

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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LIST OF CONTENTS

News Item

EDITORIAL

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

Andaman & Nicobar Islands --

Sea Turtle workshop held in Port Blair

Assam --

Plans to make Manas NP vibrant again

State to declare four new sanctuaries

New 'Nambar Daigrong Wildlife Sanctuary' declared

Rs. 15 crore Central aid for Deepor Beel

Chandigarh --

Zero silt plan suggested for Sukhna Lake

Gujarat --

Chemical spill inside Gulf of Kutch Marine NP;
guilty Tata Chemicals gets conditional approval
to continue.

Wild Ass census in January 2004

New lion sanctuary proposed at Mithiyala in Amreli
District

Kutch Bustard Sanctuary to be expanded

Haryana --

Haryana to get two new wildlife sanctuaries

Nature interpretation centre at Bhindawas

Himachal Pradesh --

Schemes to reduce local people dependency on Great
Himalayan NP

Jammu & Kashmir --

State to take steps for hangul conservation

Karnataka --

Cauvery catchment forests to be brought under
sanctuary cover

Karnataka bans plastic in PAs

Severe water shortage results in invasion by cattle of
Bandipur TR and Nugu WLS

Survey throws up 150 unnamed insect species in
Bandipur NP

Pg. No

2

3

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

4

Rs. 13.75 crores master plan proposed for the
Bannerghata Biological Park

Kerala --

Mathikettan Shola declared a national park; more in
the pipeline

Rs. 125 crore loan from Malaysia for road inside
Periyar TR.

Periyar Tiger Reserve launches electronic newsletter
Assembly passes Kerala Forest Bill

Large forests around Silent Valley NP destroyed for
cannabis, plantain cultivation

Madhya Pradesh --

East West corridor moved out of Madhav NP

Maharashtra --

State government in favour of hydro-electric projects
in wildlife sanctuaries

Political lobbying obstructs declaration of Rajmachi
and Tamhini-Sudhagadh Sanctuaries

New sanctuary at Tungreshwar

Manipur --

First meeting of the Manipur State Board for Wildlife

Orissa --

Chandka elephants stray into villages near
Bhubaneswar

Olive Ridges sighted off the Orissa Coast

20 trawlers seized near Gahirmatha

Charges of venison consumption inside Bhitarkanika
by legislators denied

Police protection to be provided to forest staff

Increased salinity in Chilka affects migratory bird
population

Villagers join government to check poaching in
Chilka

Punjab --

Rs. 70 million project for Harike

Bishnois oppose Punjab Government move to allow
killing of *neelgai*

8

8

8

8

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8

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8

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8

8

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8

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8

8

8

8

8

8

8

Tamil Nadu --	14
Feasibility study completed; Tuticorin harbour to be deepened as part of Sethusamudran project	
Uttar Pradesh --	14
Threat to Okhla Bird Sanctuary from flyover	
Workshop held on Gangetic dolphin conservation	
Monkeys poisoned in Hastinapur WLS	
Uttaranchal --	15
Workshop held on the elephants of the Shivalik Elephant Reserve in Dehradun	
Wildlife tourism grows significantly in Uttaranchal	
Call to declare Bhimgoda barrage a wildlife sanctuary	
Fewer visitors to be allowed into Corbett this season	
Foot and Mouth Disease in cattle around Corbett	
Census figures show rise in wild animal populations	
Probe sought into sale of private land inside Binsar WLS	
West Bengal --	17
Temporary forest staff in North Bengal to go on 'cease work'	
Two elephant calf deaths near Mahananda WLS	
Captive bred red pandas released into Singalila NP; Senchal WLS might be next	
Joint FD-NGO initiative in Singalila NP	
State government, Sahara sign pact on tourism project in the Sunderbans	
NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA --	19
Field Assistants' Fund of the Nature Conservation Foundation	
North East India Elephant Specialist Group	
SOUTH ASIA --	19
Meeting of the Asian Waterbird Census Coordinators	
Huge animal fur haul in Tibet	
Bangladesh --	20
Initiatives to save river dolphins in Bangladesh	
Nepal --	20
Chitwan Rhinos straying into adjoining villages	
Pakistan --	21
Oil companies delaying baseline study on Nara Desert WLS	
Oil company to prepare management plan for Kirthar NP, other PAs	
Saiful Malook and Lolusar Lakes in the NWFP declared national parks	
Project to study Indus dolphin population	
UPCOMING --	22
24 th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation	
OPPORTUNITIES --	22
MSc in Wildlife Biology and Conservation	
Opportunities with ATREE	
WHAT'S AVAILABLE --	23
Manuals on sea turtle conservation	
<i>Protected Area Update 46</i>	2

READERS COMMENTS...	23
SPECIAL REPORTS	
World Parks Congress	24
The Convention on Biological Diversity and Protected Areas	27

EDITORIAL

[The onset of winter...](#)

The coming of the cold season in the Indian subcontinent brings with it two of the most significant developments in the natural world – events that are as spectacular as they are mysterious, journeys that are massive and breathtaking in the truest sense of the term; proof, if it was needed, of the magnificence of nature; a humbling experience to that miniscule portion of humanity that cares to notice and participate in these wonderful events.

One of these journeys touches us all, as millions of winged creatures run over, rather, fly over this entire land mass. Where ever one is, be it city, town or village; on the coast, on the bank of a river or that of a lake, in the grasslands or in the forests, you cannot miss it. It's a phenomenon that connects countries, even continents. If only it could help a little more in connecting the hearts of the people that live along the 1000s of kms. these birds travels...

The other huge journey is the more remote and mysterious one and unlike our feathered visitors, does not directly touch the lives of us all. As the mercury starts to drop across the subcontinent, hundreds of 1000s of olive ridley turtles, following a primal instinct, start to converge off the coast of Orissa. It is perhaps the most significant such event anywhere on the surface of the earth. We know that they mate and the females then climb on to the beaches to lay their eggs.

We also know that for the last few years, thousands of these olive ridleys are being killed here annually, trapped in the nets of the trawlers that continue to ply in these waters, inspite of strict restrictions, trawlers that do not use the Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) that will save these ancient and threatened marvels of nature. Over the last few years, there has undoubtedly been a huge effort to deal with the problem. Researchers have worked hard, an effort has been made towards education and awareness, laws have been put into place. TEDs have been made available to the trawlers, the media has taken up the issue, and various agencies like the

Forest Department, the Fisheries Department, the Navy, the Coast Guard are all on board.

The turtles are still dying and the sickening tragedy is being repeated again this year. This winter's still young, and already, as we go to press, dead turtles are being washed ashore.

Will we only rest when all the turtles are gone, when all the fishes have been fished and when the entire coastline of Orissa is lit up for the defence, development and tourism purposes? No small corner of the sea or land for an ancient animal?

Wonder what the turtles would themselves have to say! And the birds too...?

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Sea Turtle workshop held in Port Blair

A two day capacity building and training workshop on sea turtle conservation was held in Port Blair in June. It was organised by the Andaman Nicobar Environmental Team (ANET) and the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT) in association with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) as part of the Govt. of India - United Nations Development Programme (GOI-UNDP) Sea Turtle Conservation Project.

Those who attended included officers from the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, scientists from the Central Agricultural Research Institute, National Institute of Ocean Technology, Fisheries and Forest Department officers and a batch of trainees from the Forest Training School, Andamans.

Source: 'Report on the GOI-UNDP Sea Turtle Workshop, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India', *Kachhapa*, October 2003.

Contact: **Harry Andrews**, MCBT, Post Bag No.4, Mamallapuram - 603104. Email: mcbtindia@vsnl.net

ASSAM

Plans to make Manas NP vibrant again

A number of steps are being initiated by the Forest Department to improve the infrastructure in Manas NP and to put the park back onto the tourist map. 12 of the 42 forest camps in the park have already been activated, and the FD is planning to reactivate the *Protected Area Update* 46

remaining within the coming year. Vacant posts are being filled up, patrolling paths have been reconstructed and weapons are also being provided to the forest personnel to improve security.

The FD has written to the Public Works Department to improve the condition of the road from Barpeta Road to Basbari to facilitate movement of tourists. Review meetings are also being held in every two months to monitor the progress of the revival plan. The Tourist Department Bungalow near Basbari, which was lying unused for years, has been renovated and leased out to a private party so that tourists visiting Manas can stay there. The Forest Department has further asked the Tourism Department to set up camps for allowing night stay of tourists at Mathanguri.

It has also been reported that the Forest Department is said to be receiving a lot support from the people living in the fringe villages. (Also See *PA Update* 45)

Source: R Dutta Choudhury. 'Plan to make Manas National Park vibrant again', *The Assam Tribune*, 07/10/03.

Contact: **Director**, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd. Dist. Barpeta – 781315, Assam. Tel: 03666 – 61413. Fax: 60253

State to declare four new sanctuaries

The Assam Forest Minister recently announced that four new wildlife sanctuaries would be created in the state. The announcement was made at a function during Wildlife Week. He however did not mention the specific forest areas which be made into sanctuaries. The minister pointed out that there was pressure to declare more areas as sanctuaries, but the state FD was not in a financial position to do so.

Additionally, the State Government has also created five Elephant Reserves and 28 Forest Development Agencies with about 1,000 Joint Forest Management Committees under them. These have been formed to involve the people in conservation of the forests and the wildlife and an amount of Rs. Three crores has been received from the Central Government for seven of such agencies. (Also see *PA Updates* 45, 43, and 41).

Source: 'Wildlife sanctuary status likely for more forest areas', *The Assam Tribune*, 08/10/03.

Contact: **Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhary**, C/o The Assam Company Ltd., G Bordoloi Path, Bamuni Maidan, Guwahati 781021, Assam. E-mail: badrul@sancharnet.in

New 'Nambar Daigrong Wildlife Sanctuary' declared

The Assam Government has recently issued a notification announcing the declaration of the Nambar Daigrong WLS spread over an area of 97.15 sq. kms. This includes 20.73 sq. kms. from Lower Daigrong Reserve Forest, 21.50 sq. kms. from Upper Daigrong Reserve Forest and 54.92 sq. kms. from the Nambar Reserve Forest.

Source: 'Nambar Reserve Forest now a wild life sanctuary', *The Assam Tribune*, 16/10/03.

Rs. 15 crore Central aid for Deepor Beel

The Central Government has agreed to sanction an amount of Rs. 15 crores for the 'development' of the Deepor Beel, which is also a wildlife sanctuary. The details of what has been proposed is not fully known, but steps are to be taken for the revival of the entire water body, to deal with the problems related to discharge of effluents in the water here and also for tree plantation around the beel.

The initial proposal submitted by the Assam Government was for an amount of. 25 crores. The Centre however decided to sanction only Rs. 15 crores. The money is to be spent over a period of five years and will be implemented by the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council. (Also see *PA Updates* 45, 43, 38, 36, 30, 26 & 25)

Source: 'Rs. 15 cr. Central aid for Deepor Beel Development', *The Assam Tribune*, 24/08/03.

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

CHANDIGARH

Zero silt plan suggested for Sukhna Lake

A former Engineer-in-Chief of Haryana's Irrigation Department has suggested a plan that he believes will be the final solution to the problem of the silting of the Sukhna Lake.

The plan involves building of a bund near the entry point of the lake. The bund will start from the right abutment and touch some high ground on the other bank so that water does not directly reach the lake. All the inflow will get diverted towards the regulator, where the level of the water will be raised. The plan then is to withdraw only the top two to three feet of water to avoid any silt. The water will be

filtered so that even fine silt is removed and the lake gets zero silt water. The filter will consist of jute and coconut fibre which will be put in an iron frame through which the water will be pumped to take out the silt.

