

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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EDITORIAL

Pitting Communities against conservation

The case of the two new categories of Protected Areas

In February, earlier this year, Kalpavriksh, the Wildlife Trust of the India (WTI), and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) organised a national workshop on the new categories of protected areas under the amended Wildlife Protection Act - 'Conservation Reserve and Community Reserve'. It was probably the first effort of its kind after the creation of these new categories, and was directed towards trying to see and understand how and where these could be applied and used.

The meeting began with the belief that there would be potential in these categories to support and recognise the conservation efforts of communities across the country and that this was finally, the long awaited legal backing that both communities and NGOs had been asking for. If, however, you read the statement that the workshop issued on completion (see Special Report on page 29) it seems that these hopes were far off the mark.

The workshop involved long and intense discussions on these provisions, including through the use of actual examples of potential sites for declaration. What came out was indeed a disappointing, even worrying picture. The participants actually concluded that in their present form, the categories and their provisions were ineffective and largely unusable in the case of most community conservation initiatives. These are, in fact, **not** the enabling legislations that had been hoped for. There was also strong concern that these new categories, rather than help and support community initiatives, could in many cases actually undermine them or even create serious conflicts on the ground.

Take the example of community reserves. To begin with these can be only declared on lands that are 'not owned' by government and only on those that are with the community. Secondly, the provision enables the Forest Department to get a say into what happens on this land. Its almost like allowing the state government a foot in the door and lands of the community, where they had none earlier. If indeed the land is a good area to be conserved and communities are playing that role anyway, why

create a framework that undermines the communities ownership, authority and initiative? If the state cannot trust the people even that much, then why this charade of interest in community initiatives in conservation? A similar case can, in fact, also be made for the Conservation Reserve category.

Just calling a category 'Conservation' or 'Community' reserve, does not mean that anything will change. A sincerity has to be shown to alter the existing power structures, where faith is laid in the people who have made the initiative worthy of inclusion under the category in the first place. It is not change in nomenclature that is important. What one needs is a change of heart and attitude.

Any indications of that, unfortunately, are simply not visible!

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Flamingo numbers decline in Pulicat and Neelapatu

Reports published in November indicate that the number of flamingoes visiting the Pulicat and Neelapatu Wildlife Sanctuaries has fallen drastically, from an estimated 10,000 last season to about 6,500 this time (also see *PA Update* 34). The reports are based on census work carried out by volunteers of the Pulicat Lake Bird Lovers Society (PLBLS).

The biggest culprit in the case of Pulicat is the North Chennai Thermal Power Station (NCTPS) which discharges hot, untreated effluents into the Buckingham Canal which then empties into the lake. This has an adverse impact on all life forms in the lake and this eventually affects the bird populations as well.

This also has implications for a large number of fisherfolk who live in the area. It is estimated that nearly 1,00,000 families depend on the fish catch from the lake for their survival.

NCTPS has claimed that it has upgraded its effluent treatment facility by installing electrostatic precipitators and has also stopped the discharge of the hot effluents into the canal. Environmentalists however say that nothing much has been done.

Source: Vani Doraisamy. 'Sudden decline in flamingoes visiting Lake Pulicat', *The New Indian Express*, 26/11/03.

Contact: **Prof. Sanjeeva Raj**, 17/1724, 21st Main Road, Anna Nagar, Chennai - 600 040, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044-6185188. Email: sanji_15@hotmail.com

ASSAM

High level meeting held on issue of overbridges over NH-37 for animals of Kaziranga NP

Mr B S Bonal, Former Director, Kaziranga National Park (KNP) and Dr Prasanta Choudhury were recently sent by the Central Government to the Kaziranga National Park to investigate the demand of the State Government to construct overbridges in the animal corridors on the NH-37. A large number of animals are killed every year when attempting to cross the National Highway with the flooding of the Kaziranga every monsoon (see *PA Updates* 45, 44, 38 & 34).

After visiting the relevant spots, they held a discussion at Kohora which was attended by the Assam Forest Minister; the Director of KNP; the DFO; Chairman, Tourism, Assam and the SDO(C), Bokakhat. A discussion was also held regarding the construction of ropeways in the park. It is learnt that as an experiment, the second addition of the park has been selected for these ropeways.

Source: 'High-level meet on construction of overbridges at KNP', *The Sentinel*, 02/01/04.

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

Depredation by elephants from Gibbon WLS; bridge for gibbons proposed over rail line

Wild elephants from the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary have been causing a lot of damage in surrounding areas. These including the surrounding tea estates and Ward No. 1 and 2 in Mariani. 45 persons have been killed by elephants here since 1982.

The sanctuary is spread over an area of only about 20 sq. kms with very small areas of grasslands. Deforestation and grazing here have also aggravated the problem. Additionally, an old railway line running through the sanctuary has also added to the problem, with the railway workers constantly being under threat.

There is also a proposal for the construction of a bridge across this railway track in the sanctuary to facilitate the movement of primates like the Hoolock Gibbon that are found here. The ideas being discussed include the construction, either of an artificial bridge or one that is made naturally with the help of tall trees that will overhang the railway track.

The track divides the forest and has drastically reduced interaction between the gibbon troops living on either side.

Source: 'Tusker depredation haunts Mariani', *The Assam Tribune*, 08/12/03.

356 hectares of Gibbon WLS handed over to army

There has been widespread concern over the decision of the Forest Department to permanently hand over 356 hectares of land of the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary to the army. Individuals and organisations like the Hujungapar Nature's Society have urged the Chief Minister to intervene in the matter.

The land in question was given to the Army's 2nd Mount Brigade of the Eastern Command on lease in 1965. The army constructed a residential colony and other necessary infrastructure at a cost of Rs 3 crore. The lease expired recently and the FD agreed to the army's request to permanently hand over the land to them.

The Hujungapar Reserve Forest, with a total area of 2,098 hectares, was declared the Gibbon WLS in 1997. The area will now be about 1700 hectares.

Source: 'Forest Dept's lack of foresight ruined Gibbon Sanctuary', *The Sentinel*, 11/01/04.

Contact: **Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhary**, C/o The Assam Company Ltd., G Bordoloi Path, Bamuni Maidan, Guwahati 781021, Assam. E-mail: badrul@sancharnet.in
Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam.

GOA

CEC orders stopping of mining in PAs

The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) appointed by the Supreme Court issued interim orders in November 2003 to stop all mining activities in the Netravali and Madei Wildlife Sanctuaries in the state.

The order was passed in response to a complaint filed before the Union Minister of Environment and Forests by the Goa Foundation. The State Government was also asked to file a compliance report within a period of ten days.

In practical terms this resulted in the stoppage of the operation of two iron ore leases in Madei; 11 iron ore leases in Netravali and 18 other allegedly illegal manganese leases in Netravali. (Also see *PA Update* 39)

Source: 'Halt mining leases in wildlife areas', *The Herald*, 09/11/03.

'Mining in Goa sanctuaries closed', *The Hindu Business Line*, 14/11/03.

Contact: **Dr. Claude Alvares**, Goa Foundation.

Tel: 0832 – 263305 / 6.

Email: oib@goatelecom.com

GUJARAT

Community Reserve status proposed for Wadvana wetland near Vadodara

The Gujarat Forest Department (FD) has recently sent a proposal to declare the Wadvana wetland, located 50 km from Vadodara city, a community reserve. The wetland plays host to nearly 30,000 migratory waterfowl every winter

The FD is of the opinion that the 'Community Reserve' category that has been newly created under the amended Wildlife Protection Act, is a liberal approach to conservation, wherein the local community is allowed to use resources. If the proposal comes through, the surrounding villages that use the tank for water and for fishing would be asked to prepare a management plan.

(Eds. Note: Further enquiries have revealed that the lake is in fact under the ownership of the Irrigation Department. As per the provisions of the new act then, the lake cannot be declared a community reserve. A conservation reserve category would be the one that is applicable. Please also see the edit.)

