

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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## EDITORIAL

### **The Amended Wildlife Act**

The parliament has finally passed the amended Wildlife Act and it now awaits the nod of the President. These amendments were long coming, and now that this has finally happened, there surely is a need to see what has been achieved. There are some very welcome steps and as would be expected disappointments and concerns as well. Here is an attempt at looking at some of the key issues:

- Though conservation efforts will be strengthened through measures such as the need to route requests for PA boundary changes through the Indian Wildlife Board, there continue to be no provisions for the comprehensive protection of threatened species across their entire range. Such protection requires not only a ban on hunting, but more importantly, the protection of the habitat of such species even outside protected areas, the source of threats such as pollution, dams, and mining. The Amended Act does not in any way provide for such protection. Given that a majority of individuals of many threatened species (including the tiger) may be found *outside* protected areas, this is a serious lacuna.

There is also the concern that the law continues to be soft on tourism and does not account fully for the threats that increased tourism could cause to wildlife and protected areas

- The section that relates to 'declaration of *intention* to create a protected area' implies stoppage of resource use activities by communities as soon as *intention* to declare an area protected is notified. This is an invitation to serious hostility and perhaps even clashes from communities who would be badly affected. It is also a potential waste of money in cases where alternatives are provided by the state government only to find that later, the rights concerned are allowed to continue
- The section on no commercial usage of resources from within protected areas, while undoubtedly inserted to control unsustainable extraction, is too rigid. It would create loss of livelihoods and therefore hostility and protest, even from

communities who are doing sustainable extraction, of which there are a number of examples from across the country. This whole issue needs to be looked at in a site specific context and a decision on whether any kind of commercial use by the local communities can be done or not should be based on impact assessment activities.

- The creation of the provision for the Community Reserves is potentially progressive and could certainly support communities that are conserving habitats and wildlife around them. The potential, however, is severely undermined by the provision that such Reserves cannot be declared on government land, and the provision that specifies a singular management structure for such Reserves. There exists a large body of documentation of several Community Conserved Areas across India and it is evident that they exist. Both, on community and government lands; with their own management structures, rules and regulations, and motivations. There is a fear that this diversity would get bulldozed if there is a monolithic approach imposed by the Centre.

(The edit is based on a letter sent by Kalpavriksh to the Minister, Environment and Forests. A larger note with comments on the amended act has also been prepared. For a copy of the same please write to the editorial address)

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ASSAM

#### **Veterinary camp held at Pobitara**

The NGO, Early Birds (EB) organised a free veterinary vaccination-cum treatment camp around Pobitara Wildlife Sanctuary from Nov 22-24 for the ninth consecutive year.

1200 cattle heads were vaccinated against HS+BQ diseases. The main beneficiaries were the villages of Hatimuria, Morabari, Rajamayng, Bordia and Sildubi. Huge quantities of veterinary medicines were also distributed free of cost. INTERVAT, a pharmaceutical company donated vaccines for 800 cattle during the camp.

Source: 'Early Bird's veterinary camp at Pobitara',  
*The Assam Tribune*. 02/12/02.

Contact: **Moloy Baruah**. EB, 26, Surujmukhi, PO  
Silpukhri, Guwahati - 781003. Tel: 0361-  
666353. Fax: 550158. Email:  
baruahm@iocl.co.in

#### **WWF project for elephant conservation in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh**

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - India, is working out a long term conservation action plan for the Asian elephant on the north bank of the River Brahmaputra, covering the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The 'Elephant conservation in North Bank Landscape' is a project under WWF International's Asian Rhino and Elephant Action Strategy (AREAS) program. It is based on extensive fieldwork, remote sensing, data provided by Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographical Information System (GIS) and official records.

The study covered an area of approximately 83,978 hectares, stretching from Barnadi in East Kamrup in Assam to the Dibang River in Arunachal Pradesh. An estimated 2300 elephants live in this area, of which 18,664 hectares is in Assam. Of this total area, 12% is notified as reserve forests, proposed reserve forests, wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. The study has reported that large scale destruction of forests caused by encroachment and other human and development activities especially along the Assam belt has exposed the elephant habitats to maximum risks. However, this North Bank Landscape (NBL) still constitutes prime elephant habitat in the region taking into consideration the number of elephants, their food availability and pattern of movement.

The study has stressed that habitat protection is vital, and that human-animal conflict can be substantially reduced by protecting forests and migration routes of the elephants, and where possible regenerating lost forests. The study has also listed ten important elephant movement corridors. These include the Pakke-Doimara corridor, Pakke - Papum corridor, Drupong-Doimukh corridor and the Subansiri - Dulung corridor. Charduar, Balipara and Bihali in Sonitpur district have been prioritised as conflict areas based on human and elephant casualty records from 1996 to 2002.

The project which was initiated in May 2001 is supposed to finish in December 2002, following which the final report will be released.

Source: Sivasish Thakur. 'WWF action plan to conserve elephants in Assam, Arunachal', *The Assam Tribune*. 29/10/02.

Contact: AREAS Programme, WWF - India, 172-B, Lodi Estate, New Delhi - 110 003. Email: [wwftcp@ndb.vsnl.net.in](mailto:wwftcp@ndb.vsnl.net.in)

### **Seven doves found dead in Arimora area of Kaziranga NP**

Wildlife staff manning the camp at Arimora area inside the Kaziranga National Park recovered carcasses of seven doves in a short span of time in November, causing concern over the possible causes.

The Director of the Park has however said that there was nothing alarming over these deaths which might have been caused by some sort of infection. He also ruled out poisoning as the cause of death. The Veterinary Officer of the park was assigned the task of finding the reason behind the death of the doves and his report is awaited.

A few years ago, several pelicans were found dead in the park and the emissions from the brick kilns located at the periphery of the park were held responsible for that.

Source: Bijay Sankar Bora. 'No clue yet to doves' death at KNP', *The Assam Tribune*, 24/11/02.

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga National Park.

### **Project to eradicate weed *mimosa* from Kaziranga**

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) have announced plans to remove the invasive weed, *mimosa*, from the Kaziranga National Park. The weed has been choking the grasslands and an estimated 120 hectares of the park have been affected by it.

The plant which is a native of South East Asia was introduced into the tea estates in Assam in the 1960s as an organic nitrogen fixer. The plants soon 'escaped' and have established themselves in the fertile grasslands of the national park. The thorny shrub has now created an impenetrable mat over three ranges of the park, choking edible grasses. It also releases a toxin called mimosin, which is said to be particularly harmful to rhinos and other herbivores like deer.

Earlier there was a plan for the use of a weedicide to control the growth of this weed (see *PA Update* 34 & 30), but the realisation now is that the best way to deal with the problem is to physically

uproot the plant. IFAW has committed US \$ 15,000 for this purpose and work along with the WTI and the Assam Forest Department has already started.

**Source:** 'Saving the rhino from other enemy', *The Statesman*, 23/11/02.

### **Poachers kill two rhinos in Kaziranga**

Poachers killed two rhinos in Kaziranga in the month of November. The first carcass was found on November 8 in the Panbari beat in Kohra range, while the other one was found shot on November 24 near the Arimora beat also in the same range.

Both the incidents happened near the northern boundary of park and it has been suggested that the poachers had probably crossed the Brahmaputra and escaped. These were the first cases of poaching of rhinos in the Kaziranga National Park in 2002.

Source:

[http://www.wti.org.in/html/news/wildnews/rhino\\_kazi\\_281102.htm](http://www.wti.org.in/html/news/wildnews/rhino_kazi_281102.htm)

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga National Park, PO Bokakhat, Dist. Golaghat – 785612, Assam

### **Attempts to guide elephant herd back to Kaziranga not successful**

The Assam Forest Department had in late November launched 'Operation Gajraj' to guide back to the Kaziranga National Park a herd of about 50 elephants that had lost its way. The FD was using 10 domestic elephants and several phandis (elephant catchers) since November 23 to drive away the herd that had strayed to the outskirts of Guwahati city. According to latest reports no success had been achieved in this.

The problem had arisen because of the crossing of the herd from the river island of Majuli in the River Brahmaputra to the highly populated area of Neemati. The Forest Department was trying to direct the herd back to Kaziranga (about 100 kms away) by crossing the river and taking the route back through Majuli.

Source: 'Assam grapples with elephantine problem', *Hindu Business Line*, 28/11/02.

## **Proposal for butterfly sanctuary in Garbhanga**

Dr. Jatin Kalita of the Zoology Department, Gauhati University has suggested that the Garbhanga Reserve Forest in Guwahati be declared a butterfly sanctuary.

A team of three researchers including Dr. Kalita have been working on three research projects on butterflies in the state. They recently discovered 30 species of globally endangered butterflies in this reserve forest. Dr. Kalita said that the forest has all the potential to be declared a sanctuary and its ideal location will also make it an attractive tourist destination, in addition to the fact that it can help to monitor the quality of Guwahati's environment.

Source: Ajit Patowary. 'Garbhanga unique site for butterfly sanctuary', *Assam Tribune*, 09/11/02.

## **Government denies Army charge that PAs are infested with rebels**

The Assam Government has denied the charge of the Army that the reserve forests and protected areas in the state had become safe havens for separatists. An Army statement issued recently had said that militants of the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) were using PAs, particularly Dibru Saikhowa National Park and reserve forests as hideouts and that this was also adversely affecting the eco-tourism industry.