The cost for building the bund and filter house is estimated to be Rs. 40 lakhs. This is much less than the Rs. 2 crores that the local administration plans to spend for the setting up silt extruders at the lake. (Also see *PA Updates* 44 & 29).

Source: AS Prashar. 'Zero-silt plan for Sukhna Lake', *The Tribune*, 06/08/03.

GUJARAT

Chemical spill inside Gulf of Kutch Marine NP; guilty Tata Chemicals gets conditional approval to continue.

A spill from the Tata Chemical's factory in Mithapur is reported to have impacted plant and animal life inside the Gulf of Kutch Marine National Park in October. Tata Chemicals officials admitted that there was an 'accidental spill' of calcium chloride into sector four and the sanctuary area.

After processing soda ash, wastewater is released into the settling pond where solid waste settles. The remaining water is released into the sea. On this occasion the earthen pond suddenly cracked dispensing the slurry, comprising water and solid waste into the waters of the national park.

Initial reports suggested that 62 hectares of the park and about 1500 mangrove plants were damaged. Due to the calcium deposit, some parts of the land too have been permanently lost. In addition to the mangroves, damage is also expected to the benthic species, deep in the sea. The Forest Department estimates also suggest that while the three lakh tonne slurry may have travelled to as wide an area as four km, nearly 150 acres of land too has been directly affected. Soil and mangrove samples have been collected and sent for laboratory testing to the Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB).

This incident has come within three years of a salt brine spill which had a severe impact on the mangroves within the park. Company officials suggested that the break might have been caused by some seismic activity, but forest officials have disagreed with this.

Four employees of the plant, including a manager were arrested on charges of alleged negligence. They were later released on bail. The GPCB also ordered the closure of the company's

soda ash (washing soda) manufacturing plant following this incident. Subsequently, less than a week later, the Gujarat Government gave conditional approval to restart the plant.

The decision was taken on the ground that the plant officials would clean up all the slurry waste and also fully comply with all the safety measures in future. The company has also agreed to build a new pond, with a cement-concrete wall surrounding it.

This apart, the Tata Chemicals has approached the Coast Guard and the Goa-based National Oceanographic Institute to find out the exact nature of the damage done to the MNP and take all the remedial measures in future. (Also see *PA Updates* 30, 29, 27, 25, & 23).

Source: 'Chemical spill affects marine life in Jamnagar', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com 22/10/03. 'Four held in Tata Chemicals leakage case', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com 25/10/03. 'Tata Chemicals plant to reopen', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com 31/10/03.

Wild Ass census in January 2004

The Gujarat Forest Department will be undertaking a census operation to count the number of the Wild Asses in the Little Rann of Kutch in the second week of January 2004. The Chief Wildlife Warden of the state, Mr. Pradeep Khanna informed that over 200 select census staff, drawn from various sanctuaries, would undertake the job.

Source: 'Officials gear up for wild ass census' www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com 28/11/03.

New lion sanctuary proposed at Mithiyala in Amreli District

The Gujarat State Government has proposed the creation of a new sanctuary for lions at Mithiyala in Amreli District. This area is reported to already have nine lions that have moved from the forests in Gir. The new sanctuary would be spread over an area of 18 sq. kms. and will be connected to Gir by a special corridor. The state government is awaiting the nod of the centre to go ahead with the proposal. The project is expected to initially cost Rs. Two crores.

The proposed plans of the state to move lions from Gir to the forests in Barda now stand cancelled. This development is also likely to put a serious question mark on the project for the transfer

of lions from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh (see *PA Updates* 43, 34, 33, 32, 26, 22 & 20).

Source: Anil Pathak. 'Gir's lions to have new pride of place', *The Times of India*, 25/10/03.

Contact: **Bharat Pathak**, CF (Wildlife) Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/ 630051. Fax: 631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in

Kutch Bustard Sanctuary to be expanded

The two sq. kms. Kutch Bustard Sanctuary is to be expanded substantially and will now cover an area of 700 sq. kms. This is to be a 10 year project and the first phase is the creation of a zone of the sanctuary near Nalia in Western Kutch.

The areas where the birds breed is to be designated as the core zone, a concept being introduced in the state for the first time for a bird sanctuary. Each of these breeding grounds would spread over an area of 300-400 hectares and are to be developed scientifically to meet all the requirements of the birds such as nesting, chick rearing, male displays, resting, roosting foraging and dust bathing.

Source: DV Maheshwari. 'Bustard sanctuary in Kutch being expanded', *Indian Express*, 30/10/03.

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

HARYANA

Haryana to get two new wildlife sanctuaries

The Haryana Chief Minister, Mr. Om Prakash Chautala recently announced that two new wildlife sanctuaries would be created in the state, one each in the Sirsa and Yamunanagar districts. He was speaking at a state-level function the Lal Ottu Weir at Sirsa in connection with the Wildlife Week. Further details are however not available.

Source: 'Haryana to get two new wildlife sanctuaries', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com 01/10/03.

Nature interpretation centre at Bhindawas

The Haryana Government has decided to set up a nature interpretation centre at the Bhindawas Bird Sanctuary in Jhajjar district in order to highlight the

importance of conservation and preservation of wildlife and bio-diversity.

The Centre is to be built at a cost of Rs. 22 lakh. The road leading to the sanctuary would also be constructed by the government at an estimated expense of Rs. 44 lakh and a craft centre was being set up by the local Red Cross Society.

Source: 'Nature interpretation centre at Jhajjar', *The Tribune*, 25/11/03.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Schemes to reduce local people dependency on Great Himalayan NP

The ninth meeting of the governing body of the Biodiversity Conservation Society (BiodCs) which helps manage the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) was held recently. The BiodCs is a state - enabled mechanism to plough back the income that is generated by the tourist entry fee, paddle boating and other activities into the maintenance of the three Manali-based *van vihars* as well as the resource dependent communities at the GHNP.

In the meeting that was presided over by the State Forest Minister Prof. Chander Kumar, a number of community development schemes to reduce the dependency of local people on the park's natural resources were approved. One of these was related to the marketing of vermi-compost being produced in the *van vihars* in Manali.

Source: Community schemes approved, *The Tribune*, 08/10/03.

Contact: **Sanjeeva Pandey**, Director, GHNP, Shamshi, Dist Kullu 175 125 Himachal Pradesh. Email: dirghnp@vsnl.com

JAMMU & KASHMIR

State to take steps for *hangul* conservation

The Jammu & Kashmir State Government has initiated steps to ensure the conservation of the *hangul*. Conservation breeding centres and deer parks are being set up at the two famous resorts of Pahalgam and Gulmarg. Anti-poaching squads and social awareness committees are also being raised for the purpose.

The total population of the deer is estimated to be only about 170 animals. The militancy problem in the state, in particular, has taken a heavy toll on this endangered animal. An estimated 400 of them

were killed in the period 1990 to 1993. Villagers living in the vicinity of the park say that both, the militants and the security forces were responsible for these killings.

Poaching, reportedly, continues even today because the meat of this deer is supposed to be very delicious. As per the law, those caught poaching could be sentenced to seven years in prison, but till date no one has been prosecuted in this context.

Source: 'Red deer falls prey to rebellion', *The Hindu Business Line*, 20/11/03.

KARNATAKA

Cauvery catchment forests to be brought under sanctuary cover

The Karnataka Government has chalked out a plan for the conservation of the catchment areas of the Cauvery River by declaring the forests here as wildlife sanctuaries.

It is estimated that about 810 sq. kms. of forests, which form part of the Cauvery catchment area, will be included in Brahmagiri, Pushpagiri and Talacauvery Wildlife Sanctuaries. Subsequently, these sanctuaries will come under a national park, paving way for stricter enforcement.

The move has been prompted after a recent study that showed a sharp decrease in water inflows into the KRS dam over the last decade. The average inflow was 186.78 tmcft in 1990-95, as against 119.65 tmcft during 1996-2000.

While a shift in the rainfall pattern is said to be one of the reasons for this, other serious reasons include encroachment, exploitation of the forest wealth, human interference, timber-logging, deforestation and land degradation.

Source: Aravind Gowda. 'State moves to save Cauvery', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com 27/10/03.

Karnataka bans plastic in PAs

The Karnataka State Government has banned the use of plastics, including carrybags, cups, plates, spoons, forks and straws, in all national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and at all the resorts of the Jungle Lodges in the state.

According to an official notification, there has been a rapid increase in the use of 'use and throw' non-biodegradable plastic articles, which were clogging drains, disturbing soil microbial activity and

causing soil pollution. Besides, it was found that even wild animals consumed these thin plastics along with foodstuffs, resulting in their death by choking.

While the government has directed the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) to furnish monthly compliance reports, the Managing Director of Jungle Lodges has been directed to send monthly compliance reports to the environment secretary.

The ban is to come in force immediately. The government has urged the authorities to use biodegradable alternatives made of paper, wood, pressed leaf, jute and cotton in place of plastic.

Source: 'Govt bans plastic at wildlife sanctuaries', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 03/11/03.

Severe water shortage results in invasion by cattle of Bandipur TR and Nugu WLS

Failed rains and a severe water crisis in the region has forced farmers to drive their cattle into the forests of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve and the adjoining forests of the Nugu Wildlife Sanctuary and Himavad Gopalswamy forest range. An estimated 200 villages and nearly 1.5 lakh heads of cattle have been affected by this water shortage.

As water bodies dry up, farmers are venturing deep into the forests with their livestock to reach the backwaters of the Nugu dam (see *PA Update* 45). Not only is this directly affecting wildlife, there is also the fear of transmission of diseases from the cattle to wildlife. In 1968, the entire gaur population in the forests here was on the verge of being wiped out, following an outbreak of rinderpest. It was found that gaurs contracted the disease from domestic animals that had ventured into forests.

The approach taken by the Forest Department to deal with the situation is one that involves dialogue and educative programmes. The department has vaccinated all cattle in villages located around the Park to check transmission of diseases, but senior officials say that it is only good rain that can solve the problem.

Source: Aravind Gowda. 'Cowed down by cattle, tigers flee Bandipur forest', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 13/10/03.

Contact: **Deputy Director**, Bandipur National Park, Gundlupet, Chamrajnagar 571111, Karnataka

Survey throws up 150 unnamed insect species in Bandipur NP

In a survey of insects in Bandipur National Park, Green Club, a Mysore based team of nature enthusiasts has come across 150 species of insects that have yet to be identified. They have also included butterflies in their survey.

In the first survey, the group came across more than 300 species, of which 22 species of butterflies, 23 of moths and 40 of beetles have already been identified.

This the first time such a survey of insects has been carried out in Bandipur.

Source: 'Over 150 unnamed species of insects in Bandipur', *The Hindu*, 20/11/03.

Rs. 13.75 crores master plan proposed for the Bannerghata Biological Park

The Zoo Authority of Karnataka (ZAK) has prepared a Rs. 13.75 crore master plan to upgrade the infrastructure at the Bannerghatta Biological Park. This includes plans to upgrade the safari parks and to provide high class visitor for education, recreation and relaxation.

The project is to be submitted to the Karnataka Infrastructure Development Corporation (KUIDFC) for funding. Once the concept plan is accepted in principle, a detailed project report will be drawn with the help of consultants. As per the norms, KUIDFC funds only 50 per cent of the amount for a project. The remaining has to be mobilised by the proponents of the project. The project proposal has suggested a loan of Rs. 68.750 lakh from KUIDFC at an interest rate of six per cent per annum.

The ZAK has proposed to mobilise the matching grant with contributions from the Department of Biotechnology and the Government of India, which has already agreed to fund the 'butterfly park'. It also hopes to receive contributions from the Karnataka Government by way of 'grants-in-aid'.

The Central Zoo Authority (CZA), New Delhi, has already agreed to provide funds for the improvement of animal housing, and veterinary care at the park. Meanwhile, the State Government has permitted the ZAK to use the amount obtained from entry fee and other revenue collected by the park for development work.