Source: Abhishek Kapoor. 'Wadvana may become community reserve', *www.expressindia.com*; 16/12/03.

Campaign to save whale shark in Gujarat

The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), in association with the Gujarat Government, Tata Chemicals Ltd.

and Gujarat Heavy Chemicals Ltd. has recently launched a campaign for the protection of the whale shark, said to be the world's largest fish. An estimated 1200-2000 whale sharks are reported to visit the Saurashtra coast every year and till about 2001, more than 150 were hunted annually by the fishing communities here. The whale shark was then put onto Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act in 2001.

In another step, well known religious preacher Morari Bapu too has agreed to help in spreading the message of conservation of the whale shark. He will be making a simple appeal to the people saying that guests are treated as gods in Gujarat and that since the Whale Sharks come here during the gestation period, it is like they are in the land of their mothers, and therefore should not be killed. He is also reminding people that in the land of Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence is the biggest religion.

He assured that he would spread this message of conservation through the recitation of the *Ramayana* and has also appealed for the participation of the government, people and saints in the cause.

Source: 'Campaign to save whale shark in Gujarat', *Deccan Herald*, 21/01/04.

Contact: **Wildlife Trust of India**, C 644, 2nd Floor, New Friends Colony, New Delhi- 110065.

Email: aniruddha@wti.org.in

Annual state budget for PAs raised to Rs. 12 crores; Rs. 30 lakhs sanctioned for South Gujarat

The State Government has raised the budget for the 21 wildlife sanctuaries and four national parks in the state to Rs. 12 crores per annum. Rs. 30 lakhs have also been sanctioned for the PAs in South Gujarat. These include the Vansda NP, Purna WLS, Shoolpaneshwar WLS and the Waghai Botanical Garden.

The activities planned include the construction of more water bodies in Vansda NP, strengthening the fencing around the park and renovation of small rest houses for tourist accommodation. In Shoolpaneshwar too there is a move to augment facilities for tourists visiting the sanctuary.

Source: Anil Pathak. 'Rs. 30 lakh sanctioned for South Gujarat sanctuaries', *The Times of India*, 16/12/03.

SC allows Essar pipeline through Gulf of Kutch Marine NP

The Supreme Court has given the go ahead to the Essar oil pipeline through the Gulf of Kutch Marine National Park. A bench consisting of the Justices Ruma Pal and BN Srikrishna set aside the concerns raised by environmental groups regarding the impacts this would have on the sensitive ecosystem of the Gulf. The State Government was directed to grant formal authorisation for the project within a fortnight. (See *PA Updates* 46, 32, 30, 27 & 26).

Source: 'SC green signal to Essar refinery', *The Times of India*, 20/01/04.

'SC gives go ahead to Essar oil project', *The Hindu Business Line*, 20/01/04.

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

HARYANA

Meeting of State Wildlife Board

A meeting of the Haryana State Wildlife Board was held in January in Chandigarh and presided over by Chief Minister, Mr. Om Prakash Chautala. A number of decisions were taken on the occasion.

Prominent among them was the decision for the development of the Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary as a major tourist spot (see *PA Update* 46) and the setting up bird care centres at the district level. The Chief Wildlife Warden of the State Mr. RD Jakati informed that a dense forest spread over an area of 166 acres and an open forest spread over an area of 147 acres was being developed along with the cultivation of herbal plants in Bhindawas. A nature interpretation centre to study wildlife is also being prepared. He also pointed out that the lake here would be maintained by the irrigation department and there would be no shortage of water.

The CM pointed out that *neelgai* were a constant problem in the rural areas and efforts must be made to control them. He suggested that the resolution required to be passed by the panchayats for the control of *neelgai* needed to be made from user-friendly.

It was further pointed out during the meeting that the water supply to the lake in the Sultanpur

National Park had been increased and that a tiger reserve was also being considered by the Central government which would include areas of Kalesar in Haryana, and Simbalbaraa Wildlife Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh (See *PA Update* 43).

Source: Sudhir Kalia. 'Bhindawas wildlife sanctuary to be made tourist spot', *Times News Network*, 21/01/04.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Centre takes up proposal for HP-Haryana Tiger Reserve including Simbalbara and Kalesar WLS

The Union Ministry of Forests and Environment has agreed to take up the proposal for the HP-Haryana Inter State Tiger Reserve that will include the Simbalbara and Kalesar WLSs. The proposal had put forth a few months ago by the Wildlife Institute of India (see *PA Update* 43).

The Centre has also asked the Himachal Pradesh government to provide details of the areas that are to be included in the proposed expansion of the Simbalbara WLS for the same. The wildlife wing of the state had proposed to add another 4400 odd hectares from the Nahan and Paonta Forest Divisions to the 1900 hectare Simbalbara Sanctuary.

The Haryana Government too has been asked to identify areas in the Morni hills, which can be included in the tiger reserve. A similar communication has also been sent to the Uttaranchal government by the Centre.

Source: Suresh Khatta. 'Tiger Reserve project gets a boost', *Indian Express*, 27/10/03.

Contact: **Dr. AJT Johnsingh**, WII, PO Box 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun – 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-640111 – 15. Fax: 640117. Email: ajtjohnsingh@wii.gov.in

Anglers express concern over mining impacts on Pong Dam

The Department of Fisheries, Department of Tourism and the HP Angling Association jointly organised an angling competition at Pong Dam in the month of November. A number of participants in the competition expressed their concern over the unabated illegal mining in the catchment of the dam reservoir and the impact that it was having on the

breeding and feeding grounds of fish, besides increasing the frequency of flash floods.

Concern was also expressed about the impact of dams on migratory fish species like the masheer, the menace of poaching during the upward and downward migration and the use of methods that lead to mass destruction of the fishes. The General Secretary of the Angler's Association also stressed on the need to involve people in a mass movement to protect migrating fish.

Speaking on the occasion, the state Forest Minister said that a committee comprising representatives of the Forest Department, Fisheries Department, Tourism Department and the BBMB had been constituted for the preparation of a composite plan for the development of the wetland. (Also see *PA Update* 44).

Source: SL Chaudhary. 'Anglers concerned over unabated illegal mining', *The Indian Express*, 10/11/03.

Pong Dam oustees not rehabilitated till today

The Himachal Pradesh Government recently admitted that a large number of families displaced by the Pong Dam more than three decades ago were still to be rehabilitated. Of the 20,772 families that were displaced by the dam 16,352 families were to be given land in the state of Rajasthan, while the rest were to be resettled in HP itself.

In a report submitted to the Supreme Court, the HP government has said that only 9,196 families of the total 16,352 to be settled in Rajasthan had been yet given the Eligibility Certificate (EC). Thousands of families thus continue to remain without the land that had been promised to them.

The status reports had been sought by the Supreme Court after the Pong Bandh Visthapit Samiti (PBVS) and the Himachal Pong Dam Oustees Welfare Committee (HPDOWC) had moved the apex court alleging that a committee set up on the court's order in 1996 by the Centre to resolve the problem had failed to do its duty.

The Pong Dam Reservoir was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in the year 1983.

Source: SS Negi. 'SC seeks status reports on Pong Dam oustees', *The Tribune*, 09/11/03.
SS Negi. 'All Pong Dam oustees not issued ECs, admits HP', *The Tribune*, 26/11/03.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Census shows drastic fall in *hangul* numbers; recounting ordered

A census conducted last year has revealed that the total *hangul* population in Dachigam National Park has fallen to just 140. This census that was conducted by a local officer has led to charges of official neglect and mismanagement of the park. The outcome of this census, had in fact been kept secret for a while.

After the controversy over the numbers came out in the open, the state wildlife authorities have decided to ask two 'experts' from the Wildlife Institute of India to conduct a recount. The details from this count are not yet known.

Source: Mufti Islah. 'Deer census leaves J-K dept red-faced', *Indian Express*, 05/03/04.