The Assam Forest Minister, Pradyut Bordoloi in his statement took objection to this generalisation of the Army. He agreed that there were stray incidents of rebels taking shelter in the forests, but to say that tourist flow was affected was not correct. He said that the Assam Forest Department was doing its best to protect the forests and that, in fact, tourist flows to the state had increased.

Source: 'Pradyut: Assam reserves not infested with rebels', *The Sentinel*, 14/12/02.

**Chief Wildlife Warden** – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam.

## **GUJARAT**

### **Pumping water from Chovisa lake inside Wild Ass Sanctuary threatens nesting birds**

Farmers from Bhuravandh and Adesar near the Chovisa lake inside the Wild Ass Sanctuary have

been illegally pumping out water for their cumin crop with the help of diesel pump sets. This is likely to adversely impact a large number of birds like egrets and cormorants that regularly nest here.

The same thing had happened in the winter of 2001-02, eventually leaving the lake completely dry and leading to the death of thousands of birds and their young ones. The birds had nested atop the trees and bushes around the lake in the hope that the water will last till the chicks fledge and fly away. The diesel pump sets however dried the lake before this could happen. The adult birds too refused to leave their young ones resulting in large scale mortality.

It is feared that the situation will repeat itself this winter if some urgent action is not taken to stop the operation of the pumps.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'Mass suicide of birds likely to occur in Kutch, as farmers pilfer water from lakes in the protected areas', *The Times of India*, 19/11/02

**Chief Wildlife Warden** - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-30007. Fax: 21097

## **JHARKHAND**

### **Team to investigate elephant deaths in Betla NP**

A Central fact-finding team has been appointed to investigate the deaths of three elephants reported in the first fortnight of November from Betla National Park. Forest officials blamed a mystery disease, but NGOs pressed for a central probe when locals questioned the hasty burial and some alleged that one of the elephants had a bullet wound on the head.

The team, was to be led by a senior official from the Ministry of Environment and Forests and was to include five vets. The investigation was scheduled for the first week of December. Further details are however not known.

Source: 'Jharkhand elephant deaths to be investigated', [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com).

## **KARNATAKA**

### **Hon. Wildlife Wardens for all districts**

The Karnataka Government has appointed Honorary Wildlife Wardens (HWW) in all the 27 districts of

the state as part of its efforts to involve people in environment and wildlife conservation.

The responsibilities of the HWWs include identification and selection of areas suitable to be declared as protected areas and suggesting measures for their protection. They have also been asked to raise awareness among the people, particularly those living in or near PAs and to recommend steps for dealing with the problem of human wildlife conflict. (Detailed guidelines are available related to the appointment of HWWs, their responsibilities and the powers that they have. For a copy write to Kalpavriksh at the editorial address. )

Source: 'Wildlife wardens for all districts', *The Hindu*, 26/07/02.

### **Windmill project to affect Bhadra WLS**

A 75 MW wind power installation of 75 windmills on the hilltop ridge of Bababudangiri hills in Chikmagalur district has been opposed by wildlife and environmental groups on the grounds that the project and related activities will adversely affect the wildlife in and around Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary. The Bababudangiri hills range forms the outer rim of the Lakkavalli and Muthodi ranges which is where the PA is located.

Organisations like the Nature Conservation Guild (NCG) and Wildlife Conservation Action Team have argued that the construction of the 42 kms long road to the windmill site would impact animal movement here. They have also debunked the rapid environmental impact assessment (REIA) for the project saying that it contains insufficient data and that it is based on contradictory claims.

The Chennai based NEG Micon (India) Pvt. Limited is the project proponent.

Source: Keya Acharya. 'Gust of dissent against windmills in Karnataka's protected Bababudangiri hills', *Down to Earth*, 31/12/02.

Contact: **Praveen Bhargav**, Wildlife First!, No. 1235, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 26<sup>th</sup> A Main, IVth, T Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore - 560041. Tel: 080-6535763. Fax: 6535811. Email: pbsolus@vsnl.com

### **Butterfly Park planned in Bannerghatta**

A Rs. 3.8 crores butterfly park has been planned at the Bannerghatta National Park. The Central

Government has released Rs. 5 lakh for the project. Spread over an area of eight acres, the park will be developed in association with the Karnataka Zoo Authority, the Agricultural University and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment.

Source: 'Rs. 3.8 cr. Butterfly park planned', *Hindu Business Line*, 30/12/02.

**Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka**, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 18<sup>th</sup> Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993 / 3345846. Email: pccfwl@vsnl.com

## **KERALA**

### **SC adjourns Mullaperiyar dam hearing to March**

The Supreme Court (SC) has posted for final hearing in March 2003 of the case related to the raising of height of the Mullaperiyar dam. The petitions seeking this increase have been filed by the Janata Party President, Mr. Subramaniam Swamy and the Tamil Nadu Government (see *PA Update* 36).

The Kerala Government has opposed the raising of the height of the dam on the grounds of safety and to a certain extent on the fact that the rise in water level will adversely affect the forests and fauna of the Periyar Tiger Reserve (See *PA Updates* 34 and 30).

Source: 'SC adjourns Mullaiperiyar dam case to March', *The Hindu*, 06/12/02.

### **Agency selected for developing Ecotourism and Wildlife Master Plan for Kerala**

The international consulting agency, KPMG, has been selected for the preparation of the Ecotourism and Wildlife Master Plan for the state of Kerala. In June 2002, the State Government had invited prequalification bids from consultants having experience and expertise in preparing ecotourism and wildlife master plans (see *PA Update* 38). Interested parties had made presentations before the State Department of Tourism, in September. Those invited included the following: KPMG, EQUATIONS, DD Associates & The Designers, CRISIL, and. Pannell Kerr Forster Consultants Pvt. Ltd.

The Director, Department of Tourism, had then informed the short-listed consultants to submit Technical and Financial Bids for the preparation of

Ecotourism and Wildlife Master Plan for Kerala. The consultants who were short-listed were KPMG, EQUATIONS and DD & Associates. The financial bids were opened in December 2002 and the contract was finally awarded to KPMG since it was the lowest.

Source: Joe A Scaria. 'Kerala to draw up eco-tourism plan', *Economic Times*, 20/11/02

Syed Liyakhat. Email dated 13/01/03.

Contact: **Equations**, 198, II nd Cross, Church Rd., New Thippasandra, Bangalore 560 075 Karnataka. Tel: 080 - 25282313 / 25292905. Fax: 25282313. Email: liyakhat@equitabletourism.org

**Chief Wildlife Warden** – Kerala, Vazhudaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-322217 / 204896. Fax: 325804.

## MADHYA PRADESH

### Rules issued for *Lok Vaniki* project

The Madhya Pradesh (MP) government has recently issued Lok Vaniki (people's forestry) rules under the Madhya Pradesh *Lok Vaniki* Act 2001. These rules will facilitate growth of private forestry (by private land owners and panchayats) in the state. The panchayats can get revenue land as *Lok Van* for forestry purposes. A salient feature of the act is the appointment of Chartered Foresters for making the management plans of the tree-clad areas under its purview.

Chartered Foresters can be independent forestry professionals who will be authorised to make management plans for private forests.

Source: 'Madhya Pradesh issues Lok Vaniki rules', *Inform*, Oct-Dec, 2002.

Contact: **Mamta Borgoyary**, *Inform*, RUPFOR, Winrock International India, 7, Poorvi Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi – 110057. Tel: 011-26142965. Fax: 26146004. Email: mamta@winrockindia.org. Website: www.rupfor.org

Contact: **CWLW**, MP, Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0755-557371/ 550391. Fax: 011- 761102.

## MAHARASHTRA

### State opposes SC ruling for eco-sensitive area in Matheran

The Maharashtra State Government has opposed the recent Supreme Court directive for declaring 498 sq. kms of Matheran as an eco-sensitive area (ESA) under the Environment Protection Act - 1986 (see *PA Update* 32). It has instead recommended that the area be reduced to 117sq. kms and a report detailing this has been prepared by the MMRDA.

The local Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA, Suresh Lad and Matheran Municipal Council Chiefs have approached NCP Chief, Sharad Pawar, who has reportedly assured them that he would take up the matter with Union Minister for Environment and Forests, TR Baalu. Their main contention is that the declaration of the eco-sensitive area over such a large expanse will deprive Matheran's local residents of basic facilities.

Organisations like the Matheran Bachao Samiti (MBS) and the Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG) who have been instrumental in getting this protection for Matheran, have said that the ESA is basically meant for the benefit of the local people. It checks uncontrolled development, curbs pollution, bans quarrying and mining, and restricts multi-storeyed constructions.

Samir Mehta of the MBS has clarified that there is widespread misunderstanding that the notification will ban normal activities and that this had fuelled the opposition. The biggest losers are likely to be the real estate developers whose expansion and development plans will be severely curtailed because of the notification. (Also see Editorial: *PA Update* 36)

Source: Satish Nandgaonkar. 'State opposes SC's Matheran eco-zone ruling', *Indian Express*, 15/10/02.

Contact: **Samir Mehta**, Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG), 4, Kurla Industrial Estate, LBS Marg, Mumbai – 400086, Maharashtra. Tel: 022 – 25798638. Fax: 25771459. Email: samir@beag.net

### Plastic, garbage clearance drive in Matheran

The Municipal Corporation of Matheran, at the behest of the Matheran Bachao Samiti (MBS), launched a garbage clearance drive here

Starting in September, all forest trails and points were cleared of all plastic and other solid

waste. The garbage was then packed and stored, to be carted away to the plains by a private company that has been contracted for the purpose. The plastic bottles were compressed with the help of a machine, waste paper was being separated and so was wet garbage that is to be turned into compost.