Source: Shankar Bennur. 'On a betterment spree', *Deccan Herald*, 24/10/03.

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

KERALA

Mathikettan Shola declared a national park; more in the pipeline.

The Kerala State Government recently issued a notification declaring Mathikettan Shola as a National Park. The notified area is spread over 1281 hectares and falls in the Pooppara village in Idukki District. Mathikettan Shola was at the centre of a controversy last year following media exposes on large-scale takeover of the pristine shola forests in the area by certain land sharks.

The then District Collector was among the officials placed under suspension when an inquiry ordered by the Government pointed to their role in facilitating the encroachment. This tract, comprising part of the Cardamom Hill Reserve (CHR), had been notified as a 'Reserve Forest' by the erstwhile Travancore Government in 1897. Subsequently, portions of the territory were leased out for cardamom cultivation. A major problem hampering protection efforts in CHR was a Government notification providing for dual control in the region, with the Revenue Department having charge of the land and the Forest Department, the trees growing there.

Following the controversy over the encroachments, the State Government had issued a notification in October 2002, giving total control of the Mathikettan Shola to the Forest Department.

The Government is also reported to have readied the draft of two other notifications for protecting Pampadum Shola, Mannavan Shola, Idivara Shola and Pullardi Shola, which are all situated in Idukki district. They are also to be given the status of National Parks.

One of the notifications pertains to the Pampadum Shola, which has an area of 131.80 hectares. The other envisages a single National Park by clubbing Mannavan Shola, Idivara Shola and Pullardi Shola, covering a total area of around 750 hectares. This multiple-shola National Park will be called Anamudi Shola National Park.

Source: Mathikettan declared national park', *The Hindu*, 21/11/03.

Rs. 125 crore loan from Malaysia for road inside Periyar TR.

The Malaysian government has agreed to provide a loan of Rs. 125 crores for the construction of the Mannarkulangi -Pamba Road to Sabarimalai inside the Periyar Tiger Reserve. The project had been proposed by Mr. Swami Velu, the Malaysian Minister for Public Works when he visited Sabarimalai five years ago. The Delhi based Lee Associates had been given Rs. 2 crores for the initial survey. There are many Sabarimalai Ayappan devotees who come from Malaysia and want their journey to Sabarimalai to be comfortable with all conveniences. After waiting for a long time, the Kerala State Government is reported to have accepted the Malaysian proposal.

Recently, Mr. Bhatto Pallanivel, the Malaysian Rural Development Deputy Minister assured that the money will be transferred as soon as the the Kerala Government signs the agreement. The construction of the road will be undertaken by the Construction Industries Development Board (CIDB) of the Malaysian Government. The contract will be for 20 years. The work will be completed in the first five years. The repayment of the loan would start from the 6th year and the condition is that there must be a provision for its repayment within the State budget.

A two lane road from Mannarkulangi to Plapalli, and a four lane road from there to Pamba is being planned. Up to Plapalli the width of the road will be 18 metres. The road will be constructed in such a way that all the wild animals can easily cross over. The sides of the road will be concretized instead of building it with rocks. The cost of construction of a kilometer of road at international standards will be 2 crores.

Source: Mannarakulangi - Pamba: Road to international status', *Mathrubhumi*, 21/11/03.

'Malaysian Minister assures money for Sabarimalai road project', *Mathrubhumi*, 25/11/03.

Periyar Tiger Reserve launches electronic newsletter

The Periyar Tiger Reserve has launched an electronic newsletter that can be subscribed from the following website www.periyartigerreserve.org. This is in addition to the electronic discussion forum that already exists and is open for all to join.

Assembly passes Kerala Forest Bill

The Kerala State Assembly recently passed the Kerala Forest (Vesting and Management of Ecologically Fragile Lands) Bill. It replaces an ordinance first promulgated in 2000 and reissued several times.

This now empowers the government to take over ecologically fragile land near forest areas from private parties to ensure their conservation. (Ed. More details and the larger implications of this are not known.)

Source: 'Assembly passes Kerala Forest Bill', *The New Indian Express*, 08/08/03.

Large forests around Silent Valley NP destroyed for cannabis, plantain cultivation

Hundreds of acres of forests in the Attappady Reserve forests in the buffer zone of the Silent Valley National Park, are reported to have been destroyed for the cultivation of *ganja* (*Cannabis sativa*). According to a conservative estimate, over 1000 acres of forests have been cleared for these plantations in the border areas of Galazi, Ankinda, Thukuddi, Melethudukky, Anavai and Kadukumanna. These areas are within the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and environmentalists are of the opinion that these plantations could pose a serious threat to the rainforests here.

Kerala Forest Department officials were recently also attacked by an armed gang when they went on a raid to some of the areas. In raids conducted till October, earlier this year, the FD says that they have destroyed over one lakh *ganja* plants, with an estimated value of Rs. 21.4 crores in the Attappady Forest Range alone.

The plantations are supposed to be the work of a well-organised *ganja* mafia that has recently moved to this area from Idukki. This large-scale cultivation is going on even as the Government is implementing a Rs. 219 crore eco-restoration project in the Attappady hills. The project is aided by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation to arrest the desertification of the area and to save the rain forests of Silent Valley.

In another incident 35 acres of forest at Kakkivani Malavaram under the Mannarkad Forest Division were also cleared for plantain cultivation, allegedly, by a former village officer with the connivance of local forest officials. The village officer was recently arrested in the case.

Source: G Prabhakaran. 'Ganja mafia haunts Silent Valley area', *The Hindu*, 21/11/03.

G Prabhakaran. '35 acres in Silent Valley forests destroyed', *The Hindu*, 18/11/03.

MADHYA PRADESH

East West corridor moved out of Madhav NP

It has been decided that the East West Corridor under the PM's National Highway Development Program is now going to pass south of the NP instead of going through it, as had been earlier planned. It is also hoped that once the corridor gets built, the state highway, which presently passes through the park will be shut down.

The village of Ballarpur too has been relocated from the park and the tribal relocatees are reported to be happy with the new land and facilities they have have been given.

Source: Email from Shailesh Pathak dated 08/11/03.

Contact: **Shailesh Pathak**. Email: spathak@cg.nic.in

Tel: 0771 - 5066300 / 5066301. Fax: 2221271

MAHARASHTRA

State government in favour of hydro-electric projects in wildlife sanctuaries

The Maharashtra State Government, led by Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde is keen on going ahead with four hydro-electric projects that the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has refused clearance on grounds that they will affect forest areas and wildlife sanctuaries. The CM has urged that the issue of their clearance should be pursued with the Centre. The four projects are those at Chikhaldara in Amravati district, Humbarli in Satara district, Kardi-Bhogiv in Kolhapur district and Malshej Ghat in Pune district.

The 400 MW Chikhaldara project was rejected on the grounds that it would affect the Melghat Tiger Reserve. Site clearance has been denied to the 400 MW Humbarli project, as the project area comes under the Koyana Wildlife Sanctuary. Project officials have said that while the sanctuary had an area of over 40,000 hectares, that required for the project was only 109 hectares. They have pointed out that of this, 32.71 hectares have already been deleted by the Satara District Collector. They have also made the claim that the reservoir that

will be created because of the project will benefit the forests and the wildlife here.

The jurisdiction of the 400 MW Karadi-Bhogiv project in the catchment of the Warna dam is under reserve forest in Chandoli, of which 678 hectares are needed for the project. As far as the Malshej Ghat project is concerned, 74 hectares of the land needed is forest land.

Source: Radheshyam Jadhav. 'CM for hydro projects shot down by MoEF', *Indian Express*, 21/08/03.

Contact: (For Melghat TR)

Field Director, Melghat Tiger Reserve
Amravati- 444 602 Maharashtra
Kishore Rithe, Satpuda Foundation 1st
Floor, "Pratishtha", Bharat Nagar, Akoli,
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Political lobbying obstructs declaration of Rajmachi and Tamhini-Sudhagadh Sanctuaries

The final declaration of the Rajmachi and Tamhini Sudhagadh Wildlife Sanctuaries in the Western Ghats (see *PA Update 27*), situated in the Pune and Raigad districts, is reportedly being obstructed by powerful political and corporate bigwigs to safeguard their lavish farmhouses, weekend resorts and health parlours.

The creation of a protected area in this region had been approved in principal by the State Wildlife Advisory Board in 1998-99. It had been decided to split the proposed sanctuary into two — the Rajmachi sanctuary, measuring 122.96 sq. kms. along the northern portion, and the Tamhini-Sudhagadh sanctuary, measuring 228.24 sq. kms. along the southern portion.

In 1999-2000, the proposal was submitted to the state government. However, objections from some local villagers and later from a powerful political lobby prevented the proposal from seeing the light of the day.

Some of the villages that come under the projects are Walvan, Rajmachi, Waksai, Kane, Tungarli, Pangoli, Jevrewadi, Budhle and Karandoli, among others.

Source: Neil Pate. 'Political lobbying blights sanctuary projects',
www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 14/11/03

New sanctuary at Tungareshwar

The 85 sq. kms. Tungareshwar forests, north of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Borivli, have been declared a wildlife sanctuary. It is hoped that this large chunk of contiguous forest would help in improving animal habitats and ensuring the protection of their migratory corridors.

This is the 35th sanctuary in the state now in addition to the five national parks

This announcement was made by the Chief Minister of the State recently during the Seminar of the Centenary Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) held in Mumbai.

The gazette notification for the same has also been issued.

Source: 'Tungareshwar made wildlife sanctuary', *The Hindu Business Line*, 14/11/03.

Contact: **Deepak Apte**, BNHS, Hornbill House,
Shaheed Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai- 400
023, Maharashtra. Tel: 022 - 22821811.
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Chief Wildlife Warden – Maharashtra,
Jaika Building, Civil Lines, Nagpur –
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530126.

MANIPUR

First meeting of the Manipur State Board for Wildlife held

The first Manipur State Board for Wildlife meeting was held in the month of November in Imphal. Some of the important matters discussed included the management of the Keibul Lamjao National Park and; identification of Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) under the Environment Protection Act (EPA); framing of guidelines for identification of Community Reserves; and matters relating to the regularisation of forest guards, providing them with better equipment for field work and the anti-poaching campaign.

The Member Secretary of the board, Dr. RB Lala, Chief Wildlife Warden, Manipur, informed the members that a file had been forwarded to the Chief Minister for forming of a State level Co-ordination Committee for the management of the Loktak Lake with particular reference to maintaining the water level in the lake at a desired level during the lean

season with the objective of revitalising the Keibul Lamjao National Park.

The committee will consist of representatives from the Irrigation & Flood Control Department, the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation, the Loktak Development Authority and the Forest Department.

Source: Salaam Rajesh. Email dated 27/11/03.

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

Salaam Rajesh, Sagolband Salam, Leikai. PO: Imphal-1, Manipur. Tel: 0385-222395, Email: salamrajesh@rediffmail.com; salraj_imp@yahoo.com;

ORISSA

Chandka elephants stray into villages near Bhubaneswar

A herd of about 18 elephants strayed from the Chandka Wildlife Sanctuary and created panic in villages of Nandankanan, Patia and Andharua near Bhubaneswar in the month of November. The pachyderms had been entering the villages mostly at night and the terrified villagers had stopped venturing out of their homes, particularly at night.

The problem of wild elephants straying into human settlements causing large damage to crops, homes and even resulting in human deaths has escalated in some parts of Orissa in the last few years (see *PA Updates* 41, 39, 34, 32 & 29)

Source: Jatindra Dash. 'Elephants stray into villages near Bhubaneswar', *Indo-Asian News Service*, 17/11/03.

