneer*, 12/06/12.

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

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

Nepal launches drones for wildlife protection



The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Nepal has successfully tested two unmanned 'conservation drones' recently in the Chitwan National Park. The aircraft, with a two-metre (6.5-foot) wing span and a range of 25 kilometres (15.5 miles),

can remain in the air for 45 minutes, flying at an altitude of up to 200 metres.

The remote-controlled aircraft, being used for the first time in Nepal, would monitor the animals and poachers via cameras and GPS.

Source: 'Nepal launches drones to combat poachers', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 20/06/12.

The Forest Rights Act, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation

ORISSA

Tribal groups oppose plantation drive inside Chandaka WLS

The first week of July saw hundreds of tribal villagers protesting against a Forest Department (FD) plantation drive intended to cover about 72 hectares inside the Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary. The forest staff that had come for the plantation work was met with opposition from nearly 200 villagers at Bhalunka village in the sanctuary. Many of them were armed with sticks and traditional bows and arrows. An estimated 300 tribal families live in this area. Police forces rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

The villagers allege that the forest officials had been harassing them that the land the FD intends to use for the plantation is, in fact, their community graveyard. They say that they have been living in the area for decades and yet the FD has torched their houses in the name of the plantation drive and even had one person arrested on false charges. They have also alleged that the authorities had violated the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and have demanded an inquiry.

Forest officials have, on the other hand, dismissed the allegations saying that the land belonged to the FD. The FD also decided, in response, to convene meetings of the gram sabha as well as sub-division levels of the Forest Rights Committee to find a solution. While they have suspended their plantation drive they have also asked the tribal community to suspend their farm activities.

The tribal groups here have been seeking settlement of community rights apart from a review of their individual claims. In 2010, claims of the occupants and forest dwellers were settled through due process. The Sub Collector and the then DFO had carried out joint verification of the claims for land before the settlement was carried out. The Forest Rights Committee had received 81 applications, of which 51 were rejected. Of the 30 accepted, claims have been settled in favour of 27. The tribal groups however are reported to be

unhappy with the settlement and have been demanding more land claiming that they did not get their due, while residents of other settlements have got more.

Source: Len in Kumar Mallick & Sandip Bal. 'Cry against green drive', *The Telegraph*, 08/07/12
'Tribals' protest over land rights continues', *The New Indian Express*, 10/07/12.

Contact: DFO, Chandaka WLS, SFTRI
Campus, Ghatikia, P.O. Barmunda
Colony, Bhubaneswar – 751003. Tel:
0674-2440168

TAMIL NADU

Protests against Sathyamangalam TR continue

An estimated 5000 people from the 19 tribal dominated village panchayats including those of Thalavadi, Thiganare, Thinkalur, Panakkalli, Naithalpuram, Igalur, Thalamalai, Bainapuram, Hassanur and Germalam under Bhavani Sagar constituency, took to the streets of Sathyamangalam in the month of July to oppose the proposed Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve. Traffic in the entire region was disrupted till late in the evening on account of the protest which was organized by the tribal wing of the Communist Party of India (CPI), Pazhamkudi Makkal Sanghom (PMS)

The protest was inaugurated by the Thenkasi Member of Parliament, P Lingam. Bhavani Sagar MLA, PL Sundaram; Valparai MLA, V Arumugam; Campaign for Survival and Dignity leader CR Bijoy; CPI Erode district secretary, KR Thirunavukarasu; Mudumalai farmers' leader PT Varghese and Nilgiri-based human rights activist MS Selvaraj also addressed the gathering.

The protestors wanted immediate implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006 and sought permission to collect minor forest produce. They also wanted freedom to transport agricultural

products over forest roads and permission to kill wild boars which destroy their crops. They also demanded proper compensation for those who suffered losses due to the

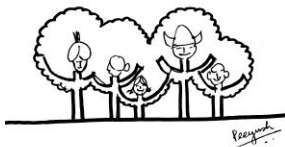
destruction of crops by wild animals. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 3, 2 & 1 and Vol. XVII, No. 6).