It has been decided to now clear the garbage on a daily basis from the forests and also from the local hotels and lodges, who have agreed to pay Rs. 30 per room per month for the service. The Corporation has also added 60 contract workers to its permanent staff of 25 workers for the purpose.

The staff have been taught how to crush bottles by experts from the Indian Council of Plastics in the Environment (ICPE), an organisation floated by the plastics industry to deal with the problem of plastics in the environment.

Source: Gunvanthi Balam. 'Plastic clearance drive in Matheran', *The Times of India*, 19/10/02.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden** – Maharashtra, Jaika Building, Civil Lines, Nagpur – 440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 – 526758 / 530126.

## MANIPUR

### Special measures being taken to save Loktak Lake

The Loktak Development Authority (LDA) Minister, Smt. Leima Devi has announced ten measures to save the Loktak Lake. These are the to: (1) Draft a Loktak Protection Act, (2) Construct a 'ring bund' all around the lake periphery, (3) Convert the *phumdi* vegetation mass into manure, bio-gas, etc., (4) Develop a Water Sports complex in the lake, (5) Develop tourist interest spots and to build tourist rest houses, (6) Construct Loktak guest houses in catchment hill areas, (7) Plant trees on the banks of feeder streams, (8) Introduce/induct tourist boats, (9) Plant flowers, medicinal plants and to encourage fishery, and (10) Launch public awareness campaigns.

Source: 'LDA to take up ten measures to save Loktak Lake', *Pokanpham*, 22/11/02.

Contact: **Salaam Rajesh**, Sagolband Salam, Leikai. PO: Imphal-1, Manipur. Tel: 0385-222395, Email: salamrajesh@rediffmail.com; salraj\_imp@yahoo.com; **Mr. Manihar**, Project Director, LDA, Email: lida@neline.com

**Chief Wildlife Warden** - Manipur, Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795001, Manipur. Tel: 03852 - 220854 / 285385.

## MEGHALAYA

### Tura winter fest held in November

The Tura Winter Fest was held in the first half of November at Daribokgre near the Nokrek National Park. Promotion of eco-tourism was one of the themes of the festival that was organised by the Meghalaya Tourism Department in collaboration with the West Garo Hills Community Resource Management Society, a project under IFAD.

Those who addressed the function included Debora C Marak, Minister for Mining and Geology; KN Momin, West Garo Hills District Officer; Dr V Darlong, Regional Director, Ministry of Environment and Forests and Dr. Jimmy Momin, Veterinary Officer.

Source: 'Tura winter fest commences', *The Assam Tribune*, 15/11/02.

## ORISSA

### Chilka removed from Montreaux Record of Ramsar sites

The Chilka Lake has been removed from the Montreaux Record of Ramsar sites. This follows remedial measures by the Chilka Development Authority (CDA) for the restoration of the ecology of the lagoon's ecology (See *PA Updates* 38, 36, and 34). Those Ramsar sites are put on the Montreaux Record, 'where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur'.

The purpose of the Montreaux Record 'is to identify priority sites for positive national and international conservation attention.

In June 1993, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) had requested that the lake be placed on the Record as it was undergoing adverse changes in its ecological character. Number of factors had been identified that contributed to this situation.

A Ramsar Advisory Mission, which visited the lake in December 2001 to review the management actions undertaken by the CDA, had concluded that the site could be removed from the Record.



Source: 'Chilka removed from Ramsar record', *The Hindu*, 16/11/02.

**Contact: AK Patnaik.** CDA, BJ-45, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 – 434485. Email: ajitpattnaik@hotmail.com  
Website: www.chilika.com

### **Threat to turtles from fertiliser plant at Paradip**

It is feared that the effluents generated by the Diammonium phosphate (DAP) plant of Oswal Fertiliser and Chemicals Ltd. at Paradip would affect the marine food chain and habitat of the Olive Ridley turtles that nest on the beaches of Gahirmatha. According to the Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO), this plant continues to operate in blatant violation of the closure orders passed by the State Pollution Control Board in June 2002.

The plant reportedly discharges harmful effluents like phospho-gypsum, fluorine, and sulphuric acid, which have affected the flora and fauna of the Mahanadi delta and even places like Satabhaya and Barunel inside the Marine Sanctuary. Dead fish have been noticed floating here on the days that effluent is released from the plant. The WSO further says that a thick crust of phospho-gypsum has been deposited at the Mahanadi river mouth, preventing the migration of hilsa fish.

The Oswal plant was started in 2000 and has always been clouded with controversy. The Paradip Port Trust too had filed a complaint against the plant, claiming that the discharges were affecting the health of its employees.

Source: 'Effluents threaten Olive Ridley turtles', *The Hindu*, 06/11/02.

**Contact: Biswajit Mohanty,** Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack - 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671-334625. Fax: 610980. Email: biswajit@cal.vsnl.net.in

### **Steps suggested to protect dolphins from tourism in Chilika**

At least 15 rare Irrawady Dolphins found in Chilika lake have been killed in the last couple of years because of the tourism boom (see *PA Update* 36). Experts have urged for urgent steps that will deal with the problem if the small population of 50 odd dolphins that are found here is to survive.

Some suggestions have now been made by the Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO). It has been suggested that the state government should step in

and urge the boat operators through some incentives or subsidy to replace their noisy and harmful Lombardini engine with outboard marine (OBM) engines which have short propellers. There should be self-regulation by the boat association to allow only a limited number of boats to leave in a batch for dolphin sighting. No boat should chase or come too close to a dolphin. The Forest Department should also post a patrol boat during the tourist season to ensure that the dolphins are not chased, surrounded or killed.

Source: Biswajit Mohanty, Press Release dated 16/11/02.

Contact: Biswajit Mohanty, WSO, see above.

### **Community patrols in Chilika yield bird traps, nets**

Members of the NGO, Wild Orissa, wildlife staff of the Orissa Forest Department and members of two village bird protection committees conducted surprise checks in the Kalpuda waters of the lake for detecting illegal trapping and poaching of birds here. The bird protection committees that participated were the Sri Sri Mahavir Pakshi Surakhshya Samiti (SSMPS) of Mangalajodi village and Muktesar Pakshi Surakhshya Samiti (MPSS) of Sundarpur village.

The daylong exercise that was carried out on November 22 resulted in the seizure of 25 nets along with the bamboo stands used for supporting the nets. The nets are made of thin plastic strings. A number of nooses are made of these, which in turn are hung from bamboo poles. The nets are almost invisible to the naked eye and lead to a great deal of casualties as far as the birds are concerned.

The SSMPS that is mainly made up of former poachers and bird trappers had been constituted in the year 2000 (see *PA Update* 34 and 32). Ever since it has worked very hard at controlling the poaching of birds in Chilika. It has also been reported that the number of birds found in the Mangalajodi waters where the society works has gone up sharply in the last couple of years. The estimated count of birds this season here was about 2.5 lakhs, when in the past it has been around 15,000.

Wild Orissa has further suggested that this area is a prime area for the development of eco-tourism, and efforts should be made in this direction. The Society is also conducting awareness programmes, particularly among children in and around Mangalajodi. School children are regularly taken on field trips for monitoring waterfowl habitats.

Recently, in August and September, an essay competition was held for children in five schools in the area. The theme of the competition revolved around the lake, its birds and their habitat and nearly 1000 students participated.

Source: Email from Nanda Kishore Bhujbal, Wild Orissa

Contact: **Nanda Kishore Bhujbal**, Wild Orissa, Plot 3A, Janpath, Satyanagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674-512044. Email: wildorissa@hotmail.com

### **Coast Guard launches operation for protection of Olive Ridley turtles**

The Indian Coast Guard has launched 'Operation Oliver' for the conservation of the Olive Ridley Turtles on the Orissa coast during its nesting season. Two ships and a hovercraft acquired at a cost of Rs. nine crores and one helicopter are being deployed by the Coast Guard for the purpose. Dornier aircraft based at Kolkata and two ships berthed at Paradip too would be used in the conservation effort.

The Chief Minister of the state has suggested that fishing along the mass nesting sites be banned from January till the end of March. The state government would also ensure that there is no lighting in the coastal areas. The Coast Guard has also urged the government to request the National Remote Sensing Agency not to announce the potential fishing pockets in the prohibited fishing pockets off the Orissa Coast: the Gahirmatha beach, Devi river mouth and Rushikulya so that trawlers do not crowd these areas, leading to high turtle mortality.

An awareness drive has been launched to educate fishermen about the need to use turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in their fishing nets. Of the 380 trawlers in Paradip, 180 have still not installed the TEDs. It is reported that one of the biggest threats comes from trawlers based in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. Nearly 500 of these come to the prohibited waters during the peak fishing season. The District Commander of the Coast Guard based at Visakhapatnam has been asked to take up the matter with the AP Government and also to keep a close watch on the movement of trawlers without TEDs.

Most of these decisions were taken at high level meeting to discuss the issue that was held recently in Bhubaneswar. Those who participated included the CM of Orissa, Navin Patnaik and

Commander Coast Guard Region (East), Commodore RS Vasani.

Source: 'Coast Guard to the rescue of Olive Riddleys', *The Hindu*, 09/12/02.