JHARKHAND

Palamau deer populations on the decline

The recently conducted census in the Palamau Tiger Reserve has shown a substantial drop in the numbers of spotted deer here. 12,586 animals were counted here as against the figure of 14,375 in 2002. The tiger population has also shown a marginal decline from 38-40 tigers in 2002 to 36-38 in 2003.

Forest officials say that the presence and activities of the naxalites in the region have made the job of patrolling very difficult. (see *PA Update* 45). They also face additional threats from robbers, the timber mafia and the poachers.

The FD also points out that the reserve is dotted with 191 villages and that wild animals are killed here by the poor people to supply animal parts to traders who then transport these to different parts of the country.

Source: Manoj Prasad. 'Naxalite shadow over Palamau tigers', *Indian Express*, 09/01/04.

39 tusker deaths reported in Jharkhand in the last two and half years; six deaths in Oct and Nov 2003 alone

39 tuskers are reported to have died in the state of Jharkhand in the last two and a half years. In 2001-02 two elephants died due to electrocution, one came under a train and the rest were said to have died due

to other reasons. In 2002-2003, 18 elephants were killed in the state of which three died due to electrocution, and one each died due to poaching, anthrax and after being crushed under a speeding train. In the period from March to November 2003 another 10 were reported dead. Of these, four came under a train and another four died of electrocution.

Put together the number of deaths due to train accidents and electrocution, therefore, were six and nine respectively. The Forest Department of the state has put the blame for this on the Railway Ministry and the Jharkhand State Electricity Board. They say that a Rs. 1.6 crores proposal for the fencing of the railway track has already been approved, but the Railways have not yet released the money (see *PA Update* 41). Most of these killings have taken place in the Chaibasa Gua railway section in Chaibasa District. This financial year the FD has also proposed a Rs. 80 lakh project for fencing a four kms section of the Goelkoda - Manoharpur section.

As far as deaths due to electrocution are concerned, here too the FD lays the blame at the door of the State Electricity Board. High tension, 11,000 Watt wires pass through a number of forest areas and in many places these are barely 12-15 feet above the ground. FD officials point out that their repeated requests to raise the height of the wires to at least 20 feet, have not been heeded too.

As far as poaching is concerned, while FD numbers give the figure at only one, others say that at least a dozen elephants are poached every year by poachers who are in cahoots with the Maoist rebels in the forests. Many of these are not reported by the forest staff.

More recent reports indicate that at least six tuskers were killed within a period of six weeks in the months of October and November 2003, alone. All the killings were reported from the Chaibasa region and tusks from four animals were missing.

Forest officials said that they had no proof of poaching, and that investigations were still going on. The possibility that the local villagers might have killed them to avenge the killing of people and the damaging of property due to the elephants has also not been ruled. Particularly so, because more than 250 people have been killed in last three years by elephants in the region.

Source: Nityanand Shukla. 'Jumbos under threat in Jharkhand', *The Pioneer*, 24/11/03.

Nityanand Shukla. 'Six tuskers killed in six weeks; Jharkhand forest dept. clueless', *The Pioneer*, 03/12/03.

KARNATAKA

Trekking to be allowed in all PAs

All protected areas (five national parks and 20 wildlife sanctuaries) in Karnataka are to be opened to trekking, starting with the Bandipur National Park. The programme will be implemented through Jungle Lodges and Resorts Limited (JLR), the eco-tourism arm of Karnataka tourism. The initiative has been taken up by the forest department to create awareness about forest conservation, particularly among urbanites.

Source: 'Forests opened for trekking', *Times News Network*, 05/03/04.

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

NGOs express concern over habitat manipulation in Kudremukh NP

The Karnataka State Forest Department (FD) has recently taken up several habitat manipulation activities inside the Kudremukh National Park (KNP). A number of NGOs, including Arohana and the Western Ghats Forum for Conservation of Natural Ecosystem (WG-FORCE), Moodbidri, have alleged that these are inappropriate and will be detrimental to the natural forest ecosystem here.

The FD has constructed a series of bunds, totaling a length of more than 12000 mts, across the natural streams in KNP as a part of soil and water conservation works. The works are also being justified in the name of employment generation. Already a total of 50,000 bunds and 20 large check dams had been constructed in the park upto 1999 as per the first management plan for KNP. Several large trees were submerged and killed due to water logging that was caused by the check dams.

Critics and NGOs have pointed out that this kind of water conservation work is primarily suited for dry states like Rajasthan and is completely out of place in the rainforests of the Western Ghats. It has also been pointed out that the FD is planting thousands of saplings on the natural grassland vegetation here, thereby altering the natural

composition of the park. Ecologists and conservationists have consistently appealed to the forest department that such habitat manipulation activities are completely unscientific, unwarranted and a waste of public money, particularly at a time when there is a severe shortage of funds for protection activity and for the welfare of the field level staff here.

Forest officials, have however, pointed out that the works were being carried out as per the centrally sanctioned development project and that this had been approved by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state.

Source: Stanly Pinto. 'Kudremukh Park undergoes habitat manipulation', *Times News Network*, 28/01/04.

Fires affect large parts of Nagarhole

Forest fires in February are reported to have destroyed large areas of two ranges in the Rajiv Gandhi (Nagarhole) National Park. The affected areas include Wadakana Mala, Ane Mala, Hannina Thota and Chikabyrana Kuppe in the DB Kuppe Range and the Sarathi beat in the Metikuppa Range.

Fire control work was severely hampered due to the absence of fire watchers. The Chief Wildlife Warden was quoted as saying that there was a severe shortage of financial resources. Money from the World Bank was no longer available and that which was available with the Forest Development Agencies could not be diverted for fire control.

Source: 'Forest Dept watches as fire burns hole in Nagarhole', *The New Indian Express*, 15/02/04.

Water shortage forces animals to migrate out of Nagarhole

A severe drought and water shortage is reported to be forcing wild animals in the Nagarhole National Park to migrate to the forests of neighbouring Kerala. There have also been reports of villages on the park borders being raided by wild animals, particularly elephants.

Source: 'Animals migrate due to water shortage', *Deccan Herald*, 17/02/04.

Action sought against AM Annaiah, DCF incharge of Nagarhole

The Karnataka Lokayukta has recommended disciplinary action against the Deputy Conservator of Forest, Hunsur Wildlife Division, AM Annaiah. He has been accused of misappropriating funds to the tune of Rs 6.1 crore in the World Bank funded India Eco Development Project (IEDP) and Beneficiary Oriented Scheme for Tribal Development Project (BOTD), funded by the Government of India for improvement of the Rajiv Gandhi National Park (RGNP), Nagarhole and adjoining areas.

Of the Rs 40 crore that was earmarked to be spent over a period of five years under IEDP and BOTD for wildlife protection, forest conservation and voluntary resettlement of tribals living inside the national park, only Rs 23.92 crore was found to have been used.

The inquiry conducted by the Lokayukta on the basis of a complaint filed by an organisation from Madikeri, revealed the following. As many as 1197 teak trees, 37 *Beete* trees, 15 *Matti* trees, 4 *Honne* trees, 21 sandalwood trees, 1 jungle wood and 1 Eucalyptus tree were felled; failure to stop timber smuggling in several areas falling under Hunsur Wildlife Division which comes in the jurisdiction of Mr. Annaiah resulted in the loss of 12,833 trees valued at Rs 5.77 crore, failure in preventing elephant poaching in RGNP (it was alleged that 77 elephants died or were killed between April 2000 and October 2002 inside RGNP), failure in taking steps to prevent *ganja* cultivation in Brahmagiri Sanctuary of Srimangala range, irregularities committed in the distribution of LPG connections under IEDP scheme, irregularities in the purchase of pressure cookers under the IEDP Scheme to an extent of an excess Rs 5.05 lakh, irregularity in the purchase of sewing machines under IEDP to the tune of Rs 1.36 lakh.