Olive Ridleys sighted off the Orissa Coast

Large number of endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles were seen off the Orissa coast in the month of October. A joint meeting of forest officials, Fishery Officials, environmentalists, and NGOs was organised by the State Chief Wildlife Warden to chalk out plans for the protection of the turtles.

The Forest Department has decided to establish 4 off shore and 12 on shore turtle protection camps in Babubali, Aagarnasi, Devi and Rusikulya areas. These will be equipped with VHF sets and mechanised boats.

Coast Guard officials of Paradeep have also been directed to be on guard and the police too will

be deputed for the protection of the turtles. A Central Turtle Monitoring Unit has been set up under the charge of turtle researcher Dr. Chandrasekhar Kar in Bhubaneswar. Of the 480 kms. long coast line the forest and fishery officials will protect 40 kms. near the three major rookery of the turtles. The CWLW said that the problem created by lights from the Missile Test Range at Wheeler's Island near Gahirmatha, from the baby Prawn catchers in Devi river mouth and from the Jayasgree Chemical Plant near the Rusikulya would also have to be dealt with.

It has been pointed out by NGOs and Fishery Department officials that trawlers were not using Turtle Excluder Devices (TED) due to which a large number of turtles were being killed. This was in spite of the fact that last year the fishery office had distributed 1820 TEDs to the trawler owners. The Wildlife Warden has directed fishery officials to seize all the non-TED fitted trawlers. Last year the licenses of 244 fishing trawlers had been cancelled by the fishery department on the ground that TEDs were not being used.

A ban has also been imposed on fishing trawlers and traditional fishermen from venturing into the Gahirmatha Sanctuary during the turtle nesting season which is from November 1 to March 1

Source: 'Olive Ridley Sea Turtles have arrived', *Waves*, 27/10/03.

20 trawlers seized near Gahirmatha

Wildlife officials in Orissa have seized at least 20 mechanised trawlers operating illegally in the prohibited zone in near Gahirmatha. Trawling operations have over the years been the primary cause of largescale mortality of the olive ridley sea turtles that nest on the beaches here.

Patrolling is reported to have been intensified this season to deal with the problem and the FD has also set up temporary camps with the help of local people for the purpose. Four of the vessels were seized were from the Andhra Pradesh coast. The 50 odd crewmembers were also arrested.

Source: '20 trawlers seized from Orissa beach'. www.hindustantimes.com, 03/12/03.

Charges of venison consumption inside Bhitarkanika by legislators denied

The Privilege Committee of the Orissa State Assembly recently recommended that the state government initiate legal action against the person

who had made a “false and baseless” charge that members of the State SC/ST committee had hunted and feasted on deer inside the Bhitarkanika National Park in January 2001 (see *PA Update* 31).

A news item had been published in a section of the local press making these allegations, and Manoj Kumar Satpathy, President of the Manava Seva Parishad, had lodged a FIR at Kendrapara Police Station based on this report

The Privilege Committee headed by Deputy Speaker, Mr. Rama Chandra Panda, which probed the said allegation, found it to be “irresponsible and baseless”. The committee directed the Oriya daily to publish a note of regret within seven days for the news item in question and also recommended some action against the person who had brought charges and lodged an FIR in the matter.

Source: 'Assembly rubbishes deer meat charges', *The Statesman*, 29/10/03.

Police protection to be provided to forest staff

The Chief Minister of Orissa, Mr. Navin Patnaik, has said that efforts were being made at the administrative department level to provide police protection to forest staff when they carry out their activities. Steps are also being taken to create a task force that will be deployed in vulnerable areas and hot spots. He made these announcements recently while addressing the general body meeting of the Orissa Forest Rangers Association.

It was further pointed out, that after the recent amendment of the Orissa Forest Act, forest laws had become more stringent and most of the forest offences were now non-bailable.

Referring to the recently launched reorganisation of forest field formation by integration of the territorial, wildlife, social forestry and afforestation wings (see *PA Update* 45), the CM said that this has facilitated the optimal utilisation of staff, reduced avoidable problems of coordination among different wings and created a more conducive arrangement for development and forest management with the participation of villagers. In the process of reorganisation, 98 more forest ranges have been created in the state and the total number of forest and wildlife ranges has now gone up to 281.

He further pointed out that the state government had already introduced a scheme from March 2001 for rewarding deserving forest subordinate officials who show exemplary performance in protecting forests and wildlife. A similar scheme was also being worked on for

rewarding forest staff and informers while seizing any wildlife produce and where a certain percentage of sale proceeds of confiscated produce will be earmarked as the incentive.

One of the reasons for suggestions to provide additional protection and incentives to the forest staff is said to be the increasing incidence of attacks on the forest staff by the timber mafia and smugglers.

Source: 'CM promises police protection for forest personnel', *The Statesman*, 22/11/03.

Increased salinity in Chilka affects migratory bird population

Increased salinity levels following the opening of its mouth to the sea (see *PA Updates* 40, 38, 34, 30 and 26) is reported to have adversely impacted the migratory bird populations that are visiting Chilka Lake. The increase in salinity has resulted in a major change in the flora and fauna of the lake and also resulted in the reduction of aquatic myophites, the ideal food of the birds visiting the lake.

The increased salinity is also said to have cleared a weed that had infested the lake in the past and has helped in the emergence of new species that had disappeared from the lake. It has also resulted in the growth of different varieties of fish and prawn but, on the other hand, also destroyed the habitat for the birds. Consequently bird congregation has been sighted in the river mouth areas where salinity was considerably low than the central area of the lake.

Wildlife officials apprehend that if the lake continues to have the current level of salinity, the migratory birds might choose some other place for their winter abode.

Three years back, before the mouth of the lake was opened, over eight lakh migratory birds visited the lake during winter. Last year this was down drastically, to almost half the earlier population. The number of species of birds however, is reported to have gone up, from 180 a couple of years ago, to 211 in the last season.

Source: 'Migratory birds face shortage of natural habitat in Chilka', *The Daily Excelsior*, 28/10/03.

Contact: **AK Patnaik**, CDA, BJ-45, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 – 434485. Email: ajitpatnaik@hotmail.com
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Villagers join government to check poaching in Chilka

Villagers in Orissa are teaming up with wildlife officials to check poaching of migratory and domestic birds in the Chilka Lake. Three people from each village around the lake will join the anti-poaching drive. The State Government has also created a special Chilka Wildlife Division and 14 special squads have been set up to check the poaching of birds here.

A large number of people in the 132 villages around the lake earlier trapped birds as their principal source of livelihood. FD and NGO led initiatives over the last few years have been trying to wean them away from hunting and helping them in the search for alternative sources of income (see *PA Updates* 40, 34 & 32)

Source: Jatindra Dash. 'Villagers join government to check poaching in Chilka, *Indo-Asian News Service*, 23/10/03.

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

PUNJAB

Rs. 70 million project for Harike

A Rs. 70 million project is being initiated for the Harike Lake Wildlife Sanctuary. The Central Government has already sanctioned a project for eco-tourism here and funds that have been lying with the Punjab State Council for Science and Technology, have now been earmarked for this. The Departments of Forests and Wildlife, Science and Technology, Irrigation and Tourism would be actively involved.

The work is to be carried out in two phases. Infrastructure would be developed to create awareness about the wetlands among tourists, casual visitors and the local population. The wetlands would also be developed for serious visitors who would visit Harike for bird watching or research. Watchtowers, log huts and other facilities will be provided for the visitors. An interpretation centre, complete with models, visuals and audio displays and neon signs will also be developed. The Delhi based NGO, Wetlands International, South Asia (WISA), was being consulted for suggestions and infrastructure development.

This development of Harike is being modeled on the work that has happened at Chilka Lake in Orissa in the last few years.

Source: Arup Chanda. 'Punjab to develop wetlands as another Chilka', *Indo-Asian News Service*, 07/10/03.

Bishnois oppose Punjab Government move to allow killing of *neelgai*

The recent move of the Punjab State Government to allow the killing of *neelgai* to deal with the huge losses caused to agriculture and crops by them, has drawn strong opposition from the Bishnoi community. The President of the *Akhil Bhartiya Jeev Raksha Bishnoi Samaj*, Hanuman Bishnoi has opposed the move saying that their guru had ordained the community to protect animals and trees.

The problem of crop depredation by *neelgais* is severe in the states of Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab. While Haryana has banned the hunting of the animal, Rajasthan and recently the Punjab government have relaxed rules for its hunting. In both cases, the decision has been governed by strong demands from farmers who have suffered devastating losses.

A study instituted by the Haryana Agricultural University (HAU) and carried out two years ago by Dr. RS Dalal reported that the problem was particularly severe in Southern Haryana in the districts of Rohtak, Jhajjar, Hisar, Sirsa, Bhiwani and Mahendergarh. It has been estimated that the loss caused to standing crops in some areas is 50%, while in certain cases it can go upto 100%, particularly when the fields are invaded by a big group of *neelgai*.

In the Bathinda District of Punjab, farmers say that groups of *neelgais* numbering 100 and more invade fields and totally destroy the crop. The Deer Park in Bhatinda too has been badly affected. The employees here are forced to be on their guard round the clock, to ward off the invading *neelgais* who disturb the animals in the park. The *neelgais* reportedly break the cages of the animals and eat the food meant for them.

In Haryana farmers have often resorted to dangerous techniques to kill the invading animals. They often lay live electric wires around their fields. While the technique has proved partially successful, it has also cost some human lives. In one instance two young brothers were electrocuted by wires in fields in Fatehabad district. In another incident two animals were electrocuted near Fatehabad and a "mahapanchayat" of the neighbouring Bishnoi

villages ordained a fine of Rs. 5100 on two accused who admitted to have laid electric wire in the field.

Source: Rajesh Deol. 'To kill a blue bull or not',
Deccan Herald, 04/08/03.

TAMIL NADU

Feasibility study completed; Tuticorin harbour to be deepened as part of Sethusamudran project

The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur is supposed to have completed and submitted its feasibility study of the Sethusamudran project in the 2nd half of November. The process of the completion of the report involved two rounds of meetings with representatives of the public, fishermen and exporters' associations, NGOs and academicians; gathering public opinion, at Ramanathapuram and Tuticorin and two rounds of official level meetings in Chennai.

The Tuticorin Port Trust, which played a pivotal role in conducting the feasibility study, is now expected to submit a detailed project report, either in December 2003 or January 2004. The port would soon commence deepening of the harbour by 12.80 metres to facilitate hassle-free movement of larger vessels.

The Chairman of the Tuticorin Port Trust, Mr. NK Ragupathy has said that the 21 islands here that also aided fish breeding in this region, would not be affected in anyway by the project as the proposed sea-route or the canal was far away from these islands. He assured that there would be constant monitoring of the discharge of effluents into the sea by the ships, and an 'environmental watcher' would board all ships leaving the harbour.

There has been major concern that this project would adversely impact the ecology of the Gulf of Mannar National Park, and a number of organisations have expressed their opposition to the project (see *PA Updates* 40, 39,38, 36, and 30).

Source: 'Sethu project: deepening of Tuticorin harbour to start soon', *The Hindu*, 29/09/03.

UTTAR PRADESH

Threat to Okhla Bird Sanctuary from flyover

A flyover project commissioned by the New Okhla Industrial Development Authority (NOIDA) to connect to Delhi is likely to adversely affect Okhla Bird Sanctuary, located on the Delhi -Uttar Pradesh

border. The flyover is to come up within 15 meters of the boundary of the sanctuary and will also completely destroy Smriti Van, that has been made commemorate the martyrs of the Kargill war.

The matter has been taken up the Samrakshan Trust and it has been found out that there have been no feasibility and traffic density surveys carried out to determine the need for this flyover. Reputed architects and urban designers who have looked at this project, too have certified that the current design of the flyover is unnecessarily complicated and appears directed towards increasing the financial outlay of the project. They have proposed an alternate design that will avoid damage to Smriti van and to the sanctuary.