'Coast Guard's Operation Oliver to protect turtles', *Indian Express*, 10/12/02.

### **Tourist flow to Bhitarkanika to be regulated**

The Orissa Forest Department has taken a decision to restrict the flow of tourists to the Bhitarkanika National Park. The decision was taken keeping in mind the heavy tourist traffic that has been seen here in this season.

It was decided that only 200 tourists per day from both Chandbali and Rajnagar entry points will be allowed inside. A decision was also taken to close the park to outsiders during the census operations that were to be conducted from January 6 to 11. Earlier the crocodile census was limited to Dangmal but this time it was to be extended to Chandbali, Rajkanika, Jamboo and the Mahanadi Delta area.

Source: 'Tourist flow to Bhitarkanika to be regulated' *The New Indian Express*, 16/12/02.

Contact: **Arup Nayak**. Email: bravo\_123@satyam.net.in

**Chief Wildlife Warden – Orissa**, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674-513134 / 515840. Fax: 512502

## **RAJASTHAN**

### **Locust control hits wildlife forms**

The locust invasion into India from Africa and other parts of Asia which is reportedly under control, has adversely affected a large number of wildlife forms that were dependant on the locusts. This was recently stated by the Director General of Police of Rajasthan, Mr. Shantanu Kumar who also has a keen interest in wildlife and the environment. He said this while delivering the Kailash Sankhala Memorial lecture in Jaipur to mark Wildlife Week celebrations in October.

He pointed out that migratory birds like the Common Grey Quail, and birds of prey like Harriers were being seen in much reduced numbers as they were dependant on and would follow the locust swarms. He said that further damage had been done

by the agricultural extension practices. The specific example cited was that of the rare Imperial Sandgrouse from most of Rajasthan which was now confined only to the Gajner Wildlife Sanctuary in the Bikaner district. The reason for the disappearance of this bird from the rest of Rajasthan has been attributed to the absence of the seeds of 'bakaria', a grass variety which comes up after the monsoon showers. The grass has reportedly disappeared after the advent of the waters from the Indira Gandhi Canal system and the changed farm practices, he said.

Source: 'Locust control hits wildlife forms', *The Hindu*, 08/10/02.

### **Meeting discusses alternative sources of water for Keoladeo**

A group of experts met in late November in Bharatpur for an open discussion, 'Hydrological needs of the Keoladeo National Park'. The main point discussed was the need to get water from new sources for the park that has suffered severely because of successive droughts in the last few years.

It was reported that of the three rivers - Banganga, Ruparel and Gambhiri - which originally brought water to the park, the first two, now do not flow even during the monsoons. This year the Gambhiri too did not get enough water to supply to the national park.

Various suggestions have been made to get water to the park from other sources. One is to get water from the Yamuna canal and the Chambal river system, but this proposal will take at least three years to materialise. The other suggestion is to source the Gurgaon canal, but the water here is supposed to be highly polluted and will have to be treated before being let into the park.

Other issues discussed included the impacts of pesticides that were being used by farmers for growing crops on the dry riverbeds. It was reported that the latest victims of the pesticide poisoning included Sarus Cranes whose population has been crashing inside the park and elsewhere too.

The meeting had been organised by the Tourism and Wildlife Society of India (TWSI) and the Siddharth Singh Natural History Trust. Participants included Steven Landfried of the International Crane Foundation; Shantanu Kumar, DG Police, Rajasthan; RN Mehrotra, Chief Conservator of Forests; RN Meena, Irrigation Secretary; VD Sharma, Former PCCF; Krishna

Kumar, Hon. Wildlife Warden and Harsh Vardhan, General Secretary of the TWSI.

Source: Sunny Sebastian. 'Keoladeo park in danger, warn experts', *The Hindu*, 29/11/02.

Contact: **Director, Keoladeo Ghana NP**, Forest Department, Bharatpur- 321 001 Rajasthan, **Krishankumar Sharma**, GHNHS. Email: krishankumar\_advocate@yahoo.com

**Principal Chief Conservator of Forests**, Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur - 302001, Rajasthan.

## **TAMIL NADU**

### **Birds skip dry Vedanthangal**

The total failure of the monsoon in the Vedanthangal belt in the Kancheepuram district has led to the complete drying up of the lake. The migratory birds that come here every year have therefore given a skip to the sanctuary this time. Other 26 lakes in the region including Madurantakam lake too are completely dry.

More than 35,000 birds of various species and an estimated one lakh tourists had visited the lake in 2001 according to the Wildlife Warden of the sanctuary.

Source: K Subramanian. 'Winged visitors keep off dry Vedanthangal', *The Hindu*, 21/11/02.

### **Gulf of Mannar Project initiated**

A seven year programme for the conservation and sustainable use of the coastal resources of the Gulf of Mannar (GoM) Biosphere Reserve was initiated by the CM of the State, Ms. Jayalalitha in July 2002. The Rs. 134 crore project is being funded under a collaborative arrangement involving the Central Government, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Also see *PA Update* 30).

The objectives of the project are to be achieved through the establishment of an effective, integrated, long term biosphere reserve management program, characterised by the ethic of equitable stewardship and an enabling institutional policy within a regulatory and financial framework. 125 coastal villages have been chosen for the implementation of the project.

Six villages: Kunthukal, Naduthuru, Chinnapalam, Munthalmunai, Therkkuvadi and Thoppukadu which are dependant on Krusadai island (also see *PA Update* 39) for their survival have been chosen to ensure alternative livelihood to the fisherfolk. Eco-tourism activities have also been planned. Village level committees are to be formed to promote snorkelling and scuba diving. A glass bottom boat costing Rs. 2.84 lakhs has also been purchased for the purpose.

Source: PS Suresh Kumar. 'Marine park all set to become a reality', *The Hindu*, 18/07/02

## UTTARANCHAL

### Train kills five chital in Rajaji

Five chital have been mowed down by a train in Kansrao range of Rajaji National Park. Over the last few years a number of wild animals including at least 20 elephants have been killed by trains in the park. The Indian Railways in fact wishes to further develop for faster trains, which will certainly lead to a larger number of accidents.

A solution that is now being suggested is to drop the Raiwala-Kansrao section in favour of a new line running from Rishikesh to Dehra Dun via Doiwala. There is significant local demand in Rishikesh for this new track, for their own needs as well as for the infrastructure needs of the state

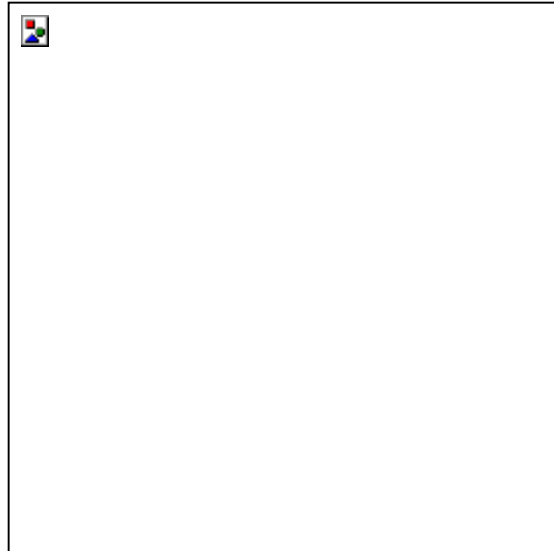
Source: 'Train kills five chital in Rajaji', [www.indianjungles.com](http://www.indianjungles.com), 26/10/02.

### Wildlife products seized, arrests made in Corbett

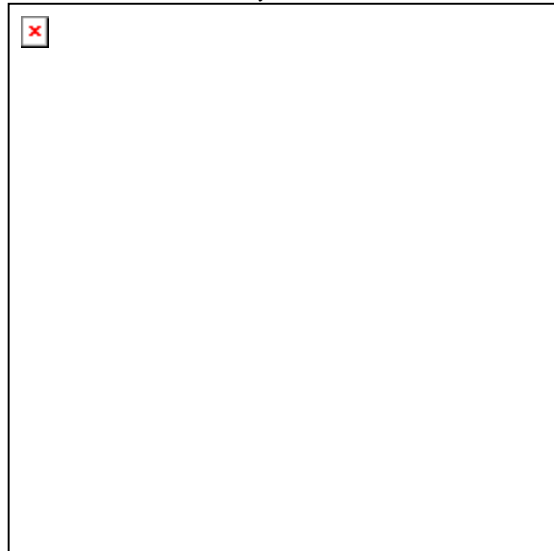
Five persons were arrested after 20 kg. of elephant tusks, a country-made pistol, rifle and two sambar deer antlers were recovered from them by forest authorities. The arrests and seizures were made during an operation that was titled 'Operation Thunder' that was conducted in the Corbett Tiger Reserve.

Park officials suspect that the arrested individuals are also responsible for several elephant deaths that occurred in the National Park in 2000-2001 (see *PA Update* 30).

Source:



Tusks, antlers recovered from poachers in Corbett', [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 05/10/02



### State to set up special anti poaching cell

The Uttaranchal Forest Minister, Mr. Nav Prabhat, has proposed the creation of a special anti-poaching cell in the state in view of the increasing incidents of poaching that have been reported here. This special cell would comprise forest personnel and the civil police.