Source: 'Tribals protest to scrap tiger reserve project', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 10/07/12.

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

FRA update



May 24, 2012 Letter by MoTA to Chief ministers on FRA implementation

A letter was issued by Minister of Tribal Affairs, Mr Deo to chief ministers of various states on May 24, 2012 on various issues related to the implementation of the FRA. Electronic copy of the letter is available on <http://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/linkimages/24may20126713834206.PDF>

July 12, 2012 Guidelines regarding Implementation of FRA

On 12 July 2012, MoTA issued guidelines "which will facilitate robust implementation of the Act". The guidelines are available at <http://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/mainlinkFile/File1416.pdf>

July 20, 2012 Draft Amendment to FRA rules:

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has proposed to make amendments to the FRA rules, 2008. The amendments have been posted on the Tribal Ministry Website on 20 July 2012, inviting comments through email or by post by 19th August 2012. For more details, see <http://tribal.nic.in/index2.asp?sublinkid=1169&langid=1> for the announcement and <http://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/linkimages/gazette5368119889.pdf> for the draft amendments in Hindi and English.

Other Publications of Relevance:

Legislation Brief: Applicability of FRA in protected areas

A legislation brief on the applicability of Forest Rights Act in protected areas has been published by the Kalpavriksh documentation centre. Electronic copy of the brief is available at http://kalpavriksh.org/images/Documentation/Advocacy/Brief_FRAToPAs.pdf

A new report on community forest rights under Forest Rights Act

The report is an output of the community forest rights learning and advocacy process (CFR-LA) and is prepared by Kalpavriksh and Vasundhara with inputs received from groups and organizations of different states. An electronic copy is available at <http://fra.org.in/new/document/A%20National%20Report%20on%20Community%20Forest%20Rights%20under%20FRA%20-%20Status%20&%20Issues%20-%202012.pdf>.

'The Forest Rights Act, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation' special section is being revived with support from ActionAid. We invite readers to send us news and information about developments that link the FRA and various aspects of wildlife conservation in general and the protected area network in particular

Important Bird Areas Update



NATIONAL NEWS

Major vulture conservation initiatives for year 2014

Two major initiatives aimed at ensuring vulture conservation are expected to take off in the year 2014. This will include the releasing from breeding facilities of 30 young vultures and also the marking of three places in different part of the country as vulture safe zones. The birds that will be colour banded will then be released in these safe zones.

The tarai belt between Uttarakhand and Nepal, stretching from the Corbett National Park to the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary and covering an area of 30,000 sq kms, will be one of the 'Vulture Safe' zone. The Slender-billed and White-backed vultures are found in this area. Similarly a belt from Dibrugarh (Assam) to North Lakhimpur (Arunachal Pradesh) will also be conserved as a vulture safe zone whereas the third zone would be in central India, covering Chhattisgarh, where the White-backed and Long-billed vultures are found.

Source: 'Vulture conservation to boost up from 2014', *The Hindu*, 01/07/12.

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Coast Guard radar project on Narcondum Island could threaten Narcondum Hornbill

A proposal of the Coast Guard (CG) to install a radar on the Narcondum Island Wildlife sanctuary has drawn strong opposition for fear of the impact this could have on the indigenous Narcondum Hornbill. The CG proposal for the radar and a diesel supply source installation came up recently before the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL). This was opposed strongly by some members such as Dr MD Madhusudan of the Nature Conservation Foundation. A subsequent

field visit headed by Dr Asad Rahmani of the Bombay Natural History Society has also recommended the abandonment of the project.

A number of organisations including the Nature Conservation Foundation and Kalpavriksh, have written to the Union Minister for Environment and Forests, Ms Jayanti Natarajan, expressing concern over the impact this project could have on the extremely rare bird. Of the estimated population of 350 hornbills on the island only 161 to 185 (46-53%) are mature breeding birds with only 80 to 90 possible breeding pairs.