The trust has also taken the matter to the Allahabad High Court. Reputed ornithologists and environmental organisations too have written to the NOIDA authority, opposing the project.

Source: Email from Arpan Sharma.

Contact: **Arpan Sharma** Samrakshan Trust, E-314, Anandlok, Mayur Vihar Phase - I New Delhi-110091. Tel.: 011 - 2279 5088; Fax: 2275 1907. Email: arpan@samrakshan.org
Web site: www.samrakshan.org

Workshop held on Gangetic dolphin conservation

A two-day workshop on conservation of the Gangetic Dolphin was organised by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE), North in Lucknow in the month of the September. Around 30 participants, including experts, members of voluntary organisations, government officials, teachers and educators attended the workshop.

The workshop recommended that the dolphin be declared the 'national aquatic animal' and to observe Dolphin Conservation Day. The participants developed a plan of action to be implemented with the help of various stakeholders in the areas where dolphins are concentrated and are facing threats. It was also agreed that the conservation of dolphins should be accorded priority and a 'Project Gangetic Dolphin' should be launched on a priority basis.

Source: 'Stress to conserve Gangetic dolphins', *The Pioneer*, 13/09/03.

Monkeys poisoned in Hastinapur WLS

More than 50 monkeys were found poisoned in the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary in the month of

August. Though no one has been arrested in the matter, it is suspected that local farmers, whose fields have been damaged by the monkeys are responsible for this. The site where the monkey carcasses were located is about 13 kms from Mawana on the middle Ganges canal near the village of Nasirpur Sathla. A complaint has been lodged at the Parikshhatgarh Police Station.

The knowledge of the dead monkeys itself came to light only when one of the villagers went to see his crop. He found about a dozen carcasses of the monkeys on the service lane of the middle Ganges canal. What happened then seems enough to nail the poisoning theory. The man was accompanied by his pet dog who found a sweet near one of the carcasses and ate it. In just 10 minutes, the dog slowed down and began to stumble. It then collapsed and died on the spot. The farmer then informed the Sub-Divisional Magistrate about the incident.

Ten of the carcasses have been sent for post-mortem examination, which will hopefully determine the cause of death.

Source: SP Singh. 'Poison makes monkey of wildlife protection', *The Pioneer*, 24/08/03.

UTTARANCHAL

Workshop held on the elephants of the Shivalik Elephant Reserve in Dehradun

Friends of the Doon Society (FOD), Dehra Dun in association with the Indian Heritage Research Foundation, supported by The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee, USA and the Alliance for Elephants, and hosted by Parmarth Niketan, Rishikesh, recently held a workshop on the elephants of the Shivalik Elephant Reserve.

The IG Forests and Director, Project Elephant, Mr. SS Bist, and the Dean, Faculty of Wildlife Sciences, Wildlife Institute of India, Dr. AJT Johnsingh made keynote presentations on the present status of the many problems associated with conservation of its habitat in the forests surrounding the holy towns of Rishikesh and Haridwar. Shri AS Negi, former Chief Wildlife Warden, and until recently Managing Director of the Forest Corporation of Uttaranchal, chaired an open house interactive session.

A small photo exhibition was also put up by FOD at the venue of the workshop, with contributions from the Wildlife Preservation Society of India, featuring pictures of elephants killed by poachers and hit by trains. At the end of the

workshop, during the customary *aarti* at Parmarth Ghat on the bank of the Ganga, H.H. Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji Maharaj, President, Parmarth Niketan spoke about the importance of the elephant and conservation of the habitat of an animal revered as a deity in India.

Source: 'Workshop held on the elephants of the Shivalik Elephant Reserve in Dehradun', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 11/10/03.

Wildlife tourism grows significantly in Uttaranchal

Wildlife tourism in Uttaranchal is reported to have registered a significant growth in recent months. According to the statistics collected by the Centre for Eco Tourism, Government of Uttaranchal, wildlife tourist traffic in the state increased by 20.22% in the period from October 2002 to September 2003 as compared to the earlier year.

Among the national parks, Corbett National Park, witnessed the highest increase, with 87,401 visitors, registering a gain of 17% over last year. Among the wildlife sanctuaries, the Binsar in Almora District saw a growth of 29.43%, with 17,172 tourists visiting the sanctuary during the year starting October 2002. With 30% growth in the number of visitors, the Rajaji National Park attracted 6,802 tourists this time as against 5,236 last year.

Most of the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries of the state are in the vicinity of holy places such as Haridwar and Rishikesh. FD officials are of the opinion that if facilities for tourists are improved and full information about the magnificent wealth of flora and fauna of the state is provided to the millions of pilgrims visiting the state every year, a large number of them can also be lured to visit the parks and sanctuaries, giving a tremendous boost to wildlife tourism in the state.

Source: Santosh Chauhan. 'Uttaranchal witnesses a boost', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 08/11/03.

Call to declare Bhimgoda barrage a wildlife sanctuary

A large number of migratory birds have been sighted at the Bhimgoda barrage in Haridwar that is situated between Neeldhara and other tributaries of the Ganga near Rajaji National Park. This has prompted conservationists and bird lovers to demand that the barrage be declared a wildlife sanctuary.

It has been reported that the greatest threat to the birds here comes from the national highway that passes nearby and the increasing number of people who visit the area. There have also been reports of killing of the birds.

Source: Santosh Chauhan. 'Winged guests arrive at Bhimgoda Barrage', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com 29/11/03.

Fewer visitors to be allowed into Corbett this season

Officials of the Corbett National Park have decided that only 60 vehicles will be allowed to enter the park every day for the present tourist season, starting in in November. The Park Director, Mr. Digvijay Singh Khati said that only 30 vehicles each will be allowed in the morning and evening shifts respectively in an effort to stop degradation of roads, reduce pollution levels and give a quality sighting to visitors who come to the park. The officials have said that the restrictions will be implemented strictly and even VIP convoys will not be exempt.

This restriction however applies only to the Bijrani area which is the day visit region of the park. It does not apply to entry to the night halt rest houses accessed from Dhangarhi gate where the restriction has always been in force to permit entry to only those tourists who have a rest house booking.

This restriction has been welcomed by environmentalists, but others, including tour operators have voiced their concern that this move will hamper tourism in the state.

The Corbett NP is spread over 520 sq. kms. and gets almost 65,000 visitors every year, who account for more than 20,000 vehicles.

Source: 'Corbett Park to allow fewer visitors', www.ndtv.com, 16/11/03.

Foot and Mouth Disease in cattle around Corbett

A large occurrence of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) has been reported in cattle around the Corbett National Park. Officials and the Minister of the State Animal Husbandry Department said they knew nothing of the outbreak. They are also supposed to ensure that domestic cattle is vaccinated against FMD every summer, but that too is not supposed to have happened as the vaccines never arrived.

A few cattle deaths have been reported, but the exact number is not known. It has been estimated

that 25 villages in the Kalagarh area have more than 100 sick wild animals that includes deer and *neelgai*.

Rs. 30,000 from the finances of Project Tiger were made available for the vaccination of cattle after the outbreak.

Source: Sonu Jain. 'Foot and mouth strikes Corbett neighbourhood', *The Indian Express*, 01/11/03.

SMA Kazmi. 'Uttaranchal: FMD struck as vaccines failed to arrive', *The Indian Express*, 05/11/03.

Contact: **Director**, Corbett National Park,

Census figures show rise in wild animal populations

The wildlife census for the year 2003 has shown a rise in the populations of most wild animals in the state of Uttaranchal. The only exception is the tiger, the numbers of which have fallen to 245 from the 2001 count of 251.

2,090 leopards were found this year as against 1,961 in the last census. The number of elephants counted this time was 1,582 which is an increase of nearly 5% over the last census figures of 1,507. The sex ratio in elephants is reported at 1:1.99, which is the best in the whole of South Asia.

The population of elephants and tigers is reported to be good within protected areas, whereas it has fallen within PAs in the case of leopards. By contrast, the number of leopards has shown an increase of 12.35 percent in reserved forest areas

In the areas outside the protected forests, Pithoragarh forest division has registered a 64.5 percent increase in the number of leopards while Champawat forest division has shown a decrease of 41.6 percent

Source: 'Wildlife lovers ecstatic with rising animal population', www.deccanherald.com, 18/08/03.

Probe sought into sale of private land inside Binsar WLS

A case has come to light of the sale of one hectare of private land that is located within the boundaries of the Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary. The sanctuary that was finally notified in 1988 is spread over an area of over 45 sq. km. and contains a large number of private lands within it. Since this area has been notified under the Wildlife Protection Act,

transaction on any land here is now considered illegal.

Officials of the sanctuary have now recommended to the Central Government that it should allow a full fledged inquiry into all transactions related to private land that might have been carried out in the protected area after its notification in 1988.

WEST BENGAL

Temporary forest staff in North Bengal to go on 'cease work'

The State Forest Watchers Association, a registered body of over 450 temporary staff has said that they would go on a 'cease work' if the Forest Department goes ahead with its decision to fill up 100 vacancies with fresh recruits. The association has pointed out that many of its members have been working for more than 15 years, and yet they were not being considered for the permanent jobs. They point out this was happening in spite of a promise made to them via a written circular in 1996, that they would be provided permanent jobs. They also continue to be paid a monthly salary between Rs. 1000 and Rs. 1950, which was only about a third of what the regular staff received.

A concern has been expressed that this move would adversely affect tourism in protected areas in the region like the Gorumara NP, Buxa TR and the Jaldapara WLS, as this staff collects fodder, feeds the elephants and works as tourist guides and mahouts. They know where to find food for the domestic elephants, they are aware of the wild animal trails in the forests and also provide overall security.

Source: 'Forest staff stir to hit tourism', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 26/11/03.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)**, North Bengal, West Bengal Forest Dept., Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-25627(O) 25596 (R)

Two elephant calf deaths near Mahananda WLS

Two elephant calves died in the month of September in the Sukna area near the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary. The first, a newly born calf was found dead inside a trench of the Mohorgong Tea Estate on September 17. The adult elephants had tried valiantly, though in vain, to retrieve the calf, and also perhaps injured it in the process.

The second calf was found dead in the last week of September in the Laltong Block of the sanctuary. Though the animal was found deep within the forest, it had evidently died of electrocution. This has baffled the officials, who are trying to ascertain the exact circumstances of the death.

A large herd of 50 elephants also went on a rampage in the region, resulting in the death of a villager and some destruction to fields. Depredation by wild elephants in this region is a common thing in this part of the year. Though it has not been ascertained for sure, indications are that the calf belonged to this herd and the rampaging in this case may be linked to its death.

In the past there have been several instances of elephant deaths caused by electrocution when the animals have come in contact with illegal fencing put up by villagers to save their crops and homesteads. The fencing is connected by the villagers to overhead high-tension power wires making it lethal. Couple of years ago, members of a family had been arrested near Sukna for causing the death of an adult elephant by electrocution.

Source: Niraj Lama. 'Calves' death link to rampaging elephants', *The Statesman*, 08/10/03.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)**, North Bengal, see above.

Captive bred red pandas released into Singalila NP; Senchal WLS might be next

Two red pandas that were bred in the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park (PNHZP) in Darjeeling were released into the wild in the Singalila National Park in November (see *PA Update* 40). Project Red Panda had been initiated by the PNHZP in the late 80s and the release of the captive bred animals into the park, if successful, would be one of most successful such initiatives in the country.

The pandas had been shifted from the park for a 'soft release' to the intermediate release facility at Garibas within the Singalila NP on August 15 earlier this year. The idea was to keep the animals within an enclosure large enough for them to roam around freely and at the same time to acclimatise to their new surroundings. The animals were radio-collared before their final release into the wild. Two other pandas were also released into the enclosure at the same time and are slated for final release in the wild in March 2004.