Source: 'Special cell to deal with poachers', *The Tribune*, 31/08/02

## WEST BENGAL

## East Kolkata wetlands declared Ramsar site

The East Kolkata Wetlands which serve multiple purposes that include sewage treatment, fisheries, and vegetable farming have been declared as a Ramsar site. About 262 fisheries comprise the wetland that is spread over an area of 12,500 hectares.

The sewer water from the dry weather flow and storm weather flow channels are offloaded into the wetland *bheries* where the water is purified naturally. This water supports the various species of fish like the *rohu*, *katla*, *mrigel*, *bata*, nilotica and silver carp that are found here.

The wetlands have however been threatened because of large scale reclamation work, particularly for construction of houses and housing colonies. State government officials are hopeful that this will now stop. The Creative Research Group has prepared a management plan of the wetland in accordance with the Ramsar Convention guidelines.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was signed in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar and it provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and better use of wetlands and their resources. Presently there are 133 signatories to the convention and 1229 sites around the world covering a total area of 1059 million hectares have been brought under the Convention

(See NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA for the full list of Ramsar sites in India)

Source: Tarun Goswami. 'City wetland on world environment map', *The Statesman*, 28/11/02.

## Steps to protect Sundarbans from plastic

The West Bengal State government has announced a ban on carrying plastic bags to the Sundarbans. The area has become more accessible to tourists (see adjoining story) and the plastic problem too has increased.

In an effort to enforce the ban, the Minister for Sundarbans Development has called for a meeting with boat operators, who would be asked to stop passengers from carrying plastic bags. A penalty is to be slapped on an operator if his passengers litter the forest and the waters will non-biodegradable plastic items. For repeated offences an operator could even face cancellation of his license.

Steps are also being taken to deal with the problem of increasing sound pollution. There are

plans to introduce special mechanised boats that produce less noise in the area.

Source: Deepankar Ganguly. 'Ban on plastic to save Sundarbans mangrove', *Telegraph*, 17/11/02.

Contact: **Director**, Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve, Bikash Bhavan, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, North Block, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3211750. Fax: 3211529 Email: atanu\_raha@hotmail.com

## Jharkhali to be new tourist site in Sundarbans

The Department of Sundarbans Development of the West Bengal Government has taken up a scheme to project Jharkhali as the new tourist destination replacing Sajnekhali. It will now act as a tourist hub along with Sagar, Fraserganj, the crocodile project at Bhagabatpur and the tiger reserve.

Jharkhali is accessible only through the waterways and efforts are on to make available a road link that will allow visitors from Calcutta to reach here in a little over two hours. A 300 meter bridge on the River Hogol is also under construction and its completion is expected by March 2003, making the area within the reach of motorists from the Calcutta.

The construction of two more bridges at Petkulchand and Nimania in Kultali, at a cost of Rs. 14 crore would also be over by March. 14 bridges have been proposed at different places in the Sundarbans and seven have already been readied.

Source: Deepankar Ganguly. 'Ban on plastic to save Sundarbans mangrove', *Telegraph*, 17/11/02

Contact: **Director**, Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve, see above.

## Steps to control tourism in Singhalila

Fifteen Non Governmental Organisations, under the initiative of the Himalayan Nature and Adventure Foundation (HNAF) have launched an initiative to deal with the problems arising from excessive tourism in the Sandakphu region of the Singhalila National Park. An estimated 8000 to 10000 trekkers take the trip to Sandakphu annually.

One of the major problems that has arisen because of tourism on this very popular trekking route is the coming up of a large number of eateries and shanties selling food in non degradable disposable packs. There is now a major problem of garbage here. Additionally a large number of trees

including rhododendrons are being chopped for fuel and construction purposes.

In September the NHAF in association with the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) and the West Bengal Forest Department undertook a clean up campaign in the area. Attempts are also being made to restrict the number of trekkers to Sandakphu, to promote new trek routes and the imposition of financial penalties for littering. Suggestions have also been made for the creation of an LPG outlet here to deal with the fuel needs and for a nature interpretation centre as well.

The Wildlife Division, Darjeeling organised an awareness camp for the local population in the first week of October at Manebhanjhang. Officials also confirmed that nature interpretation centres will be set up at Rimbick and Manebhanjhang and that the later will be made the gateway to park. Further it will be made mandatory for trekkers to take recognised guides with them on their treks. The Forest Department has reportedly trained 40 guides for the purpose. Plastic too has been banned in the park. Additionally two new routes in the Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary are to be introduced to reduce the pressure on Sandakphu.

Source: Sudipta Chanda. 'Sandakphu hikers to pay for littering', *The Statesman*, 07/09/02  
'Ban on plastic products in Singhalila', *The Statesman*, 30/09/02  
'Awareness camp on Singhalila', *The Statesman*, 04/10/02.

**Contact: Mr. Raju Das**, DFO, Wildlife, West Bengal Forest Dept., Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-24907(O) / 30383 (R). E-mail: wild2@dte.vsnl.net.in  
**Bharat Prakash Rai**, Federation of Societies for Environment Protection.Red Cross Building, Darjeeling. – 734101, West Bengal. Tel: 0354 - 53589 (O)/ 53246, 56460.

### **Red Pandas to be rehabilitated in Singhalila NP**

The highly endangered red panda is the subject of an ambitious rehabilitation effort by the Darjeeling Zoo and the Central Zoo Authority (CZA). The project aims to release captive bred red pandas in the 78 sq. km. Singhalila National Park, the natural home of the animal. An agreement was recently signed for this

between the Darjeeling Zoo, the CZA and the West Bengal Forest Department.

In the first phase, two female red pandas will be released in an open enclosure in the zoo, followed by a partial release into the wild after they are radio collared. The project was schedule to start in November 2002 and the eventual release of the first pair of pandas is scheduled for May 2003.

Source:



Red panda rehabilitation project',  
[www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 01/11/02.  
Email from Arunayan Sharma.

Contact: **Arunayan Sharma**. Netaji Subhash Road, In front of TOP, Malda - 732101, West Bengal. Email: s\_arunayan@rediffmail.com

### **OBC to support project for conservation education and monitoring in Singhalila NP**

A conservation awareness small grant has been awarded to Sarla Khaling by the Oriental Bird Club (OBC) to conduct an education and monitoring programme in Singhalila National Park.

The education work will take place in two villages, one within the park, and the other in its buffer zone. Separate environmental education workshops will be held for adults and children in each of the two villages. There will also be workshops on basic monitoring of forest biodiversity. This project complements a larger rural development programme in the area, undertaken by the World Pheasant Association's South Asia Office.

Source: 'Conservation education and monitoring in Singhalila National Park, Darjeeling, India', *Oriental Bird Club Bulletin No. 36*, December 2002.

### **Army men arrested for smuggling timber from Mahananda WLS**

Twelve army personnel from the Ninth Engineering Regiment were arrested on charges of smuggling timber from the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary on November 3, 2002. Three army trucks loaded with 300 cubic feet of timber, worth Rs. 3 lakhs were seized in the Baikunthapur Forest Division and the army men were booked under Section 59 of the Indian Forest Act. They were later handed over to the military police on bail bond and the seized vehicles were returned to the army for safe custody. The army authorities have promised to take appropriate action against the offenders and the Forest Department too has decided to pursue the case in a civil court.

The army men based at Kachrapara, near Kolkata were returning after delivering supplies to the Bengdubi cantonment near Bagdogra when they were arrested. Forest officials said the arrests were just the tip of an ice-berg. Timber smuggling is reportedly rampant in the area and army trucks are a good cover for smuggling out timber since they were hardly stopped at checkpoints.

Source: Email from Arunayan Sharma, based on Report in *The Statesman* dated 04/11/02

Contact: **Arunayan Sharma**, see above.

**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**

### **Parliament passes Biodiversity Bill**

The Biological Diversity Bill - 2000 was passed by the Indian parliament on December 2, 2002. It now waits the final approval from the President of the country.

The Bill has proposed the setting up of a three tier structure including an apex National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) at Chennai and the

setting up of state biodiversity boards and biodiversity management committees.

The NBA's approval will be required now before obtaining any form of intellectual property rights on an invention based on a traditional knowledge and it will deal with all cases of access by foreigners.

Source: 'Biodiversity Act passed', *Down to Earth*, 31/12/02.

'India's new Biodiversity Act', *Inform*, Oct.-Dec., 2002.

### **National Forest Commission formed**

A National Forest Commission (NFC), with Former Chief Justice of India, Justice BN Kirpal as Chairperson has recently been formed. It has a two year time frame and has the mandate to review, reform and strengthen the entire forest management set up of the country.

The other members of the Commission include MK Sharma, Director General (Forests); environmentalists Chandi Prasad Bhatt and MK Ranjit Singh; JS Singh of the Benaras Hindu University and AP Muthuswamy, a former government officer. An Additional Director-General (Forests) will be the member secretary.

The proposal for the setting of this Commission was put to the Prime Minister about a year ago, in January 2002.

Source: Chandrika Mago. 'National Forest Commission on the anvil', *The Times of India*, 20/11/02.

'Justice Kirpal to head national forests panel', *Inform*, Oct.-Dec., 2002.

### **MoEF issues new guidelines for JFM**

The Union Ministry for Environment and Forests (MoEF) has issued a new set of guidelines for Joint Forest Management (JFM) in the country. Issued on December 24, 2002, they focus on three issues: a) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the JFM committee and the Forest Department; b) Relationship between JFM Committees and Panchayats and c) Management of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP).