Irregularities were also found in the purchase of steel almirahs, solar lanterns, improved *chullas*, Mangalore tiles and installation of gobar gas connections. Irregularity in digging of water pond under BOTD Scheme was also found out to the tune of Rs 8.65 lakh.

The Lokayukta, Justice N Venkatachala has recommended to the Government that the disciplinary inquiry may be entrusted to him, which can be further entrusted to a sitting judge working in the Lokayukta Organisation. He has also recommended taking steps to fix the extent of responsibility, including recovery of amounts for

which the accused may be directly responsible. (Also see *PA Updates* 41, 39, and 24).

Source: 'Action sought against Annaiah' *Deccan Herald*, 08/01/04.

Water supply project to Mahadeshwara Betta held up due to Cauvery WLS.

A water supply project from the River Cauvery to the pilgrimage centre of Mahadeshwara Betta has been held up due to the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary. While supplementary works of the Rs. 11.5 crore project have begun at the Betta itself, the chief work of supplying water from Paalaar through a canal is yet to get the sanction of the Forest Department.

The distance between the Cauvery River, which flows near Paalaar and the Betta is 22 kilometres. In order to undertake the project work, it is necessary to divert 0.3 hectare of land of the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, and 0.6 hectare of land that of the Kollegal forest division.

This matter has not yet been sorted out and even the Chief Minister, Mr. SM Krishna is reported to have openly criticised the indifferent attitude of the forest department officials in the matter.

The final decision will lie with the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), but it is not clear whether the matter has yet been referred there.

Source: N Siddegowda. 'Parched hills pray for water', *Deccan Herald*, 30/12/03.

State seeks NBWL permission for power line inside Bannerghatta NP

The Karnataka State Government has approached the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) for the denotification of 3.98 hectares from the Bannerghatta NP for the installation of a 66 kv power line from Somanahalli to the Jigani industrial area. Somanahalli has a 400 kv service station drawing power from Ramagundam power station and a 100 kv line has already been drawn through the park for this purpose.

In an attempt to supply quality power to industrial firms situated at Jigani on the outskirts of Bangalore City, the Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation (KPTCL), had in 1999, initiated the project to draw a power line from Somanahalli.

90 % of this work is over, including raising most of the towers and installing conductors. Of the 545 towers to be erected, only 10 are remaining and

five of these are to be installed inside the park. The total project cost is estimated to be Rs. 18 crores.

The towers are 18 to 20 metres tall. The KPTCL has contended that these would not affect the animals in the park and that the delay in the completion of the project has led to theft of conductors. The Forest Department has raised an objection to transmission lines passing through the national park. The NBWL is reported to have set up an expert team that will conduct a site visit before taking a final decision.

Source: B S Arun. 'State seeks wildlife board nod for power line inside Bannerghatta park', *Deccan Herald*, 08/12/03.

Quarrying leases near Bannerghatta suspended

31 leases for stone quarrying granted in Survey No. 71 of Ragihalli near the Bannerghatta National Park and three stone crushing contracts have been put on hold. Additionally, the use of six crushing machines have also been banned.

This information was recently provided in the Karnataka State Legislative Council by the Mines and Geology Minister, V Muniyappa.

Source: 'Quarrying leases suspended', *The Hindu*, 15/01/04.

Contact: **ACF (WL)**, Bannerghatta NP, Bangalore – 560083, Karnataka

68,000 tons of silt load reported in River Bhadra

A study conducted by the Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS) and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), has concluded that it is the small sub-catchment at Kudremukh that is responsible for the 53 – 67% of the total silt load entering the River Bhadra.

The study that was sanctioned by the Karnataka Water Resources Ministry to estimate the amount of silt in the Bhadra River also found that in the 2002 monsoon approximately 68,000 tons of sediment load entered at Nellibeedu downstream of the KIOCL mining at Malleswara, including one event in which over 19,900 tons was discharged in a single day.

The study was designed by a team of professionals that included Dr. Jagdish Krishnaswamy, a hydrologist working with ATREE

along with Dr Ullas Karanth of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited, meanwhile has stated that they have complied with the stipulations set by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board and have adhered to the parameters set for carrying mining activity and were taking necessary steps for protection and restoration of the mined areas.

Source: 'Bhadra turns brown with silt', *Deccan Herald*, 08/01/04.

'Proper steps taken, claims Kudremukh company', *Deccan Herald*, 09/01/04.

Contact: **Ullas Karanth**, Wildlife Conservation Society, India Programme, 403 Seebo Apts, 26/2 Aga Abbas Ali Road, Bangalore - 560042, Karnataka. Tel: 080-5591747 / 5591990. Email: ukaranth@vsnl.com

State Biodiversity Board constituted

The Karnataka State Government has recently constituted the Karnataka Biodiversity Board. The Board has been constituted under the Biological Diversity Act 2002 to formulate policies for the protection of biodiversity.

The Board is comprised of 11 members. These include the Principal Secretary, Environment and Ecology Department; Principal Secretary, Agriculture and Horticulture Department; Secretary, Forest, Environment and Ecology Department; Director, Indian Medical System and Homeopathy; Madhav Gadgil of the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore; Dwarakinath, Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Agricultural Sciences; H. Sharath Chandra, Microbiology and Cell Biology Laboratory, IISc; MS Mahalingappa from Turuvekere Taluk of Tumkur District; and Darshan Shankar, Foundation for the Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions.

Source: 'Biodiversity Board constituted', *The Hindu*, 29/11/03.

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

KERALA

Tribal chief moves court against FD move to cut teak plantations in Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

The Chief of the Kurumba Tribe of Attapady, Mudda Mooppan, has filed a petition before the Kerala High Court seeking to stop the felling of teak in the 500 acres of a plantation on the banks of the Bhavani River. The Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha too has promised their support in the matter.

According to the 110 year old Mooppan, the land where the teak trees are being cut down originally belonged to the tribal community. It was their agricultural land where they practiced their traditional 'slash and burn' agriculture. The FD had taken over the land for teak plantation in the 1930s.

Mooppan has said that their fight is for control over their ancestral land and for the conservation of the eco-system. He also questioned the logic of spending an estimated Rs. 219 crores on afforestation of the degraded forest land of the Attapady hills on the one hand and cutting down standing trees from another part in the same area.

The Forest Department has meanwhile said that they did not have a plan to clear fell the forest. They only intended to fell the trees by rotation as the plantations were 'production forests' for revenue generation and also that the felling was being done as per the approved working plan.

Source: G Prabhakaran, 'Tribal chieftain moves court to save forests', *The Hindu*, 06/01/04.

Travancore Devaswom Board asks for forestlands within Periyar for Sabrimala pilgrims

In a petition filed before the Kerala High Court, the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) has asked the Central and State Governments to allot it land at Sabrimala and Pampa for amenities for pilgrims.

The Board has also sought to declare that it is entitled to undertake development activities without any prior sanction from the Government for the 73.8 acres of land leased to it prior to the Forest Conservation Act (FCA) - 1980. Additionally, a prayer has also been made to construct enough check dams across the Pampa and Kakki Rivers to store sufficient water.

The Court has issued notices to the concerned parties. The latest in the matter is however not known. (Also see *PA Updates* 44 and 41)

Source: 'HC orders notice on TDB plea for forest lands at Sabarimala', *The New Indian Express*, 29/10/03.

Women's patrolling group in Periyar TR gets award

Vasanthasena, the group of rural women who patrol the Periyar Tiger Reserve were recently given the PV Thampi Memorial Endowment Award instituted by the Environment Monitoring Forum for the year 2003. The award consists of Rs. 5000 and a citation.

Vasanthasena has around 90 women from areas bordering the tiger reserve. The patrolling starts from the Anavachal Base Camp and any sign of encroachment or poaching is registered with the authorities.

The work of the group has resulted in a substantial drop in the number of such cases in this area in the last few years. (Also see *PA Update* 43)

Source: 'Environment award for 'Vasanthasena'', *The New Indian Express*, 27/11/03.