The Forest Department is also thinking of launching a plan for the release of captive-bred pandas into Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, located not very far from Darjeeling. This programme will be

different from the one at Singalila NP, because while red pandas are still found in Singalila, they are said to be locally extinct in Senchal. This will however be taken up only once the programme in Singalila has settled down.

Source: Niraj Lama. 'Red pandas to find new home in Sinchel', *The Statesman*, 22/10/03.

'Official boost for panda project' *The Statesman*, 14/11/03.

Aarti Dhar. 'Red pandas bred in captivity to be released into habitat', *The Hindu*, 16/11/03.

Contact: **Director** Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling - 734101, West Bengal

Joint FD-NGO initiative in Singalila NP

The Forest Department and seven NGOs from various parts of North Bengal have come together in a joint initiative to work for the Singalila NP.

The FD has banned the use of polythene products in the park and also made it compulsory for tourists to take a guide with them. Programmes for the training and motivation of the local people, tourist guides and porters are also to be taken up.

The NGOs, from Siliguri, Naxalbari, Raiganj, Balurghat, Dinhat, Cooch Behar and Darjeeling, recently conducted a week-long cleanliness drive along the 31-km stretch of road in the park from Manebhanjang to Sandakphu with help from local residents. Residents of Manebhanjang, Chittrey, Lamedhura, Meghma, Gurasae, Tonglu, Tumling, Jowbari, Gairibas, Katyakata, Kalipokhari, Beekay Bhanjan and Sandakphu participated and a lot of non-biodegradable waste was collected during the drive. One of the main problems that still needs resolution is the large-scale tree cutting along the trekking route. The initiative has been taken up under the Clean and Green Singalila National Park Project.

Source: Forest dept shield for Singalila Park, *The Statesman*, 13/11/03.

Contact: **Animesh Bose**, Himalayan Nature and Adventure Foundation Nivedita Market, Hospital Road, Siliguri- 734 401 West Bengal.

State government, Sahara sign pact on tourism project in the Sunderbans

The West Bengal State Government and the Sahara Group recently signed an agreement to develop the

Sunderbans as a global destination for 'eco-tourism'. The state has agreed to provide 750 acres of land spread across the five islands of Sagar, Kaikhali, Frazergunge, L-Plot and Jharkhali for the project, the estimated cost of which is Rs. 500 crore. Apart from land-based accommodation for tourists, there will be floatels, water sports and arrangements for excursions to different creeks in the delta. The Sahara Group will develop the means of communication to these islands and a jetty is to be built in Kolkata for ferrying tourists.

The State Chief Minister said that work would begin this winter after the project gets clearance from the Central and State Environment Departments. The first phase is likely to be completed in about 18 months time. Mr Subrata Roy, Chairman of the Sahara Group, allayed fears that the project would in any way disturb the ecological balance, and that in fact it would contribute positively to the ecology of the region.

A large number of individuals and organisations have expressed grave concern over the ecological and social impacts of this proposed project in the Sunderbans. (Also see *PA Updates* 39, 38, 33 and 30)

Interestingly, the West Bengal Forest Minister, Jogesh Barman recently expressed fears about the impact of the project on the forests of the Sunderbans. He however decided to leave the monitoring of the project to the CM's secretariat. He further clarified that going by documents and proposals submitted to his department, there appeared to be nothing wrong in the project and that tourism development was essential if the state was to get more investments.

Source: 'State -Sahara pact to develop Sunderbans', *The Statesman*, 29/11/03.

'Eco doubts over mega project', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com 05/12/03.

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

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

Field Assistants' Fund of the Nature Conservation Foundation

The Mysore based Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) is seeking financial support for its Field Assistant's Fund, that is aimed at providing assistance to local assistants who are crucial for field research and conservation programmes.

The fund was initiated in 2000 with contributions from many individuals in the research and conservation community. It is essentially an emergency fund, open not just to NCF's project associates, but to any field assistant working in any conservation project in India. In the past, the fund has provided financial assistance for medical treatment of field assistants, and in one case even aided a field assistant who lost considerable property when his house accidentally caught fire.

The NCF has also made a special appeal for funds to support the family of one of their field assistants in Namdapha National Park. He recently died due to malaria and the Foundation is trying to provide direct financial help to the family and also to help train his wife to set up a tailoring shop.

Contact: **Charudutt Mishra**, NCF, 3076/5 IV Cross Gokulam Park, Mysore - 570002. Tel: 0821-2515601. Fax: 2513822.
Email: charu@ncf-india.org Website: www.ncf-india.org

North East India Elephant Specialist Group

A North East India Elephant Specialist Group (NEESG) comprising of representatives from the government and NGOs has recently been formed to work on issues related to elephant conservation in this part of the country. The members of the group are Dr Bibhab Talukdar, Dr KK Sarma, Dr Rathin Barman, C Loma, Bijoyananda Choudhury, CCS Maunglong, Bhupen Talukdar, HK Choudhury. A formal committee of the NEESG will be formed in December. Till then the group will be convened by Dr Bibhab Talukdar and Bhupen Talukdar.

The group was formed after participation in the International Symposium on human-elephant conflict that was recently held in Sri Lanka.

The goal of the NEESG is to promote conservation welfare of the Asian Elephant in North East India. Its objectives include advocacy for the

cause of elephant in every possible forum, formulation of a regional approach for elephant conservation in NE India, promoting traditional means of elephant keeping, mass awareness campaign for elephant conservation and its habitats in NE India, encouraging research work and capacity building of young researchers from NE India, and compliment all other government and non-government agencies with regards to elephant conservation.

Source: Body formed to tackle Man-elephant conflict, *The Assam Tribune*, 27/09/03.

Contact: **Dr. Bibhab Talukdar**, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati - 781 028, Assam. Email: bibhab1@sancharnet.in

SOUTH ASIA

Meeting of the Asian Waterbird Census Coordinators

A meeting of the Coordinators of the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) was organized by Wetlands International in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia on October 9 & 10, 2003. Thirty five people from 20 countries and regions participated. This included coordinators and their representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. The meeting was the first formal gathering of the AWC coordinators since the establishment of the AWC in 1987.

The meeting focused on support of international and regional conventions and initiatives, and the challenges and opportunities for the development of the AWC at the respective national levels. Major issues identified included inadequate local expertise, lack of data, quality control on the data generated, inability to collect data on all important sites, lack of communication and insufficient access to funding to support basic costs.

Source: David Li. 'Report on AWC Coordinators Meeting', *Newsletter of the Asian Waterbird Census*, November 2003.

Contact: **David Li**. Email: david@wiap.nasionet.net, Website: <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/awc/workshop03.html>

Huge animal fur haul in Tibet

In one of the largest seizures in more than half a century Chinese custom officials and police seized 1,276 skins of several endangered species, including tigers and leopards, in the mountainous Ngamring county of Tibet. Officers have valued the haul at 6.52m yuan (\$795,000) and say it was the largest single seizure of endangered animal products in the area since 1951.

Three Tibetans and two Nepalese have been arrested. The illegal furs were intercepted as they were being transported by truck from neighbouring into China. The haul included 32 tiger pelts, 579 leopard skins and 665 otter pelts. Most of the animals had been shot.

Since 1999, Chinese customs have cracked down on 217 smuggling cases of endangered animals, uncovered some 18,713 living animals and prosecuted up to 298 suspects.

Source: 'Huge animal fur haul in Tibet', www.news.bbc.co.uk, 11/10/03.

BANGLADESH

Initiatives to save river dolphins in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Government has initiated a project for the conservation of the endangered river dolphin with financial help from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and support from the IUCN. It has undertaken a project near the Yamuna river to create public awareness about the importance of saving the *Shushuks*.

International conservation groups - Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and The World Conservation Union (IUCN) had recently undertaken a study on the viability of creating dolphin sanctuaries in a few of Bangladesh's rivers. Their recommendations to the government are awaited.

The Sunderbans is the only place where the two fresh water dolphins, the Gangetic Dolphin, locally called the *Shushuk*, and the Irrawaddy Dolphin are found. In the past decade they have been severely threatened because of overfishing, mangrove destruction and the toxic contamination of the rivers here. Additionally, large scale projects on Indian rivers have stemmed water flow into Bangladesh increasing the salinity of water. Scientists realised the extent of the threat to freshwater dolphins here, when they discovered a salt-water species in the Sunderbans indicating high salinity levels.

Experts have recommended that the rivers in Sunderbans be declared a sanctuary to safeguard the remaining few hundred dolphins. The other recommended sanctuary is a part of the southeastern coastal river Sangu, home to an isolated group of the animals. Studies indicate that there are a few hundred dolphins left in the rivers of the Sunderbans mangrove forest and another 131 in river Sangu.

Source: 'Combined efforts to save river dolphin in Bangladesh', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 23/10/03.

NEPAL

Chitwan Rhinos straying into adjoining villages

Rhinoceroses from the Royal Chitwan National Park straying into over a dozen neighbouring has created panic among the residents. The animals generally move into the villages at night and have caused a lot of damage to crops and cultivated land.

The Amaltari Conservation Office of the national park said the rhinos cross the Narayani river and enter the villages. As the river gets smaller in the dry months, it gets easier for the animals to crossover into the villages.

Trenches and wire fences exist along the park border but these have not been successful in keeping the rhinos away. The VDCs that have been affected include Mukundapur, Amarapuri, Rajhar, Divyapuri, Pragati Nagar, Pithaulu, Kawasoti, Agyauli, Kumarwanti, Kolhuwa, Narayani, Tamsariya, and Triveni VDCs.

Source: Rhinos straying into villages', *The Kathmandu Post*, 06/12/03

Contact: **Director**, Dept. of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, PO Box 860, Babarmahal, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: +977-1-227675. Fax: 250850

PAKISTAN

Oil companies delaying baseline study on Nara Desert WLS/

Three multinational oil companies, which are actively involved in oil and gas exploration in the Nara Desert Wildlife Sanctuary, are reportedly, not fulfilling their commitment to fund the baseline study in the protected area. The consortium that comprises Petronas Caragali of Malaysia, OMV of Austria, and Eni- Pakistan of Italy had been given only

conditional permissions for the exploration and one of these was that they would sponsor the baseline study. This was also the condition on which government agencies had approved their environment impact assessment studies.

OMV, had in violation of the commitment made, even installed the Central Production Plant (CPP) in the Sawan Bloc. It has been reported that a team of two experts from the UK based consultants - Mott MacDonald that had been hired by the consortium, visited the sanctuary a year ago, which was followed by a briefing for the stake-holders - Sindh Wildlife Department, Sindh Environmental Protection Agency and other government organizations. As promised they submitted the Terms of Reference (TORs) for the proposed study to the oil companies. The companies, however, are yet to submit these TORs to the various stake holders. As per the earlier decision, the TORs were to be finalised after the stake-holders gave their inputs. This was then to be followed by floating of open tenders to hire consultants to carry out the baseline study.

Meanwhile the oil companies have been extracting oil and gas from the area and are reported to be making a lot of money from the same.

Petronas is working in Mubarak and East Kadanwari blocs; OMV is working in Maino, Sawan and Gambat blocs; and Eni-Pakistan (which has taken over the operations of an English oil company, Lasmco) is working in Kadanwari.

The Nara Desert Wildlife Sanctuary - having an area of approximately quarter of a million hectares, is located from the left side of the Nara Canal which originates from the Sukkur Barrage up to the Indian border stretching over desert regions in the Ghotki, Sukkur, Khairpur and Sanghar districts.

Source: Oil firms delaying baseline study on Nara',
The Dawn, 24/09/03.

Oil company to prepare management plan for Kirthar NP, other PAs.