It has been pointed out that the CG claim that the installation would need only 0.67 hectares of land was incorrect. The conservationists have noted that 20 hectares of land would be directly affected and another 400 hectares or 60% of the island would be indirectly impacted. They have noted that the installation site is atop a hillock in the dense forest and access for installation and regular maintenance would need a two km road to be cut through the forest. This would involve cutting an unspecified number of trees resulting in considerable overall damage to the habitat.



Source: K Venkateshwarlu. 'Coast Guard radar project may make hornbills extinct', *The Hindu*, 07/07/12.

Contact: **CWLW** – A&N Islands, Haddo, Port Blair – 744102. A&N Islands

GUJARAT

Status quo to be maintained for Banni Grassland

The status of the Banni grasslands is likely to remain unaltered in the near future because it is caught between judicial orders, uncertainty over which department owns it, strong protests by resident maldharis (pastoralists) (*PA Update* XVIII, No. 2) and the political implications any activity may have in an election year. A recent meeting of revenue and forest officers with the Chief Secretary of the state, Mr A K Joti's failed to decide on a specific way forward and settle a recent jurisdictional dispute that cropped up between the two departments over the area which still belongs to the revenue department.

Observers say that the government is not interested in touching this sensitive issue because of the Assembly elections due in December. Several weeks ago, district level officials disagreed over who holds jurisdiction over the 2,497 sq km grassland in Kutch. As part of an approved working plan to regenerate the grassland, forest staff were readying the ground ahead of the monsoon so that grass could be planted. But revenue officials protested and the local maldhari community was also opposed to the plan for fear that their livelihoods would be compromised.

The 48 villages and 19 panchayats inside the demarcated grassland are elected entities but do not have any legal jurisdiction over the land although they host an estimated 16,000-plus people (most pastoralists) and about 60,000 livestock. A further complication was added when the grassland was declared a protected forest in 1955 but it has not been transferred to the forest department (FD).

When a subsequent Supreme Court ruling necessitated management or working plans for forests across India, the forest department drew up a working plan for Banni on behalf of the revenue department. It was finalised in 2009. By 2011-end, pastoralists feared they would lose access to grazing land and began protesting — the most visible was a rally of thousands of pastoralists in Bhuj on March 16 this year, demanding the working plan be trashed and they be given forest rights under the Forest Rights Act.

Source: 'Too hot to touch in election year, it's status quo for Banni grassland for now', www.indianexpress.com, 20/07/12.

Vulture numbers rise in Girnar hills

A recent vulture census conducted jointly by the Gujarat forest department and non-profit GEER Foundation has shown a significant increase in vulture population at Girnar hills in Junagadh district of Gujarat. The vulture census in Gujarat is conducted every two years and their population was found to have almost doubled during the census conducted this year on May 26 and 27.

131 vultures including 16 young ones, and 85 nests were spotted during the exercise. The species recorded include the Indian long-billed vulture, White-backed vulture and the Red headed vulture. During the last census conducted in 2010, presence of 69 Indian long-billed vultures and 26 nests had been recorded.

The birds were spotted on Girnar Hills and in the nearby Devaliya Park area. Red headed vultures were found in Bordevi area, three km from Girnar hills. The maximum concentration of the bird population and nests was exactly along the route of the proposed rope way from the base of the Girnar Hills to the Ambaji Temple and it is feared that, if built, this rope-way would have a disastrous impact on the vulture population here.

The increase in the vulture population here is said to be a result of efforts by several non-profits and the forest department officials, particularly to spread awareness against the use of diclofenac, an anti-inflammatory drug used on livestock, which has been the main cause of the steep fall in vulture populations all over the country.

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'Vulture numbers rise in Girnar hills', *Down to Earth*, 02/06/12.