Gaur population on the rise in Kerala

Gaur populations in protected areas across Kerala are reported to have gone up substantially. Reports to this effect have been received from the Periyar TR and the Parambikulam and Chinnar WLSs. The average size of the gaur herds are said to have gone up from 20-30 animals earlier to nearly 70 animals now.

While this is being considered proof of the better management and protection of the forest areas, fears have also been expressed that this could lead to the outbreak of some epidemic. The growth in numbers is also likely to put additional pressure on the natural resources and there is concern of the possibility of them turning crop raiders.

Source: Manoj Das. 'Bison population bursting at the seams', *New Indian Express*, 12/11/03.

Supreme Court allows plea to expedite hearing on Mullaiperiyar dam

The Supreme Court has recently allowed the plea of Janata Party President, Mr. Subramanian Swamy and the Tamil Nadu Government for expediting the hearing on transfer petitions seeking to raise the height of the Mullaiperiyar dam in Kerala from 136 ft. to 152 ft.

The matter was earlier being argued, in both, the Tamil Nadu and Kerala High Courts respectively. The Supreme Court had then directed that the petitions be transferred to the apex court (see *PA Updates* 40 & 36).

While Tamil Nadu has been seeking for the height of the dam to be increased, Kerala has opposed the move on grounds on safety and that this would lead to submergence of ecologically important parts of the Periyar Tiger Reserve (See *PA Updates* 34 & 30)

Source: J Venkatesan. 'Supreme Court allows plea to expedite hearing on Mullaiperiyar dam', *The Hindu*, 13/12/03.

Governor sends back forest bill

The Governor of Kerala sent back in December the bill for the takeover of ecologically fragile lands, passed by the Assembly on August 7, 2003 (see *PA Update* 46). The bill titled 'Kerala Forest (Vesting and Management of Ecologically Fragile Lands) Bill, 2003, was to replace an ordinance first promulgated in 2000 and reissued several times. Under the ordinance, over 25,000 acres of ecologically fragile forest land was taken over by the Government from private individuals to ensure its conservation.

Environmentalists and the Opposition parties had pointed out that the bill would force the government to surrender to private individuals a big chunk of forests taken over from them under the ordinance. It was also pointed out that most of individuals had taken possession of the concerned lands through fraudulent methods.

The reason cited for sending the bill back to the assembly was that there was a problem over the definition of 'forest'. Any land cultivated with crops such as coffee, cardamom, coconut or areca is not described as a forest in the bill, even if it has predominantly natural vegetation and is ecologically fragile or close to the boundary of protected forests.

Source: 'Governor sends back Forest bill', *The Hindu*, 27/12/03.

State electricity board asks centre for compensation for conservation

The Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) has suggested the creation of an 'Oppurtunity Denial Compensation Fund' by the Centre to compensate the

states that sacrifice their development interests for the sake of biodiversity conservation. The suggestion was made in a memorandum submitted to the 12th Finance Commission that visited the state recently.

It was pointed out that except for its 44 rivers, Kerala has no other natural resource for power generation. While the total potential in the state for hydropower is 4333 MW, only about 1800 MW has yet been harnessed.

It was further noted that since 1982, the Union Government had denied all hydroelectric projects in the state on ecological grounds, the prominent ones being the Silent Valley and Pooyamkutty Hydroelectric projects.

Source: 'Share cost of conservation, KSEB urges Centre', *The Hindu*, 24/12/03.

LAKSHADWEEP

Corals under threat due to pollution

The Coral Reef system in the Lakshadweep Islands is facing a threat from oil-spillage and fuel discharge caused by an increase in the passage of vehicles and the number of generators being used by the islanders for power generation.

A recent study titled 'Coral reef ecosystem of Lakshadweep - a Bio-Geochemical Facsimile', under taken by the Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) has found that 25% of the outer cells in the reefs were dead due to the prolonged trapping of sediment on the coral. The study also found a high concentration of metals like Cadmium, Lead, Mercury, Aluminium, Zinc and Vanadium in the reefs here.

Lead and Cadmium were found in all the study areas, with their concentrations being above one mg per litre. Cadmium concentration was found to be 26.70 mg per litre. The study also reported that the anti-fouling bottom paints used by boats contributed to the formation of toxic concentrations of tributyl tin and other harmful chemical compounds.

The study was conducted in Kavaratti, Kadamath, Kiltan, Androth, Agathy and Minicoy.

Source: Giji Marykulam. 'Lakshadweep coral reefs under threat', *Indian Express*, 06/01/04.

MAHARASHTRA

Water pipeline for Mumbai residents to be blasted under Sanjay Gandhi NP

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is reported to have cleared a project to lay a water pipeline underneath the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai. The pipeline is to be laid in a tunnel blasted 200ft below the national park from the Malad side to Bhandup. The project reportedly came through following the initiative taken by Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. Manohar Joshi to convince then Environment Minister, Mr. TR Baalu, that the project will have no impact on the ecology of the park.

The conditions laid down while clearing the proposal include the following: the pipeline should be in a straight line; air vents should be dug at the spots fixed by the Conservator of Forest without removing any trees; the work should be supervised by the Forest and Environment Department and the Bombay Municipal Corporation, in return. will deposit an amount of 10 lakhs for wildlife protection.

The beneficiaries of the project will be the western suburbs of Mumbai.

Source: '*Mumbai sathi jast pani*', *Loksatta*, 12/12/03.
Contact: **DFO, SGNP**, Borivali (E), Mumbai – 400066, Maharashtra.

Blackbucks from Mumbai zoo to be released in Aner Dam and Gautala Autram Ghat WLSs

Forty blackbucks from Mumbai's Jijamata Udyan are slated to be released the Aner Dam Wildlife Sanctuary in Nashik District and Gautala Autram Ghat Wildlife Sanctuary in the Aurangabad District of Maharashtra.

It has been reported that the animals will be checked for any infections and diseases and will also be vaccinated before release. Further details, including whether the relocation was carried out are however not available.

Source: Lajwanti D'souza. 'Black bucks to be released in sanctuaries', *Mid Day*, 05/12/03.

Rs. 2 crore rehabilitation package approved for villages affected by Chandoli WLS

The Maharashtra State Government is reported to have agreed to provide a Rs. Two crore rehabilitation

package for those families affected by the Chandoli Wildlife Sanctuary.

The affected families had launched an agitation in Kolhapur in the month of November for the same. They then called off their protest when the State Finance Minister assured them of the package and that the money would be released by December 5, 2003. The funds were to be given from the Chief Minister's Funds. The full details or the latest in the situation are not known.

Source: 'Rs 2 crore for rehabilitation of project affected families', *Free Press Journal*, 11/11/03.

CM clears Chandivli resettlement plan for evacuees from Sanjay Gandhi NP

The Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr. Sushil Kumar Shinde has recently put his stamp of approval on the controversial Chandivli rehabilitation project for the 20,000 odd families that have been evicted from the Sanjay Gandhi National Park. He had earlier refused to approve the project (see *PA Updates* 45, 43, 41 & 39). The CM has now said that the earlier rehabilitation site at Shirdon village in Kalyan taluka had been cancelled and this has paved the way for the Chandivli project.

According to the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti (NHSS), which is implementing the project, the work had started in November 2003. Currently, 48 buildings in five clusters are coming up and the first batch of 3000 homes is expected to be ready by June 2004.

Source: 'CM clears Chandivli resettlement plan', *The Times of India*, 29/01/04.

Contact: **NHSS**, Sankalp Bldg., 5th Floor, Plot 1040, Off Sayani Rd. Prabhadevi, Mumbai - 400025. Tel: 022-4227690.

Tourism award for Pench Tiger Reserve

The Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra has been awarded the WWF-India and Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) institutional award for 2002 for their work in improving the management and habitat of the park.