The MoEF had earlier issued JFM guidelines on two occasions – June 1, 1990 and February 21, 2000. The guidelines can be accessed at the following website: [www.rupfor.org](http://www.rupfor.org)

Source: 'MoEF issues new JFM guidelines', *Inform*, Oct-Dec, 2002.

Contact: **Incharge**, JFM Cell, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodi Estate, New Delhi – 110003. Tel: 011-24360379. Website: <http://envfor.nic.in>

### **Global Species Directory on Indian Fauna**

The Pune based National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) is in the process of building up the Global Species Directory (GSD) on Indian Fauna. The work that has already been done can be seen at the website: <http://www.ncbi.org.in/biota/fauna/>

The project coordinators have asked for the following inputs: critical comments / suggestions for improving the GSD; names of individual / institutions / NGOs who can contribute data or act as taxon editors; and names of contributors for multimedia content such as sketches, photographs, images, audio and video for Indian fauna.

Contact: **Vishwas Chavan**, NCL, Dr Homi Bhabha Road, Pune - 411008. Tel: 020 – 5893457. Fax. 5893973. Email: [vishwas@ems.ncl.res.in](mailto:vishwas@ems.ncl.res.in); [vishwasc@yahoo.com](mailto:vishwasc@yahoo.com); Web: <http://www.ncbi.org.in> & <http://www.ncl-india.org>

### **Plans for sustainable development of mountains**

A 21-member, high-level national Committee has been constituted to prepare an action plan for sustainable mountain development in the country. The Committee will be headed by the Minister of Environment and Forests, Mr. T.R. Baalu. The Committee's terms of reference include preparation of an action plan with the involvement of government and non-governmental institutions, coordination of relevant national initiatives and events and to take up follow up activities and programmes as decided by the Committee.

A two day conference on the subject was also organised in the last week on September in Darjeeling. While speaking at the conference, Mr. Baalu urged the 12 Himalayan states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, West Bengal, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir to draw up an integrated action programme for sustainable mountain development.

He also proposed several restrictions in town-planning for the hills and asked the states to send their comments at the earliest so that a final notification can be passed. The proposed restrictions include: 1) Banning construction in areas inclined above 30 degrees; 2) Tourists resorts, commercial complexes and institutional buildings to be located only in areas with surplus water and electricity; 3) Banning the cutting of hills, which causes slope instability; 4) Areas rich in groundwater not to be diverted for construction activities; 5) Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out for construction of roads more than 5 km. in length; 6) Roof-top rainwater harvesting to be made compulsory for future constructions in urban areas; and 7) Banning institutional and commercial building activity from deriving water from existing water supply schemes, which adversely affects water supply to local villages or settlements.

Source: 'National Committee on Mountain Development set up,' [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 18/09/02.  
'Centre proposes urban area restrictions in 12 mountain states', [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 30/09/02

### **List of Ramsar sites in India**

The RAMSAR Convention came into force for India on 1st February 1982. India presently has 19 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance, with a surface area of 648,507 ha. Following is the listing of all these wetlands: Asthamudi Wetland, Kerala; Bhitarkanika Mangroves, Orissa; Bhoj Wetlands, Madhya Pradesh; Chilika Lake, Orissa; Deepor Beel, Assam; East Calcutta Wetlands, West Bengal; Harike Lake, Punjab; Kanjli, Punjab; Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan; Kolleru Lake, Andhra Pradesh; Loktak Lake, Manipur; Point Calimer Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu; Pong Dam Lake, Himachal Pradesh; Ropar Lake, Punjab; Sambhar Lake, Rajasthan; Sasthamkotta Lake, Kerala; Tsomoriri Lake, Jammu and Kashmir; Wular Lake, Kashmir; Vembanad Kol Wetlands, Kerala.

### **SC notices to centre and four states regarding utilisation of Project Tiger funds**

The Supreme Court has issued a notice to the Central Government and the State Governments of Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar



regarding the proper utilisation of funds released under Project Tiger.

The order was passed in response to a petition, filed by Mr. Ashok Kumar of the Wildlife Trust of India, which pointed out indiscipline in the use of and the diversion of these funds which are exclusively earmarked for wildlife conservation under Project Tiger and other central government schemes. The petition pointed out that the plight of forest staff in Corbett, Dudhwa and Ranthambhore was similar to the situation in Valmiki Tiger Reserve last year where forest staff had not been paid for months, before the apex court intervened (Also see *PA Update 36 & 34*).

Source: 'SC issues notices to centre and four states for proper utilisation of tiger funds', [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 18/11/02,

Contact: **Ashok Kumar**, WTI, PO Box 3150, New Delhi - 110 003. Tel: 011-6326025/6 / 6325775 / 6. Fax: 6326027 Email: [ashok@wildlifetrustofindia.org](mailto:ashok@wildlifetrustofindia.org)

### **Conservation award instituted for school / university students**

The Vadodara based International Society of Naturalists (INSONA) has instituted an Environmental Awareness Fund to honour a school child and an university student every year for outstanding recognition / achievement in the field of environment.

The award has been instituted in name of the late Lt. Col Fatehsingh Gaekwad, the founder president of INSONA. The last date for the receipt of nominations is March 31, 2003.

Contact: **Dr. Gunvant Oza**, INSONA, Oza Building, Salatwada, Baroda – 390001. Tel / Fax: 0265-2421009. Email: [insona@123india.com](mailto:insona@123india.com)

### **BNHS institutes new Salim Ali Conservation Award**

The Bombay Natural History Society has instituted a new, biannual 'Salim Ali Conservation Award for Nature Conservation' for outstanding contributions and achievements in the fields of protection, management and conservation of natural resources, including human population, wildlife, pollution and hazardous material control, education, information and legislation.

Contact: BNHS, Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai 400 023 Maharashtra. Tel: 022-22821811. Fax: 22837615. Email: [bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in](mailto:bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in)

### **Sanctuary Wildlife Awards presented**

One Lifetime Service Award, one Green Teacher Award and five Wildlife Service Awards were recently presented by Sanctuary magazine as part of its annual Wildlife Service Awards. The awards were instituted three years ago and are supported by the ABN Amro Bank.

The Lifetime Service Award went to PK Sen, former Director, Project Tiger and presently Head of the Tiger Conservation Programme of World Wide Fund For Nature – India. Pandit Hanuman Sharma who works with children around the Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan was awarded the Green Teacher Award. The Wildlife Service Awards were given to SS Notey, Range Forest Officer, Nagpur; Dr. Rakesh Shukla, Range Forest Officer, Kanha Tiger Reserve; Samir Acharya, Secretary of the Society for Andaman and Nicobar Ecology, Port Blair; JS Chauhan, Divisional Forest Officer, Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary; and AR Bharati, Divisional Forest Officer, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Contact: **Editor**, Sanctuary Magazine, 602 Maker Chambers V, Nariman Point, Mumbai – 400021. Tel: 022-22830061/81. Email: [mail@sanctuaryasia.com](mailto:mail@sanctuaryasia.com). Website: [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com)

### **Indira Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra Awards for 1999 and 2000**

The Indira Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra (IPVM) Awards for the years 1999 and 2000 were recently presented to the awardees by Sri TR Baalu, Minister for Environment and Forests.

The awards are presented under seven different categories: Individuals, Village Level Institutions, Educational Institutions, Voluntary agencies, Government Servants (Individual), Government Agency and the Corporate Sector. A total of 11 and 8 awards were given for 1999 and 2000 respectively. For the year 2000 there were no awardees under the categories of Educational Institutions and Government Agencies.

Source: 'Indira Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra Awards – 1999 and 2000', *Enviro News*, Vol. 6, July-September, 2002.

Contact: **Secretary**, MoEF, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi – 110003. Web: <http://envfor.nic.in>

## SOUTH ASIA

### AFGHANISTAN

#### **Western soldiers and aid workers pushing snow leopard towards extinction**

There are reports that western soldiers and aid workers have been buying pelts of snow leopards in Afghanistan for a price of around 1000 pounds each. The pelts which are used to make fur coats and rugs are sold in shops in Kabul and Faizabad in the North East of the country.

An official from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has also said that the killing of snow leopards in fact seemed to have increased after the fall of the Taliban regime.

The estimated population of the snow leopard in Afghanistan is less than 100 and the total population across its Central Asia habitat is estimated at around 3500.

Source: David Harrison. 'Cat's woes', *The Hindu Sunday Magazine*, 12/01/03

### **BANGLADESH**

#### **Decline in tiger population in Sundarbans**

The number of tigers in the Bangladesh Sundarbans is reportedly falling at an average annual rate of 20. A few years ago the population of the endangered cat here was estimated to be 500 and it is now reported to have fallen to around 400 animals.

The main threats faced by tigers include poaching, increase of salinity of water and increasing encroachments.

Source: '20 tiger lost yearly in Bangladesh', *Indian Express*, 07/10/02.

### **NEPAL**

#### **Nepal Rare Birds Committee formed**

The Nepal Rare Birds Committee was recently formed under the auspices of Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN). The Committee will be administered by the BCN and will be chaired by Carol Inskipp. It will consider all new species records for Nepal and all records of species that have been recorded five times or less.

The aims of the formation of this committee are to have a system of maintaining an official Nepal bird list that is accepted by ornithologists and birdwatchers throughout Nepal and internationally and to ensure that fair credit and acknowledgement are given to all observers concerned. A rarities report will be published annually and will include details of all accepted records. It will also maintain a list of those that were rejected. Observers have been requested to send in details of all their relevant records to Bird Conservation Nepal.