MAHARASHTRA

Conditional clearance to the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link

The Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link (MTHL) that will connect Sewri to Nhava Sheva in New Mumbai has been given conditional clearance. The Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority (MCZMA) has listed 12 conditions to forward the Rs. 8800 crore project proposal to the

Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for its clearance. Concern has been expressed on the present proposed alignment of the link for the impact it will have, particularly on the Sewri Mudflats which are an Important Bird Area (IBA) (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 1).

The MCZMA has said the 22-km link will be allowed provided it does not affect the tidal flow of water between the high-tide line and the low-tide line. No reclamation would be allowed even for landing areas in the CRZ I, II, III and IV areas. The land link will have to be in the form of a bridge up to non-CRZ areas. The MMRDA has been asked to submit a mangrove replantation plan along with details of the place identified for the same. It will have to replant five times the number of mangroves cut or destroyed during the construction. Other conditions include obtaining permission from the Bombay High Court and the Forest Department to carry out construction in the mangroves and in the Sewri wetland area and an impact assessment study on the flora and fauna as well as the avifauna.

The MMRDA has informed the coastal authority that it has already undertaken the plantation of mangroves on a seven hectare patch of mudflats near Gavan village. It has also already obtained an NOC from the Department of Archaeology for the Gateway of India, Elephanta Caves and Sewri Fort.

Source: Clara Lewis. 'Conditional NOC for trans-harbour link plan', *The Times of India*, 12/07/12.

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

80% reduction proposed for Nandur Madhmeshwar WLS

The area of the Nandur Madhmeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary which is presently a little more than 10000 hectares might be reduced by 80%. It has been suggested that the sanctuary should only be restricted to an area of 1962.996 ha which is comprised of the land owned by the Irrigation, Revenue and Forest Departments. It is believed

that local people who have been impacted by the strict regulations of the sanctuary have urged for this reduction and their cause has been taken up by local politicians.

There is also confusion regarding land under the ownership of the Irrigation Department (ID). Although the area with the ID is indicated as 1757.929 ha, the department itself claims that they have only 971.39 ha area under their control. The ID is also reported to have requested that an area of 84.67 ha out of this 971.39 ha be excluded from the sanctuary area, since the same is required by them for their development works.

The total area slated for exclusion from the sanctuary is therefore a little more than 8177 hectares.

Source: 'Nandur Madhmeshwar Wild life Sanctuary to shrink 80%?', www.deshdoot.com, 05/07/12.

Contact: **DCF (WL)** Nashik, 78, Magh Sector, Sundarban Colony Old CIDCO Nashik 422005

ORISSA

New research and conservation initiatives at Chilika

The Orissa Government is initiating a number of new initiatives to ensure research about and conservation of the Chilika Lake. This will include a Rs. 3.21 crore state-of-the-art hi-tech monitoring system as part of which sensors would be installed at 10 strategic locations in the lake. These would telemetrically transmit data to the research centre on a real time basis every 15 minutes. Upgradation of visitor centre at Satapada at a cost of Rs. 51.48 lakh has also been approved.

Approval has also been granted for the strengthening of the wetland research and training centre under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) project and new legislation will be brought in to check pollution by curbing prawn cultivation and other activities. Eight new machines are to be procured to demolish illegal prawn farms in the environs of the lake.

The Chief Minister has, additionally, asked for a provision of financial assistance to primary cooperative societies of fishing communities. While Rs. 2 crore was given to 16

primary cooperative societies earlier, another Rs. 4 crore is to be distributed among 40 such societies. It was also decided that 3,500 highly efficient insulated ice-boxes will be distributed among members of the fishing community and fishing jetties are to be developed in the lake in order to boost export of fish products.

Source: 'State to strengthen wetland research, conservation', *The New Indian Express*, 20/06/12.