The awards were conferred in January 2004 during National Tourism Day celebrations.

Source: 'Award for Pench reserve', *Indian Express*, 08/12/03.

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

ORISSA

Zoo school launched in Nandankanan

Orissa's Nandankanan zoo has launched a unique 'zoo school' to sensitise children to wildlife and environment issues. The school was started in December on the zoo's 44th foundation day.

The school would have experts on its faculty to educate the children on various crucial environment issues, including wildlife and forests. It will also function on holidays, a move that should attract more children, zoo authorities said.

Source: 'Zoo school to sensitise children on wildlife', *Indo Asian News Service*, 30/12/03.

Irons spikes to keep in Chandka's wild elephants

The Forest Department is reported to have planted iron spikes in a move to prevent wild elephants straying from the Chandka Wildlife Sanctuary near Bhubaneswar. Elephants from Bharatpur, which is a part of the sanctuary cross over the road to reach farmlands, particularly in the winter months.

First trenches were dug to keep the elephants out. When this failed, barricades were put up in the form of stone walls. This prompted the elephants to take the 'tunnel route' under a bridge. Then in December 2003, the FD fixed an iron & concrete platform with nearly 3 to 4 inches long spikes here to prevent them from crossing under.

According to locals one elephant ran away screaming after it put its weight on the spikes. Since then the elephants have stopped taking the 'tunnel route'. Their footprints, however, have been noticed near the spiked concrete bed, indicating the importance of the need for a route to move.

Wildlife groups have expressed concern on the risks that the elephants will continue to face because of this, including those from infections caused by the rusted spikes and the fact that during the monsoon they will not be visible due to water flowing over them. There is also the concern that

other wildlife that could include hare and deer might also be injured.

Source: Biswajit Mohanty, Email dated 20/02/04.
Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack – 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671 – 334625. Fax: 610980. Email: biswajit@cal.vsnl.net.in

Large scale poaching of migratory birds in Bhitarkanika, Hirakud Reservoir

There have been reports of large scale poaching of migratory birds in Bhitarkanika National Park and the waters of the Hirakud Reservoir. Residents from villages adjoining Bhitarkanika were reported to be using poisoned food grain for the purpose, while others were using nets in their fields and ponds. There were reports of poaching from small islands in the deltas in Kendrapara district and the neighbouring Jagatsinghpur district as well.

Large numbers of people including from the state capital, Bhubaneswar, were regularly seen buying bird meat in the markets near Bhitarkanika. The meat is priced at Rs. 100-150 per kg. Observers have suggested that anti-poaching and awareness raising drives that have been carried out in and around Chilka Lake in the last couple of years are also needed in this area if this problem is to be dealt with successfully.

Source: ST Beuria. 'Winter homes of migratory birds turn death traps', *Deccan Herald*, 10/12/03.

Anti-poaching initiatives around Chilka

The State Forest Department is reported to have initiated a number of measures to deal with the poaching of migratory birds in and around Chilka with the start of the migratory season in November.

130 eateries in the vicinity of the lake were identified in the Tangi area and put under surveillance, as they were known to attract visitors by offering special delicacies of bird meat. A poster campaign was also launched to create awareness in the matter.

Village level bird protection committees were also formed, where three members from each village joined the anti-poaching drive. (Also See *PA Updates* 40, 34 & 32)

Source: 'Villagers join anti-poaching drive', *The Statesman*, 08/11/03.
Soumyajit Patnaik. 'Drive to curb poaching', *The Hindustan Times*, 08/11/03.

Radio isotopes to study Chilka productivity

The Central Institute of Fishery Research (CIFRI), Barrackpore, has been assigned the task to study the productivity of the Chilka Lake using radio isotopes. The lake is to be divided into four ecological sectors and the study will be conducted from 18 stations that will be distributed across these four sectors. The maximum sustainable yield will then be evaluated sector wise as well as for the entire lake. It is hoped that the outcome from the study will help in the long-term management of the fisheries resources here.

The study is to be conducted in a participatory manner, with the involvement of the fishermen's federation from the beginning. The first part of the study is to be completed by August 2004.

Similar studies of the productivity of wetland systems are reported to have been carried out successfully in four other places in the world.

Source: 'Radio isotopes mechanism to study Chilka lake', *Hindu Business Line*, 13/10/03.

Chemical poisons being used for poaching fish in Satkosia Gorge WLS

A new trend of using chemical poisons for poaching fish has been reported from the Satkosia Gorge Wildlife Sanctuary. The culprits are alleged to be Bangladeshi fishermen who have settled in this part of the state in the recent past.

They mix poisonous powders with sand and prepare small balls, which are then thrown in deep-water pools where the water flow is slow. The balls settle down on the riverbed and start releasing the poison into the surrounding water. The dying fish surface on the water in a while and are caught. Another method is used is to make small balls of flour mixed with the pesticide Demecron. This is also thrown in as bait. When the fish eat them, they start dying and float on the water.

These methods are being used as it enables a huge fish catch in short span of time. The villages that these fishermen are reported to be coming from include Tikarpada, Badmul, Kuturi, and Morada, all of which are located on the banks of the River Mahanadi.

Recently, the Forest Department released nearly 700 juvenile gharials and muggers in the river here in an effort to boost the population of these threatened creatures. It is now feared that the large scale poisoning and poaching of fish here will adversely impact the initiative of the FD.

Source: Jatindra Dash. 'Poisoned water kills fish, endangers wildlife', *Indo-Asian News Service*, 11/12/03.
'Chemicals hurt Orissa tiger habitat', *The Hindu Business Line*, 17/12/03.

Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, see above

Albino crocodiles found in Bhitarkanika

15 rare albino crocodiles were counted by Forest Department officials during the recent census in the Bhitarkanika National Park. The census was carried out from January 8-14, 2004 and the total number of crocodiles counted was 1358. Of these 220 were found to be adults, 100 sub-adults, 210 juveniles, 303 yearlings and 525 hatchlings. Bhitarkanika is supposed to be the only place in the world where these albinos are found.

The total population of crocodiles as per the last census was 1308. This included 192 adults, 82 sub adults, 180 juveniles, 370 yearlings and 484 hatchlings.

Source: 'Rare white crocodiles found in Orissa', *The Hindu*, 11/01/04.
'1358 salt water crocodiles found in Bhitarkanika', *Daily Excelsior*, 30/01/04.

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

PUNJAB

Flyash leakage into Sutlej turns water acidic, threatens Harike

Thousands of tonnes of fly ash leaked into the Sutlej River following a major breach in the Stage I dyke of the Guru Gobind Singh Super Thermal Plant (GGSSTP), Ropar in the first week of October 2003. This is the 2nd major breach here, the earlier one having occurred on January 2, 2003 in the Stage 2 dyke. A magisterial inquiry conducted into the breach

had indicted the GGSSTP authorities for poor construction and upkeep of the dyke. Analysis of water samples in the river a few a couple of days after the breach showed that the water was turning acidic with the pH level falling to 6.

There was concern regarding the impact this would have on the migratory bird populations that visit the region in large numbers. Many areas located downstream also depend on this resource for their drinking water supplies, and they too are likely to be adversely impacted.

Source: Lalit Mohan. 'Fly ash flows into Sutlej', *The Tribune*, 08/10/03.
Lalit Mohan. 'Fly ash continues to flow', *The Tribune*, 09/10/03.
'Sutlej waters test acidic', *The Tribune*, 10/10/03.

RAJASTHAN

Tourism threatening Ranthambore says Park Director

The Director of the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Govind Sagar Bhardwaj, has said that the activities of 'politically influential hotel owners' and the growth in tourism is posing a serious threat to the tiger reserve. He is reported to have said that the big hotels supported by influential politicians constantly demand access for more vehicles to ferry the growing number of tourists to see the tigers in the park. He has pointed out that the number of vehicles going into the park has already exceeded the carrying capacity and that there would be no increase from the present 14 jeeps and eight mini-buses that are allowed into the park daily. The park's fame has led to a near doubling of visitors in the past 10 years, from about 37,000 per year earlier to about 68,000 annually now.