Contact: **Hem Sagar Baral**, President, BCN.

Email: [bcn@mail.com.np](mailto:bcn@mail.com.np). Website: [www.birdlifenepal.com](http://www.birdlifenepal.com)

#### **Kathmandu emerges as major centre for illegal wildlife trade**

A team of researchers headed by senior Nepalese journalist Mangal Man Shakya has reported that the Nepalese capital, Kathmandu is emerging as a major centre for the illegal trade in wildlife products like shahtoosh shawls, coats made from leopard, tiger and snow leopard skins, python skin and ivory products. With the country's security forces running after the Maoists insurgents, wildlife poachers and traders have reportedly increased their activities (Also see following story).

Their report 'Wildlife Trade in Nepal', says that areas where these products are available in the capital includes popular tourist locales like Patan, Bhaktapur Durbar Square, Thamel, Lazimpat and even the shopping arcades of some of the city's five star hotels.

Source: 'Kathmandu: safe haven for illegal trade in endangered wildlife', *The Kathmandu Post*, 11/11/02.

## Rhino poaching on the rise in Nepal

31 rhinos are reported to have died in Nepal in less than an year. This is the highest number of deaths in recent years with more than half the deaths being blamed on poaching.

The inadequate security for wildlife caused by the long running Maoist insurgency in the country is being considered the main reason for this increase in poaching. The government has been forced to cut down the number of security posts that were established to counter poachers after it deployed the military to tackle the insurgents last year.

Successful conservation measures in the past few years have seen a healthy rise in the rhino population in the country, and the recent spate of poaching deaths has alarmed the authorities.

Source: Sushil Sharma. 'Threat grows to Nepal rhino', *BBC*, 03/12/02

## OBC Small Grants Projects in Nepal

A number of bird conservation related projects are being initiated in Nepal with the supported of the Small Grants Programme of the Oriental Bird Club (OBC).

These include an assessment of the population status of the Lesser Adjutant Stork in the Royal Chitwan National Park by Nabin Gyawali, a conservation awareness project amongst students living around Sukhlaphanta Wildlife Reserve and an Ecological Study of the White-Rumped Vulture in the Rampur Valley in Palpa district.

The study in Sukhlaphanta will be carried out by Bijay Tamang and will be assisted by a teacher from the town of Mahendranagar and by Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN). The project aims to organise a training workshop on bird conservation, a birdwatching camp for local students and to publish a resource handbook in order to create an interest in birds and their conservation amongst students.

The study in the Rampur Valley will be carried out by Ramji Gautam who will also be assisted by BCN. The results on this project will complement those already carried out in Koshi and Sukhlaphanta. Among other things, the project also aims to collect data on the extent of pesticide use in the valley, to assess threats and recommend measures for vulture conservation at this site.

Source: *Oriental Bird Club Bulletin No. 36*, December 2002.

## SRI LANKA

### Wilpattu NP Park to reopen after two decades

The Wilpattu NP that has remained closed since 1983 following an attack by the LTTE is scheduled to be reopened soon. This follows the peace deal that has been signed between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government. The first step that will however need to be taken is the clearance of the large number of land mines that have been laid by the organisation.

Source: 'National park to re-open after rebel ceasefire', *Oriental Bird Club Bulletin No. 36*, December 2002.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Ban on sale of African ivory lifted, fears expressed for Asian elephants

The latest Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) that was held in Chile in November, 2002, voted to allow South Africa, Botswana and Namibia to sell 60 tonnes of ivory in the international market. Similar proposals by Zambia and Zimbabwe were however not accepted. A joint proposal by India and Kenya for the continuation for the ban on international sales of ivory was also rejected at the meeting.

Trade in ivory was prohibited globally in 1989 after the number of African elephants plummeted to 600,000 from 1.2 million in just over a decade. Countries lobbying for trade argue that much of the ivory that would be sold comes from elephants that have died naturally. These countries would now earn around US \$ 2 to 3 million from ivory sales.

Serious concern is being expressed on the impact that this will have on the population on the Asian elephant. Recent raids in Hong Kong and Singapore revealed a huge cache of Asian ivory. It is feared that there will now be an easy alibi for Asian elephant tusks to be smuggled to countries like Japan and Korea. Only an estimated 12000 tuskers survive in India.

Source: 'UN allows sale of African ivory, India worried', *Indian Express*, 15/11/02.

Contact: **Vivek Menon**. Wildlife Trust of India, see above

## **Programme to review national policies and plans for sustainable development through tourism**

The London based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is undertaking a global review to examine national policies and plans for tourism development. The review will look at how tourism has been addressed in sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies and whether the tourism policy is coordinated with policies for other sectors which affect, or are affected by the industry.

The core focus areas of this work will be developing countries that already have a significant tourism industry and those that have recognised the potential of tourism and are trying to develop their industry. Inputs have been invited on the same

Contact: **Dilys Roe**, (IIED), 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, United Kingdom. Fax: +44 (0) 207 388 2826. Email: dilys.roe@iied.org

## **New World Bank Forest Strategy**

The Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank has recently endorsed the 'Revised Forest Strategy for the World Bank Group'. The strategy has been built on three interdependent pillars: protecting vital local and global environmental services and values provided by forests; harnessing the potential of forests to reduce poverty; and integrating forests in sustainable economic development.

The issue of biodiversity conservation and those of the creation and management of protected areas also finds an important mention in the strategy. The strategy can be accessed on the web at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

Source: 'New World Bank forest policy', *Inform*, Oct. - Dec., 2002.

## **World Bank launches new biocarbon fund**

A new fund called the BioCarbon fund has been launched by the World Bank in November 2002. The fund with a total value of US \$ 100 million is a public/private partnership that will provide for the reduction of Green House Gas Emissions while promoting 'biodiversity conservation and sustainable development'. Fourteen companies and national governments have shown an interest in supporting this programme and have signed an MoU with the

fund to take this forward. Details can be accessed at [www.biocarbonfund.org](http://www.biocarbonfund.org)

Source: 'Innovative \$ 100 million Biocarbon fund', *Inform*, Oct-Dec. 2002.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Job opening with Moving Images**

Applications have been sought from candidates with a broad range of written and organisational skills, preferably with a background in environmental issues, for two distinct responsibilities. The primary responsibility will be to assist in the production of an international bi-annual journal, *Conservation and Society* that is being launched in February. The second set of responsibilities will involve conducting background research, writing proposals, concept papers and scripts in support of projects undertaken by Moving Images, which is an environmental film production company.

Three years of work experience in environmental/developmental issues, publishing, and/or documentary film-making is essential.

Contact: **Moving Images**, D III / 3425, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi 110 070. Email: [moving@vsnl.com](mailto:moving@vsnl.com)

## **UPCOMING**

### **23<sup>rd</sup> Annual International Sea Turtle Symposium**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual International Sea Turtle Symposium is being held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from March 17 to 21, 2003.

The theme for the symposium is 'Living with Turtles' and those attending are likely to include turtle biologists and conservationists and government, fisheries and indigenous community representatives.

Contact: [www.seaturtle.org/symposium/2003/](http://www.seaturtle.org/symposium/2003/)

### **International Conference on Himalayan Biodiversity**

The International Conference on Himalayan Biodiversity which was scheduled to be held from December 10 to 13, 2002 in Kathmandu (see *PA Update* 39) has now been postponed and will be held from February 26 to 28, 2003. The conference is being co-organised by the Himalayan Resources Institute (HIRI), Biodiversity Research Group (BRG), the Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University and the Ecological Association of Nepal (ECOAN)

Contact: Ripu Kunwar. Email:  
rkunwar@rediffmail.com. Website:  
<http://www.hirinepal.com/international.html>

<p><b>PA UPDATE MATTERS</b></p>
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### **PA Update now available on CD**

All issues of the Protected Area Update, are now available on CD, priced at Rs. 150 (Please add Rs. 50 for postage and outstation cheque charges. Hard copy versions from Issue No 20 onwards are also available in a hardbound format for Rs. 150.

The Protected Area Update is also available in its electronic form and is regularly emailed to recipients who would like to receive it via email. To get on to the emailing list write to: [kvriksh@vsnl.com](mailto:kvriksh@vsnl.com)

Contact: **Pankaj Sekhsaria**, at the editorial address

# CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOODS NETWORK

6<sup>th</sup> Consultation on Wildlife Conservation and People's Livelihood Rights, February 23-25, 2002,

Bongaigaon Polytechnic & Manas National Park, Assam

## PRESS STATEMENT

(26 February, 2002)

### NATIONAL CONSULTATION CALLS FOR CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOOD ALTERNATIVES IN THE NORTH-EAST

“The unique ecological and cultural diversity of north-eastern India offers tremendous opportunities to forge an alternative path of development, which avoids the pitfalls of the model adopted in other parts of the country.” - This was the major conclusion reached at the 6th National Consultation on Wildlife Conservation and People's Livelihood Rights, held on February 23-25, 2002, at Bongaigaon, Assam. The Consultation was jointly organised by Nature's Foster (Bongaigaon), Green Heart's Nature Club (Kokrajhar) and Kalpavriksh (Pune), under the auspices of the Conservation and Livelihoods Network (CLN). The Consultation was also linked to the ongoing National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) process, being carried out by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, with technical execution by the NGO Kalpavriksh.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Consultation brought together diverse people including wildlife conservationists and researchers, forest and civil administration officials, social and human rights activists, rural development workers, law experts, educationists, and others. About 100 participants came from Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Manipur, Tripura, W. Bengal, Karnataka, Gujarat, Sikkim, Nagaland, Arunachal, and Maharashtra. Special participation was from the villagers of the fringe areas of Manas Tiger Reserve, belonging to the community organisation Green Manas; from other local NGOs; from local forest officials Amit Sahai and Alka Bhargava, and from the Deputy Commissioner Mr. Kalita.