Contact: **Chilika Development Authority**, BJ-45, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa.
Fax: 0674 – 434485. Website: www.chilika.com

PUNJAB

Govt honours staff at Harike WLS that was injured in attack by land mafia

Three staff of the wildlife department that were injured at the Harike Wildlife Sanctuary, allegedly by the land mafia, backed by Gujjar nomads were publicly honoured by the state government recently. The incident had occurred in June 2011 when the three were seriously injured and three others including a police constable had suffered minor injuries.

The unarmed wildlife staff was accompanied by a bare-minimum number of police personnel, who often refuse to take along their service weapons and even declare that they do not have orders to fire. This attack, last June, was the third major attack on Harike's wildlife staff in recent years.

Source: Vikram Jit Singh. 'Punjab govt honours Harike bravehearts', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 06/07/12.

Encroachments removed from 40 acres at Harike WLS

In a major exercise to remove encroachments from the Harike Wildlife Sanctuary about 40 acres of land was freed from land grabbers,

permanent structures were demolished and an illegal barbed wire fencing was removed in the month of June. The encroachments were located in the confluence area of the sanctuary where Beas and Satluj rivers meet. Since only two police personnel were available with the sanctuary's wildlife staff to carry out the anti-encroachment drive, 15 more cops were requisitioned from the nearby Makhu police station and deployed at the sanctuary's entry point to prevent mobs from opposing the demolition squads.

Nearly 1,000 acres of the 86 sq km Harike sanctuary, falling in the revenue districts of Ferozepur, Tarn Taran and Kapurthala, is said to be under encroachment. Part of the reason for this, according to forest officials, is that the revenue authorities of the three districts had not made entries in respect of the sanctuary's territory in girdwari and khasra records. Only Ferozepur district has started the process of entering details of the sanctuary's territory into records and even that is incomplete.

Source: Vikram Jit Singh. '40 acres of Harike freed, structures demolished', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 14/06/12.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Harike Lake WLS, Near Police Station, Harike, Dist. Firozpur, Punjab. Tel: 0181 - 248409
Chief Wildlife Warden, Punjab, SC No. 2463-64, Sector 22-C, Chandigarh - 160022. Tel: 0172-2705828(O), 2675661(R). Fax: 2705828

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), UK

Quick NEWS

Western Ghats as World Heritage.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1342>
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/4280>

39 sites selected

Visit the following link

http://envis.maharashtra.gov.in/envis_data/files/W_G_july_marathi_final.pdf

to see the Marathi version of the 'Understanding report of the WGEEP' (related to Maharashtra) part of the Western Ghats.

Narcon-doom!

<http://greenhumour.blogspot.in/2012/07/narcon-doom.html>

Will the Narcondam hornbills survive on Narcondam island?

Smithsonian-Mason School of Conservation- Graduate/Professional Training Courses FALL 2012/SPRING 2013; 7 different courses - Starting October 2012 through May 2013

<http://conservationtraining.si.edu>

<http://www.un.org/depts/los/nippon/> The United Nations -

The Nippon Foundation of Japan Fellowship Programme for Human Resources Development and Advancement of the Legal Order of the World's Oceans

Andaman and Nicobar Environment Team (ANET). Opportunities for working in the Islands – 'Research Officer', 'Education Officer' and 'Administrative Officer'. Contact Tasneem Khan, ANET, Email: tasneem@anet.org

www.anet.org

Workshop on Management Tools for **environmental** NGOs from **Goa, Gujarat and Maharashtra**. Venue: American Center, Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai. Dates: 10- 12 September 2012. Contact: **Kaustubh Bhagat**, BNHS at 9323738622. Email: engosindia@gmail.com

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



A DECADE AGO

Protected Area Update 38, August 2002

MADHYA PRADESH

WII identifies four crucial forest patches for tiger conservation in Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh.

In a study entitled "Spatial pattern analysis of forested landscape between Kanha Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh) and Achanakmar Wildlife Sanctuary (Chattisgarh) for identification and evaluation of wildlife corridors" scientists at the Wildlife Institute of India have identified four forested patches: i) Motinala RF (71.1 km²), ii) North Phen RF (49.68 km²), iii) Marpha RF (35.1 km²) and iv) Dhaba-Bijora RF (80.91 km²) crucial for tiger conservation in the Kanha – Achanakmar Landscape (KAL). The KAL has been subjected to increased habitat fragmentation due to mounting biotic pressures.