The Director has also put forward a plan that includes a freeze on the number of vehicles entering the park and the development of other activities in the area to ease the tourist pressure on the park.

Later reports have indicated that the Director has denied some of 'dramatic' remarks that were attributed to him. However there has been general agreement, following his comments that tourism pressure on tiger reserves continues to increase, and that there is a need to urgently deal with the problem.

Source: 'Ranthambore is endangered', *AFP*, 04/03/04.

Chandrika Mago. 'Saving the tiger: who will bell the cat?', *Times News Network*, 06/03/04

Contact: Director, Ranthambore TR,
Sawai Madhopur - 322 001.

UTTAR PRADESH

UP to lay thrust on nature based tourism

The UP Forest Department has decided to lay a great deal of thrust on nature related tourism in the state. Picnic spots, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are to be put onto the tourist map of the state. To give shape to these plans, 196 development committees constituted by the Forest Department are working to develop the area within 5 kms of protected areas. As any development or construction work is prohibited inside the protected areas, efforts are being directed at development around them.

The FD has also planned to link up with the hotel and travel industry to ensure a hassle free experience to the tourists. In the first phase, the impetus will also be on developing employment avenues for the local population living in and around the protected areas.

Source: Anjali Singh Jaiswal. 'In search of greener pastures...', *Times News Network*, 07/02/04.

Kukrail reptile rehabilitation centre to be revived

The State Forest Department has decided to revive the reptile rehabilitation centre at Kukrail, about a year after a decision had been taken to close it down. It has also been decided that the centre will take up the responsibility of functioning as a rescue centre for animals that are confiscated from circuses, poachers, and illegal bird markets. The project cost is estimated to be Rs. Two crores.

Source: Anjali Singh Jaiswal. 'Kukrail: back from the wild', *Times News Network*, 02/02/04

UTTARANCHAL

Elephant menace around Rajaji forcing farmers to change crops

A large number of farmers in Hardwar are shifting away from their traditional crops of sugarcane and paddy to deal with the menace of wild elephants from

the Rajaji National Park. Katarpur, Bhopur, Tanda and Tantwala are some of the villages in the district where farmers have shown keen interest in moving to the newer crops, which includes tobacco and chilies.

The winter of 2003 was the first time this was being tried. The move is being supported and encouraged by experts who believe that this will help deal with the problem of elephant depredation in the region. The government too has agreed to help out with necessary inputs like seeds. District authorities have suggested that the move could also be attractive, economically. While a sugarcane crop on one *bigha* of land brings Rs 3,000 to a farmer, the tobacco crop is likely to yield Rs 5,000.

Source: Shishir Prashant. 'Elephant menace forces farmers to change crops', *Deccan Herald*, 28/11/03.

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP, Shivalik House,
Dehradun - 248001, Uttaranchal.

Encroachments removed from Rajaji NP

A large number of encroachments including religious constructions were recently removed from the Rajaji National Park following orders for the same from the Supreme Court. Half a dozen other constructions were also removed from the Motichur Range of the park. The drive was launched in the last week of November 2003.

Source: Shishir Prashant. 'Anti-encroachment drive launched in Rajaji Park', *Deccan Herald*, 01/12/03.

Nandadevi cleared of garbage

An initiative launched by the Director of the Nandadevi National Park, Jyotsna Sitling, has resulted in the buffer zone of the park being cleared of 44 tonnes of garbage that had collected in the region over the last few years.

The campaign had been started more than a year ago when the local population was urged to start cleaning the buffer zone that was littered with plastic. The Eco-Development Committee (EDC) comprising of the locals started off by hiring people to collect garbage for a salary of Rs. 1000 a month, with an additional incentive of Rs. five per bag of garbage. Sacks worth Rs. 1.5 lakhs were bought to store the garbage, but as 'Operation Clean Up' picked up the number of sacks was soon falling short.

At the end of the campaign, nearly a year after it had begun, a total of 44 tonnes of garbage had been collected in 14,000 bags at Hemkund Sahib. This was transported on horse back to Govindghat and then loaded onto 14 trucks to be taken to Delhi via Dehradun for recycling.

The EDC spent a total of Rs. 6.81 lakhs on the garbage collection and disposal, while it earned Rs. 9.81lakhs by imposing levies like those on shops and mules. (Also see *PA Updates* 43 & 34).

Source: SMA Kazmi. 'Nanda Devi's guardian angel', *The Indian Express*, 23/11/03.

Uttaranchal Govt. re-invites bids for tourism project adjacent to Corbett NP

The Uttaranchal Tourism Development Board (UTDB) has re-invited applications for the development of an 'International Tourism Destination' called 'Corbett Country Tourism Destination' in the vicinity of the Corbett National Park. 325 hectares of land is to be made available on long term lease to a private party for the same.

Tender notices were issued in national newspapers in the month of November and the last date for the submission of the completed bid document was January 31, 2004. A similar invitation for the same project had been issued earlier by the government in June 2003 (see *PA Update* 44). What happened then is not known and neither are the reasons for the re-issuing of the invitation bid.

Project details including an indicative Master Plan can be accessed at www.ua.nic.in

Contact: **NN Prasad**, Secretary Tourism, Gov. of Uttaranchal and CEO Uttaranchal Tourism Development Board, Secretariat, 4B, Subhash Road, Dehradun - 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135 - 2712095. Email: nareshnp@sancharnet.in

Vivek Nigam, CEO, Uttaranchal Infrastructure Dev. Co. Ltd. 74/27-1, Rajpur Road, Opp Madhuban Hotel, Near Kanya Gurukul, Dehradun - 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135 - 2748497 / 3795. Fax: 2740129. Email: vivek@u0dec.com

Rajiv Bhartari, Conservator (Eco-Tourism) Office of the PCCF, Forest Department, 87 Rajpur Road, Dehradun-248001. Tel: 0135-2746934. Fax: 2743964. Email: rajivbhartari@hotmail.com

Uttaranchal forest guards call off strike after assurances from government

Over 3200 forest guards in Uttaranchal including those working in protected areas like the Corbett National Park struck work for about a week to bring notice to their demands. The guards occupy the lowest rung of the Indian forest service, are on the job round the clock and often the ones who are in the 'line of fire'.

Their salaries have remained stagnant at Rs. 2,750 a month since the mid 80s, and other demands have also remained pending. The immediate cause for the strike was the announcement of the state government that the forest guards would not be promoted unless they were science graduates.

The guards returned to work after receiving an assurance from the government that their demands would be looked into.

Source: 'Crisis averted: Corbett guards promised better living', *www.ndtv.com*, 20/02/04

WEST BENGAL

Postal Dept. initiatives for wildlife conservation in North Bengal and Sikkim

A number of initiatives have been launched recently by the Postal Department in North Bengal and Sikkim that will contribute towards wildlife conservation and awareness. The Post Master General of the region informed that the 4,000 post offices strewn across North Bengal and Sikkim would henceforth promote the region's wildlife through envelopes, greeting cards and other stationery.

The department has also launched the Rural Postal Life Insurance Scheme (RPLIS). It was pointed out that the scheme would benefit people in rural areas where they are prone to animal attacks, particularly from elephants. The help of the Forest Department was sought for the popularisation of this scheme and the FD has assured its cooperation.

Source: 'Postal Dept. launches life insurance', *The Statesman*, 19/02/04.

Contact: **DFO, Wildlife (II)**, Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-24907(O) / 30383 (R).