The oil company Premier -Kuffpec Pakistan (PKP) is said to have started the work for the preparation of the management plan of the Kirthar National Park (area: 3078 sq. kms) and other protected areas in the region. These include the Mahal Kohistan Wildlife Sanctuary (705 sq. kms.), Hub Dam Wildlife Sanctuary (272 sq. kms.) and the Surjan, Sumbak Eri and Hothiano Game Reserve (282 sq. kms.).

The year long process was started recently and is expected to cost the company Rs. 65 million.

PKP had been allowed by Sindh Wildlife Department to carry out its oil and gas exploration activities in in these protected areas. The move had been opposed by a large number of environmental and wildlife groups (see *PA Updates* 34, 30, 25, & 22)

PKP has hired Hagler Bailly as consultants, which is chalking out the plan in association with a South African firm, Van Reit Louw Landscape Architects. The oil company had earlier funded a US\$1 million baseline study of the park which was carried out by an Australian University team. The company is funding the scientific studies in the park as per the terms and conditions laid down for the firm to continue with the oil and gas exploration activities in the protected areas.

The area is significant for its sizable indigenous settlements, rugged terrain, valuable flora and mineral resources and a number of rare wildlife species like the Sindh ibex, urial, chinkara, houbara bustards, grey partridge, and the saker falcon. More than 400 species of plants, 36 species of mammals, 203 species of birds, 34 species of reptiles and two species of amphibians have been documented in the park. The archaeologically significant sites here include the tombs at Taung, remains of Kohtrash, the fort of Rani Kot and the fossils and petrified forests of the Khirthar range.

Source: 'Preparation of Khirthar Park plan started',
The Dawn, 08/08/03.

Saiful Malook and Lolusar Lakes in the NWFP declared national parks

The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) government has recently declared the Saiful Malook and Lolusar lakes, with their catchment areas, as national parks. Both the lakes are located in the Manshera district and are spread over 12026 and 75058 acres respectively. The move was prompted by the rapid decay of the lakes due to reasons such as increasing pollution over grazing and deforestation in the catchment areas.

Hunting, trapping of wildlife, collection of fuel, burning of plants, land reclamation and mining is now prohibited in these areas. The wildlife department will deploy staff here and also involve communities for preservation and conservation of these lakes. The Wildlife Department has already involved a number of communities for protection of the existing three national parks of the province, including Chitral Ghor, Shiekh Badin and Ayubia National Park. The communities too, are reported to

be benefitting as they get a handsome share of the earnings that are obtained from these parks.

Source: 'Two lakes declared national parks', *The Dawn*, 07/05/03.

Project to study Indus dolphin population

The Sindh Provincial Government has approved a project for biological and ecological studies of the Indus Dolphin to find out the causes for the slow growth in their population. The three year, Rs. Seven million project is slated to start soon.

While the habitat of the Indus Dolphin originally ranged from Attock in the north to the delta of the Indus in the south, it has now been restricted owing to construction of various barrages on the river. The dolphin is now found only between the Jinnah and Kotri barrages. The river course between Sukkur and Guddu barrages, where the largest chunk of population resides, was declared a dolphin reserve in 1974. This is a wildlife sanctuary, protected under the Sindh Wildlife Protection Act. Trapping and killing of the dolphin is banned under the law. The dolphin reserve has also been declared a Ramsar Site.

The Sindh Wildlife Department (SWD) carries out regular surveys of dolphins in the reserve for monitoring its population trends. While the 1996 survey showed that there were 458 animals, the number had increased to 499 by 1999. However, a more recent and a comprehensive survey conducted jointly by the SWD and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has put the number of dolphins in the reserve at 602.

Source: 'Bhagwandas. 'Project to study Indus dolphin population', *The Dawn*, 17/10/03.

UPCOMING

24th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation

The 24th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation is being held in San Jose, Costa Rica from February 22 - 29, 2004.

The theme of the symposium is 'Sea Turtle Lifescapes' and a number of sessions have been planned as part of it. These include: Sea turtles in Costa Rica; Sea Turtles and Socio-Economics; Sea Turtle Assessment and Monitoring; Global and Regional Sea Turtle Conservation and Research; Sea Protected Area Update 46

Turtle Modelling and Prediction; Technology and Sea Turtles; and Novel Insights in Sea Turtle Research and Conservation.

Contact: Roderic Mast. Email:

r.mast@conservation.org. Brian Hutchinson.

Email: b.hutchinson@conservation.org

OPPORTUNITIES

MSc in Wildlife Biology and Conservation

Applications have been invited for admission to a MSc in Wildlife Biology and Conservation based in Bangalore and being offered by a consortium of research institutions.

The two-year full time course starts in July 2004 and is open to graduates or final year students in any field other than fine arts languages.

Last date for receipt of applications is January 14, 2004.

Contact: **Dr. Ajith Kumar**. National Centre for Biological Sciences, PB 6501, GKVK Campus, Bangalore - 560065. Email: [mcs@wcsindia.org](mailto:msc@wcsindia.org) Website: <http://www.wcsindia.org/wnew.htm>

Oppurtunities with ATREE

- Project Director – National Program on World Biodiversity Heritage Sites

This is part of a multi-agency program sponsored by a consortium of donors. The applicant should have at least a Masters level degree, be broadly knowledgeable in Conservation issues and have good management skills. S/he will coordinate all aspects of the project and work closely with ATREE senior staff who will be responsible for individual components of the project. The position will be based in Bangalore or Guwahati and requires extensive travel within India.

- Two positions in Natural Resource Conservation and Management

These positions are for persons with a background in Natural Resource Management for ATREEs core team in the Eastern Himalayas. The applicants must have training in the ecological or social sciences, and should have a M.Sc or Ph.D in ecology/forestry/social sciences or any related discipline with relevant experience and a good

publication record. Candidates from Eastern Himalayan region/North Eastern India will be given preference. These positions are based in Bagdogra.

Final date for application is December 31, 2003.

Contact: **The Director**, ATREE, 659, 5th A Main Rd, Hebbal, Bangalore 560024. Tel: 080-3533942 / 3530069. Fax: 3530070. Email: director@atree.org; info@atree.org Website: www.atree.org

WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

▪ **Manuals on sea turtle conservation**

A set of four manuals on sea turtle conservation have been prepared by the Centre for Herpetology/Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT) for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - Government of India Sea Turtle Project. They are meant for distribution, mainly to concerned individuals and agencies, including the state forest and fisheries department, NGOs and young researchers. The manuals are in English and aimed essentially at an Indian audience. They can however be used in other parts of South and South East Asia as well.

The manuals are on the following subjects: Beach management and hatchery programmes; Research and management techniques; Population monitoring and census and Eco (turtle) friendly coastal development.

PDF files of all the manuals are available at <http://www.kachhapa.org>

For hard copies contact:

Harry Andrews, MCBT, Post Bag No.4, Mamallapuram - 603104. Email: mcbtindia@vsnl.net

For further information contact:

Kartik Shanker, Email: kartik@atree.org

READERS COMMENTS...

Lavkumar Khachar...

There are tiny editorial slips that need to be pointed out - not in printing errors or spellings but in the

reporting of animals. Eg. on page 13 ('Large number of crocodile hatchlings seen in Bhitarkanika, *PA Update* 44, October 2003), the Bhitarkanika report speaks of wild jackals and wild dogs - do we have domesticated jackals? Should not wild dogs be referred to as feral dogs? Wild dogs could be mistaken for dholes.

(Further), what I fail to understand is how encroachments ever happen when we have an ubiquitous Forest Department. How long can this sort of casualness in administration continue? Also how naïve are human interest groups who talk of 'original adivasis' as though they were wildlife. In a well-managed WLS even wildlife has to be 'culled'. Far more thought needs to be applied to the recurring theme of 'traditional lifestyles'. Far too much confusion is being generated and delay will merely compound problems...

Contact: **Lavkumar Khachar**, 14, Jayant Society Rajkot - 360004.

SS Chitwadgi...

With reference to the special report on the World Parks Congress (*PA Update* 45, October 2003), kindly accept congratulations on the same.

Incidentally, I am unhappy with the news item 'Conservationists oppose government move to hand over PAs to NGOs and private sector for management' and 'Nepal to allow farming of wild animals (*PA Update* 45, October 2003). What happens in Nepal might not happen in India. Nepal (has been) on the march to community management of forests and wildlife. In India the paradigm shift from Joint Forest Management (JFM) to Community Forest Management (CFM) is under loose talk. It could be suicidal, especially so, because we don't know the community constitution and stakeholders in conservation of forests and wildlife.

Contact: **S.S. Chitwadgi**, Bharat Forestry Consultancy 156/A, Indrapuri, Bhopal - 462021. Tel: 0755 - 2586586. Email: mangeshi@sancharnet.in; edss156@yahoo.com

SPECIAL REPORTS

WORLD PARKS CONGRESS

The recently held World Parks Congress concluded with following set of 32 recommendations:

- 1) Strengthening Institutional and Societal Capacities for Protected Area Management in the 21st Century
- 2) Strengthening Individual and Group Capacities for Protected Area Management in the 21st Century
- 3) Protected Areas Learning Network
- 4) Building Comprehensive and Effective Protected Area Systems
- 5) Climate Change and Protected Areas
- 6) Strengthening Mountain Protected Areas as a Key Contribution to Sustainable Mountain Development
- 7) Financial Security for Protected Areas
- 8) Private Sector Funding of Protected Areas
- 9) Integrated Landscape Management to Support Protected Areas
- 10) Policy Linkages between Relevant International Conventions and Programmes in Integrating Protected Areas in the Wider Landscape/Seascape
- 11) A Global Network to Support the Development of Transboundary Conservation Initiatives
- 12) Tourism as a Vehicle for Conservation and Support of Protected Areas
- 13) Cultural and Spiritual Values of Protected Areas
- 14) Cities and Protected Areas
- 15) Peace, Conflict and Protected Areas
- 16) Good Governance of Protected Areas
- 17) Recognising and Supporting a Diversity of Governance Types for Protected Areas
- 18) Management Effectiveness Evaluation to Support Protected Area Management
- 19) IUCN Protected Area Management Categories
- 20) Preventing and Mitigating Human-Wildlife Conflicts
- 21) The World Heritage Convention
- 22) Building a Global System of Marine and Coastal Protected Area Networks
- 23) Protecting Marine Biodiversity and Ecosystem Processes through Marine Protected Areas beyond National Jurisdiction
- 24) Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas
- 25) Co-management of Protected Areas
- 26) Community Conserved Areas
- 27) Mobile Indigenous Peoples and Conservation

- 28) Protected Areas: Mining and Energy
- 29) Poverty and Protected Areas
- 30) Africa's Protected Areas
- 31) Protected Areas, Freshwater and Integrated River Basin Management Frameworks
- 32) Strategic Agenda for Communication, Education and Public Awareness for Protected Areas

Given here are the details of two of these recommendations:

Recommendation 25

Co-management of Protected Areas

The benefits of promoting and strengthening partnerships for conservation have been repeatedly stressed by IUCN, from Council Resolution 22 of 1952 to Resolution 1.42 of the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Montreal (1996) and Resolution 2.15 of the IUCN World Conservation Congress Amman (2000). They have also been emphasised by the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD plan of action.

Co-managed protected areas (CMPAs) are defined as protected areas (as per IUCN categories I-VI) where management authority, responsibility and accountability are shared among two or more stakeholders, including government bodies and agencies at various levels, indigenous and local communities, non-governmental organizations and private operators, or even among different state governments as in the case of trans-boundary protected areas.