**The objective of these Consultations has been to provide a forum for constructive interaction among people working on wildlife conservation, and people working on social and economic development and human rights.** These two sets of people have conventionally had serious conflicts, with the dominant model of conservation

having neglected the rights and needs of local communities that live in and around wildlife habitats. The Consultations are a part of a larger attempt to build bridges, and to work towards joint strategies against threats to the habitats that support both wildlife and local communities.

Special focus at the Bongaigaon Consultation was on the problems and prospects of the North-eastern region. As in the case of previous Consultations, there was a consensus that both the rights of wildlife and the livelihood rights of communities dependent on natural habitats, needed to be protected. Serious concern was expressed about the continued destruction of wildlife habitats, species, and biodiversity, including the increasing incidents of poaching of critically endangered species, and widespread encroachments by outsiders to the region.

## MAJOR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The **North-East Council** and the newly set up **Department of North-Eastern Region** need to consider the ecological and cultural diversity of the region as the building block for all development planning and budgeting.
- 2) **Central government programmes** and schemes, such as the move to restructure forest-related administration through **Forest Development Agencies**, should be flexible to accommodate the unique and site-specific situations in the north-eastern region.
- 3) While the demand for **decentralisation** of decision-making, and for self-determination by communities and the region, is entirely justified, this should go hand-in-hand with responsibilities for conservation, sustainable natural resource based livelihoods, social justice, protecting common property regimes, and equitable decision-making processes. In the north-eastern

- region, the **6<sup>th</sup> Schedule** needs to be reformulated to actually empower the communities rather than just some symbolic heads like gaonburhas. Autonomous councils should integrate mechanisms of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. The **village council** (tribal council, gram sabhas, or other bodies where all adults of the village are members), should be the basic units of decision-making for natural resource management and use.
- 4) Special and much greater attention is needed to enhance **livelihoods** based on the rich natural resources of the north-eastern region, while ensuring their conservation and sustainability, such as non-timber forest produce (bamboo, orchids, cane, medicinal plants, etc.) and aquatic resources.
  - 5) Special **economic and social incentives** are needed for conservation of biodiversity in the north-eastern region, noting that such conservation benefits the entire country; and especially to compensate for the opportunities lost when income generating opportunities (like from the extraction of timber) when such activities are denied. Mechanisms should be put in place so that the primary stakeholders and affected people benefit from the compensation, and that this compensation be treated as a special fund for generating sustainable natural resource based livelihoods and alternative development strategies.
  - 6) There should be an **environmental surcharge or tax** on biological resources based industries and elite consumer products, which can go into a fund for conservation and livelihoods.
  - 7) There needs to be a special **environmental tribunal/court/green bench** in all states (including each north eastern state) which can speedily take up cases relating to violations of ecological norms or laws.
  - 8) It was noted that the **major dams** being proposed for the region are likely to have serious ecological and social impacts, and are oriented more to meet the needs of electricity outside the region. In light of this, there should be a serious search for alternatives, independent environmental and social impact assessments of proposed projects, mandatory involvement of civil society in decision-making relating to such projects, and stringent enforcement of environment and forest related legislations.
  - 9) Regarding the serious **elephant-human conflicts** across north-east and eastern India, there is a need for: mapping migration routes and studying areas of concentration and conflicts, studying behaviour of raiding animals, ensuring that development projects and settlements avoid elephant corridors, relocating major development projects from such corridors, dealing with the recent encroachments in the corridors, starting crop insurance schemes, making existing compensation procedures appropriate and efficient, and cropping pattern changes, following consultation with local people. Inter-state coordination through forums like the North-East Council, is needed for these steps.
  - 10) **Border roads** were recently exempted from having to take clearance under the EIA notification 1994 of the Environment Protection Act; this exemption should be withdrawn, given the serious ecological impacts that such roads could have.
  - 11) The adverse ecological and social impacts of **militarisation** of the north-eastern region need to be independently assessed, and steps taken to tackle these, particularly towards sensitisation of all parties concerned on biodiversity and cultural/livelihood issues.
  - 12) The state and central governments need to give much greater attention to civil and political solutions, with a central role to the communities themselves, for the **ethnic conflicts** that are taking place in many parts of the north-east and which have serious ecological and social consequences.
  - 13) **Threatened species** like the **Greater adjutant stork**, which live amidst human settlements, need a community-based approach for conservation, including through the provision of incentives and awareness to communities and families on whose lands/trees they nest and feed.
  - 14) Given that **mining** has major and long-term ecological impacts and social disruption to local communities, all proposed and existing mines need to be independently assessed, and carried on or cleared only where there are no serious impacts. Fully informed permission of local communities should be ensured in this decision, no mining should be allowed in and around protected areas, and environment impact assessments and public hearings should be mandatory for all sizes and scales of mining.
  - 15) National policy and legal measures are needed for **rehabilitation of poachers** and timber

thieves, facilitating not only their inclusion in legal livelihood options but also utilising their skills and knowledge to aid conservation (e.g. in the Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala).

- 16) There is serious concern regarding the killing of wild animals, including of elephants, by **trains and highways going through forest** areas; in this connection an independent expert appraisal of the ecological, wildlife, and socio-economic impacts of the proposal to convert the Bongaigaon-Siliguri meter gauge to broad gauge (while staying ongoing construction), and other such proposals for conversion or for new tracks and highways in the country, is urgently needed.
- 17) The destruction of natural forests under the assumption that ‘**compensatory afforestation**’ will make up the loss, is unacceptable. There is no way to reproduce a complex forest ecosystem once it is gone, and it is even worse when compensatory afforestation is done in different ecological conditions from the forest destroyed. It is therefore time that large-scale diversion and destruction of forests for development processes is prohibited.
- 18) The recently released **National Wildlife Action Plan** (NWAP) has several positive elements, including a thrust to save wildlife habitats from destructive development pressures and to involve local communities in conservation. However, there is concern regarding its failure to prohibit forced evictions from protected areas, and the denial of even basic civic amenities (water, appropriate health services, etc.) and land development facilities to local traditional communities inside such areas. Implementation of the NWAP must incorporate these issues.
- 19) **Protected area boundaries** need to be clarified and clearly demarcated across the country, and in particular in the north-eastern region, given its complex land tenure situation.
- 20) Community representatives and NGOs should be included in the **Biosphere Reserve committee** of Assam, and similar committees of various stakeholders should be set up for other states.

### **Recommendations regarding Manas Tiger and Biosphere Reserve**

Workshop participants made a field visit to Manas Tiger and Biosphere Reserve, and extensively discussed various related issues. Discussions were held with the local community organisation Green Manas and with other NGOs. Unfortunately the Field Director of the TR was not able to join the workshop.

- Participants felt that critical biodiversity areas like Manas Tiger and Biosphere Reserve, need much greater state and central government focus. This includes the following steps:
- Creating awareness of the Biosphere Reserve (BR), its implications and prospects, amongst schools, local people, officials, and other sections of society
- Management planning for the entire Reserve, including through the use of GIS mapping, by experts, NGOs, FD officials, and local community members
- Involving local communities in conservation management, through the emerging community-based organizations
- Activating the BR committee set up in 1999; expanding it to include district level officials and NGOs for the entire BR, representatives of user and ethnic groups, incl. women, and related HWLWs; and formulating rules/guidelines for its functioning including methods by which village councils can be optimally involved
- Urgently providing greater funds for basic infrastructure including communication
- Encouraging grass management through extraction by villagers, rather than burning, since according to scientific studies, this would help both biodiversity and local people
- Reaching a quick resolution of the surrendered poachers issue, by their rehabilitation through development of community assets and generating livelihood alternatives, as also invoking sense of responsibility amongst the poachers
- Providing much greater attention to the neglected ranges of the national park, viz. Bhuiapara and Panbari
- Pooling funds of different departments to enable sustainable development, livelihood options, and health facilities for fringe villages, for the entire BR (building on the ongoing attempt to use DRDA funds by the Forest Dept)
- Strengthening and increasing the patrolling staff of the Forest Department, while also using the services of local people for the same.

The various Assam based NGOs present at the Consultation, resolved to take up these issues on a priority basis, by coordinating with the Forest Department and other agencies. The Deputy Commissioner Mr. Kalita, made an assurance to help with this process.



**Conclusions regarding networking for north-east  
and other parts of India**

The Consultation participants resolved that they would continue the process of dialogue, networking, and action in the North-East and in other parts of India, to take up the above and other issues. Participants also decided to exchange information on conservation and livelihood related laws, policies, circulars, and programmes across the country, and to initiate similar networking processes under the Conservation and Livelihoods Network, in individual states and regions.

Finally, it was agreed that the issues raised above would be incorporated into the ongoing National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) process, in which the North-Eastern region would be given a prominent position.

Sd /-

NK Dey, Pankaj Sekhsaria Bablu Dey  
(Nature's Foster), (Kalpavriksh) (Green Hearts  
Nature Club)

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