The patches were identified by a study that combined remote sensing, GIS technology and field studies to characterize the landscape in terms of forest cover, forest patches, biotic pressure and connectivity between forest patches and their suitability as a habitat for tiger and prey species. The total area of the Kanha – Achannakmar Landscape is about 14,000 sq. km. of which approximately 50% is under forest cover.

The study has also pointed out that one of the major factors which affected tiger conservation adversely was the rapidly expanding road network, which caused corridor breaks, leading to habitat fragmentation and increased road induced wild animal mortality. The study was carried out by Drs. V.B. Mathur, S.A. Raven and A.M. Dixit.

Source: 'Great potential for tiger conservation efforts in some parts of India', *Indian Express*, 11/03/02

Ranthambore villages to move out of park

The four villages of Padra, Khatoli, Mordungri and Indala have reportedly agreed to move out of the Ranthambhore National Park. The first village

to move out from the buffer zone of the park will be Padra. The lone village in the core area, Indala, which has 20 families that are dependant on rainfed agriculture and animal husbandary will however need some more time as the residents want to be relocated at two different sites.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Rajasthan, Mr. RG Soni has said that the villagers are desperate to come out of the forests. There are no schools for their children, no avenues for employment and they felt that their development was being hindered. The package for rehabilitation and relocation was prepared by the state government in 2001, and clearance for the relocation is also being sought from the World Bank as there is a Bank funded Eco-development project that is presently going on here.

The shifting of the villages would be carried out partly with the funds from the Centrally Sponsored Schemes. An expense of Rs. 1 lakh is likely to be incurred on each family for this process.

The previous relocation of villages from Ranthambore was made in 1976, when the residents of 16 villages were moved out to Ganesh Nagar and Kailashpuri near the Khandar division. The new relocated villages are also to come up near Ganesh Nagar.

Source: Sunny Sebastian. 'Ranthambore villages to be shifted out', *The Hindu*, 07/07/02.



PERSPECTIVE

The 'dreaded' research permit

In recent times there has been much concern over the hurdles that scientists and researchers face from the forest department (FD) with respect to working in protected areas. Almost every researcher I have met has some unfortunate story to tell of their experience with the FD. The end result is that a researcher is either unable to implement a project (due to denial of permit) or does not have adequate time and support to do a thorough job even if the permit does eventually come through. The unfortunate consequence is that India today lags behind other countries in ecological and evolutionary research of wild populations. What little is accomplished is often of poor quality and not up to international standards. Researchers are also shying away from cutting-edge, novel and bold research as these projects cannot be implemented given these hurdles.

A case in point is my own research and the direction it has taken in recent times. When I joined the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) here in Bangalore, six and a half years ago, I was very enthusiastic about working and collaborating with the FD to address the numerous exiting questions pertaining to Indian biota. Over the years, however, this enthusiasm has pretty much vaporized due to the numerous hurdles faced by the members of my lab.

These has included the usual denial of permits/ delayed issue of permits (in one case by two and a half years), bureaucratic red tape such as signing of the memorandum of agreement

(MOA), exorbitant fees, and harassment in the field by local officers (including arresting researchers during fieldwork) (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 4).

All this seriously jeopardizes the PhD research of the student thereby endangering his/her future. Given this sad state, I have had to take the unprecedented step of stopping all work in protected areas. Most of my work and that of my students today, therefore, is outside protected areas and on non-scheduled species. This obviates the need for permits and protects my students from the vagaries of the FD.

Unfortunately, it is science and conservation that will be the loser because human dominated landscapes are very different from natural landscapes and some of the more exiting and fundamental questions can be address only in natural conditions.

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