In the 21st Century the size, number, and complexity of protected areas systems has increased to impressive proportions. In accordance with good governance principles, consolidating, expanding and improving this global system of protected areas should be done while respecting the rights, interests and concerns of all stakeholders, including their right to participate in decision-making in the establishment and management of protected areas. The sharing of protected area management authority, responsibilities, benefits and costs should be distributed among relevant actors, according to legitimate entitlements. Such entitlements should be defined through a negotiation process that specifically involves disadvantaged groups, and

results in stronger engagement of civil society in conservation.

Are governments alone able to ensure the accomplishment of all their protected areas conservation objectives and social requirements? Some estimate this to be plainly impossible.

Fortunately, there is a substantial wealth and diversity of conservation-relevant knowledge, skills, resources and institutions at the disposal of indigenous, mobile and local communities, local governments, NGOs, resource users, and the private sector. Co-management settings are one of the most effective ways to mobilise such conservation-relevant resources, but are they successfully enlisted and implemented?

1. Current efforts to involve indigenous peoples, mobile peoples and local communities in protected area management are often limited to consulting them, asking their help in implementing predetermined activities or assigning to them some “benefits” (often unrelated to the costs incurred), without effective discussion and negotiation of options. This may be due to various causes, but lack of supportive policies and capacities are at the roots of many failures. Actions are needed to facilitate: Understanding the potential of, and obstacles to, co-management approaches;
2. Undertaking co-management processes;
3. Negotiating co-management agreements;
4. Developing co-management organizations;
5. Integrating adaptive governance approaches with more familiar adaptive management exercises; and
6. Learning by doing through participatory monitoring and evaluation.

The diversity of co-management approaches makes them capable of fitting different contexts. If properly understood and adopted, co-management can lead towards more effective and transparent sharing of decision-making powers, a more active, conservation-friendly and central role of indigenous, mobile and local communities in protected area management, and a better synergy of the conservation capacities.

Therefore, PARTICIPANTS in the Communities and Equity Cross-Cutting Theme at the Vth World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa (8-17 September 2003): RECOMMEND international conventions, governments, protected area agencies, donor agencies, conservation NGOs, communities, and the private sector, and in particular IUCN - The World Conservation Union as potential inspirer and leader of well coordinated and synergistic efforts, to:

1. SUPPORT the review, consolidation, strengthening and expansion of existing experiences of co-management of protected areas;
2. PROMOTE the participation of stakeholders in decision-making concerning protected area management, with particular regards to indigenous,

mobile and local communities, and disadvantaged groups via a range of mechanisms including information generation and sharing; joint visioning and participatory assessment exercises; support to stakeholder organising and capacity building; negotiated management agreements and benefit sharing; and full empowerment and accountability for conservation in effectively co-managed and community-managed areas;

3. CREATE or strengthen enabling legal and policy frameworks for co-management in protected areas;
4. UNDERTAKE programmes to develop and strengthen institutional and human capacities for co-management of protected areas as part of efforts towards good governance and more effective management, including setting up basic training and refresher courses for natural resource managers, national and international exchange visits and joint learning initiatives among PA institutions and sites engaged in co-management efforts;
5. PROMOTE participatory action-research in co-managed protected areas with emphasis on stakeholder identification, social communication initiatives, negotiation processes, consensus-based decision making, co-management outcomes and impacts, and legislation and policies for a supporting environment;
6. EXPAND the sharing of experience and lessons learned on co-management of protected areas at national, regional and international levels including by strengthening the work of the Co-management Working Group (CMWG) of the IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economics and Social Policy (CEESP) and of the joint World Commission on Protected Areas/CEESP Theme on Indigenous and Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA); and
7. CALL upon the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to address co-management issues in their programme of work for protected areas, in particular with regard to enabling legal and policy framework, capacity building, participatory action-research and exchanges of experiences and lessons learned.

Recommendation 26 **Community Conserved Areas**

A considerable part of the earth’s biodiversity survives on territories under the ownership, control, or management of indigenous peoples and local (including mobile) communities. However, the fact that such peoples and communities are actively or passively conserving many of these sites through

traditional or modern means, has hitherto been neglected in formal conservation circles.

Such sites, herein called Community Conserved Areas (CCAs), are extremely diverse in their institutions of governance, objectives of management, ecological and cultural impacts, and other attributes. Two primary characteristics distinguish them:

1. Predominant or exclusive control and management by communities, and
2. Commitment to conservation of biodiversity, and/or its achievement through various means.

In this context, CCAs are natural and modified ecosystems, including significant biodiversity, ecological services and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous and local communities through customary laws or other effective means. The term as used here is meant to connote a broad and open approach to categorizing such community initiatives, and is not intended to constrain the ability of communities to conserve their areas in the way they feel appropriate.

Various international instruments dealing with environmental and human rights have recognised the role of communities in relation to natural resource management, such as:

1. The emphasis provided by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to the biodiversity-relevant knowledge, skills, innovations, and practices of communities; or
2. The Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which acknowledges the right of such peoples to control and manage their territories.

Today, most CCAs remain unrecognised in national and international conservation systems, and are largely outside the official protected area networks of countries. This may be because the resource management systems of CCAs are often based on customary tenure systems, norms and institutions that are not formally or legally recognized in many countries.

CCAs as they exist today serve the management objectives of different protected area categories.

Nevertheless, CCAs everywhere are facing threats, including:

1. Those resulting from unclear and insecure tenurial arrangements;
2. Unsustainable developmental projects;
3. Delegitimization of customary rights;
4. Centralized political decision-making processes;
5. Social, economic and political inequities;
6. Loss of knowledge and cultural change; and
7. Commercialization of resources.

It is therefore recognized that communities need support and facilitation to respond to these threats, and to enable them to reach greater security in their conservation and sustainable use practices.

Mindful of these points, participants in the cross-cutting Theme entitled “Communities and Equity” have deliberated on CCAs in several sessions of the 5th World Parks Congress, and have concluded that national and international recognition of such areas is a urgent necessity.

Therefore, PARTICIPANTS in the Communities and Equity Cross-Cutting Theme at the Vth World Parks Congress, in Durban South Africa (8-17 September 2003):

1. RECOMMEND governments to:
 - a. PROMOTE a multisectoral process for recognizing, enlisting, evaluating, and delisting CCAs;
 - b. RECOGNIZE and PROMOTE CCAs as a legitimate form of biodiversity conservation, and where communities so choose, include them within national systems of protected areas, through appropriate changes in legal and policy regimes;
 - c. ENSURE that official policies, guidelines, and principles, recognise diverse local (formal or informal) arrangements developed by communities on their own or in collaboration with other actors, for the management of CCAs;
 - d. FACILITATE the continuation of existing CCAs, and their spread to other sites, through a range of measures including, financial, technical, human, information, research, public endorsement, capacity-building, and other resources or incentives that are considered appropriate by the communities concerned, as well as the restitution of traditional and customary rights;
 - e. ACKNOWLEDGE that it may be appropriate for some existing protected areas to be managed as CCAs, including the transfer of management of such areas to relevant communities;
 - f. PROVIDE protection to CCAs against external threats they face, including those mentioned in the preamble;
 - g. RESPECT the sanctity and importance of CCAs in all operations that could affect such sites or the relevant communities, and give particular attention to applying the principles of Prior Informed Consent, participatory environmental impact assessments, and other measures as elaborated in decisions and documents of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
 - h. SUPPORT self-monitoring and evaluation of CCAs by the relevant communities, and participatory

monitoring and evaluation by outside agencies or actors; and

i. PROVIDE impartial information when and where needed and/or asked for by the relevant communities;

2. ALSO RECOMMEND communities to:

a. COMMIT to conserving the biodiversity in CCAs, maintaining ecological services, and protecting associated cultural values;

b. CONSIDER extending the network of CCAs to sites not currently being conserved or sustainably managed;

c. STRENGTHEN or initiate measures to respond to forces that threaten CCAs, including those mentioned in the preamble above;

d. RECOGNIZE the ecological, cultural, and other values of the CCAs and species that are within territories the communities are controlling and managing;

e. SEEK public recognition for the CCAs they are managing where it is appropriate, including from governments; and

f. COMMIT to strengthening or developing effective mechanisms for internal accountability;

3. FURTHER RECOMMEND conservation agencies and other non-government organizations (NGOs), donor agencies, private sector, and other actors:

a. RESPECT the sanctity and importance of CCAs in all their operations that could affect such sites or the relevant communities, and in particular activities that could adversely affect them; and

b. PROVIDE support of various kinds to CCAs, where considered appropriate by the concerned community, including to help build capacity;

4. CALL on international organizations to:

a. RECOGNIZE CCAs in all relevant instruments and databases, including in the United Nations List of Protected Areas, and the World Protected Areas Database;

b. PROVIDE adequate space for consideration of CCAs in relevant documents, such as the State of the World's Protected Areas Report, and Protected Areas in the 21st Century;

c. PROMOTE OCCAs through appropriate programmes of work, in particular the Programme of Work of the CBD on protected areas; and

d. INTEGRATE CCAs into the IUCN Protected Areas Category System, through the introduction of a dimension of governance, appropriate interpretations and additions to the definitions and guidelines especially regarding cultural values, and work towards identifying CCAs that would fit into each of the six IUCN Protected Areas Categories.

The entire set of these recommendations are now available English and also in Hindi and Marathi. For more details contact:

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THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY & PROTECTED AREAS

The **seventh meeting** of the Conference of the Parties (COP 7) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 9 to 20 February 2004.

One of the main subjects of discussion this time is related to Protected Areas.

The overall purpose of the programme of work on protected areas is to support the establishment and maintenance by 2010 of a comprehensive, effectively managed, and ecologically representative global system of networks of protected areas. The ultimate result will be to significantly reduce biological diversity loss at the international, regional, national and sub-national levels through the implementation of the three main objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and to contribute to poverty alleviation and sustainable development, thereby supporting the objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Convention, the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals.

PROGRAMME ELEMENT 1:

Direct actions for planning, selecting, establishing, strengthening, and managing, protected area systems and sites

Goal 1.1 – To establish and strengthen national and regional systems of protected areas integrated into a global network as a contribution to globally agreed goals.

Goal 1.2 – To integrate protected areas into broader land- and seascapes and sectors so as to maintain ecological structure and function

Goal 1.3 – To establish and strengthen regional networks, transboundary protected areas (TBPAs) and collaboration between neighbouring protected areas across national boundaries

Goal 1.4 – To substantially improve site-based protected area planning and management:

Goal 1.5 – To prevent and mitigate the negative impacts of key threats to protected areas

PROGRAMME ELEMENT 2:

Governance, participation, equity and benefit sharing.

Goal 2.1 – To promote equity and benefit-sharing

Goal 2.2 – To enhance and secure involvement of all stakeholders including local and indigenous communities.

PROGRAMME ELEMENT 3:

Enabling activities

Goal 3.1 – To provide an enabling policy, institutional and socioeconomic environment for protected areas:

Goal 3.2 – To build capacity for the planning, establishment and management of protected areas:

Goal 3.3 To develop, apply and transfer appropriate technologies for protected areas:

Goal 3.4 – To ensure financial sustainability of protected areas and national and regional systems of protected areas

Goal 3.5 – To strengthen communication, education and public awareness

PROGRAMME ELEMENT 4:

Standards, assessment, and monitoring

Goal 4.1 – To develop minimum standards and best practices for national and regional protected area systems:

Goal 4.2 – To evaluate the effectiveness of protected areas management:

Goal 4.3 – To assess and monitor protected area status and trends:

Goal 4.4 – To ensure that scientific knowledge contributes to the establishment and effectiveness of protected areas and protected area systems.

For further details contact:

Ashish Kothari, Manisha Sheth Gutman and Tasneem H. at the editorial address. For emails, see above.

Also refer to website on CBD and COP7 :

<http://www.biodiv.org/default.aspx>

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The *PA Update* can be accessed on the following websites as well

www.indianjungles.com & www.sanctuaryasia.com/resources/paupdate

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