E-mail: wild2@dte.vsnl.net.in

Train knocks another elephant in Mahananda WLS

Another wild elephant was knocked by a train in the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary in the month of March. This is the 2nd such incident since the meter gauge line was converted to a broad gauge one towards the end of 2003. An estimated 10 elephants have been killed or severely injured by trains on this track since 2000

The matter of the conversion meter gauge track to broad gauge has also been the subject of litigation in the Calcutta High Court. Though the HC refused to stop the conversion of the track, it did impose severe restrictions on the railways to ensure minimum loss of animal lives. A special monitoring team was also to be formed to monitor the day to day happenings on the route.

(Also see *PA Updates* 43, 39, 36, 34, 32 & 29).

Source: Subhendu Ray. 'Killer rail-line among elephants', *The Statesman*, 19/03/04.

'Elephant faces agonising death', *The Statesman*, 19/03/04.

Contact: WWF- I, West Bengal State Office, 5th Floor, Tata Centre, 43, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta 700071, West Bengal. Tel: 033 – 2889530. Fax: 2883761.

Animesh Bose, HNAF, Nivedita Market, Hospital Road, Siliguri – 734401, West Bengal. Tel: 0353 – 430856. Fax: 537609

Efforts on to augment Darjeeling water supply that comes from Senchel WLS

The Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council (DGAHC) has decided to overhaul the water-supply system of Darjeeling at its source, which is located inside the Senchel Wildlife Sanctuary. Collection of water at the source would be augmented by at least 1.5 lakh gallons per day. The water supply system here had been set up before independence but has not seen any significant improvement since then. For the last two decades Darjeeling has continued to face a severe water crisis.

Work to be taken up includes the improvement of the 15 million gallon capacity Sindhap or Third Lake that was constructed after independence at Senchel. Faulty construction, and seepage in areas below the reservoir, had made it only partially usable. The construction of another eight lakh-gallon reservoir, abandoned by the council

in the mid 1990s, is also to be taken up. This will be further augmented by strengthening the six lakh-gallon reservoir on the Khong Khola.

The conduit lines which feed the Senchel North and South lakes as well as the Sindhap are also to be repaired. Leakages and seepage along the conduit lines, if plugged, would go a long way in augmenting the collection at source. It has also been noted that the availability of water in the springs that supply water to the lake have been declining over the years. Out of the 32 springs feeding the lakes, only 24 remain. The rest have dried up

Additionally, the council will also undertake repairs of “bridges” and the pipes that carry the water from the lakes to the main filter plant. The entire initiative is expected to cost Rs. 72 lakh.

The council is also reported to be considering an overhaul of the water distribution network of Darjeeling, another system that is considered to be antiquated and extremely inefficient.

Proposals for the Rundung project have also been submitted to the state government by the Darjeeling Municipality. The project envisages the pumping of water from the Rundung River to the Senchel lakes at an estimated cost of Rs. 10 crore. Only 10% of the money has been received so far. Presently, the construction of the road to the project site is going on.

Source: Niraj Lama. 'Plans for better water supply in Darjeeling', *The Statesman*, 10/02/04.

Proposal for NHAI's East West corridor through PAs in North Bengal rejected

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has informed the Supreme Court that it has rejected the National Highway Authority of India's (NHAI) proposed route for its ambitious East-West Corridor Project passing through the forests and protected areas of North Bengal (see *PA Update* 45, 44 & 43). The concerned alignment if approved would have run through the forests of the Buxa Tiger Reserve, Gorumara NP, the Mahananda and Chapramari WLSs, the Jalpaiguri forest division and the Himalayan foothills of Kalimpong forest division.

The proposal had envisaged the conversion of the Islampur-Chalsa section on NH 31 and the Chalsa-Sankosh section on NH 31C into a six-way express lane. It was to pass through Islampur, Bagdogra, Siliguri, Sevoke, Oodlabari, Mal,

Nagrakata, Banarhat, Telipara, Birpara, Madarihat, Hasimara, Damanpur and Sankosh on way to Assam.

Local groups had contested the proposed route, stating that the high-frequency traffic would affect the movement of wildlife, especially elephants, in the area. They pointed out that 2,000 hectares of prime forest land, covered with trees worth Rs 2,000 crore, would also be lost. Besides, the route would pass through flood-prone rivers such as the Leash, Gheesh and Mal.

Instead, they had suggested an alternate route passing through Islampur, Ghoshpukur (Siliguri), Jalpaiguri, Maynaguri, Dhupguri, Falakata, Cooch Behar, Toofanganj and Baxirhat that would avoid this forest stretch as also be shorter by 37 kms. The ministry has now referred this alternate proposal, to the West Bengal government.

Source: 'N Bengal forests safe, NHAI proposal rejected', *The Statesman*, 01/02/04.

Elephant herd from Dalma WLS causes havoc in neighbouring Midnapore Dist. in West Bengal; severe degradation of habitat and corridor reported

A herd of wild elephants from the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary is reported to have caused largescale damage in the adjoining district of Midnapore West in West Bengal. The areas worst affected included the Salboni, Midnapore Sadar, Kharagpur (Rural) and Jhagram blocks of the district. About 250 acres of crops and 300 houses had been destroyed in a period of about a month starting middle of Decemeber, 2003. Five people were also injured.

This problem here is said to have first started in 1987. Explosions because of mining activity in the region and the construction of the Subarnarekha Dam are considered the main reasons. These forced a 60-strong herd to cross the Kangsabati river into Bengal and spread out to the plains of Bankura, Midnapore, Purulia, Burdwan and even as far as Hooghly, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. The taste of paddy, sugarcane and potatoes, that they found in the fields of Bengal, has attracted them to return every year.

On an average, eight to 10 people are killed and crops and property worth Rs 40 to 60 lakh are destroyed by the elephants during each annual visit. In an effort to deal with the problem the state wildlife wing had in 1995, prepared a plan for the creation of elephant sanctuary spread over 200 sq kms at

Mayurjharna — bordering Purulia, Bankura and Midnapore West. A dearth of funds has however delayed the project and in 2002-03, only Rs 70 lakh have been allotted for the Rs 5-crore project. (Also see *PA Update* 38).

Another report has pointed out to the number of development and related threats faced by the elephants and the forests of Dalma WLS. The migratory route between the forests of Dalma and Midnapore West have been badly degraded. An estimated three- hundred headloads of firewood are sent for the furniture industry at Galoori, and 800 to 1,000 headloads of firewood are sent for the furniture-making units at Bataluka and Ghatshila from here. Each headload contains 40 kg of wood. Additionally there are 8,000 to 10,000 heads of cattle that graze in these forests.

It has also been pointed out that a group of elephants from Saranda which used to migrate to Keonjhar are now failing to do so due to massive opencast iron-ore mining in the transit route. Many elephants in this group are also reported to have gone missing in the last three years. Further impediments to the Saranda elephants include the irrigation work at Subarnarekha Canal, forcing them to stay between Parahat and Chakradharpur. The alternative that these elephants have it to move towards the Ayodhya hills, but here too the Purulia Pump Storage project has created a big obstacle. More than 600 hectares of the migratory corridor of the animals is said to have been lost to the project.

Source: 'Elephant herd on the rampage', *The Statesman*, 16/01/04.
'Dalma elephants on verge of extinction', *The Statesman*, 30/01/04.

Major thrust on tourism development in Jalpaiguri district.

There is a major emphasis on tourism development in the Jalpaiguri District in North Bengal. A project for Rs. Seven lakhs was sanctioned for the same during the recently concluded tourist season. 83 spots have been identified as places of tourist interest as part of the project.

Eight of these are under the Sadar block, six under the Raiganj block, six under the Mainaguri block, seven under the Dhupguri block, six under the Malbazar block, four under Nagrakata, 13 under Kalchini, six under Falakata, five under Alipurduar-I block, four under the Alipurduar-II block, 10 under

the Madarihat-Birpara block and eight places under the Kumargramduar block have been earmarked to be developed

In the first phase the district administration has decided to take up the development of 21 of the 83 identified places. This includes the Gorumara National Park, the Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary, the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, Murthy, Chalsa, Jalpesh, Jatilleshwar, Domohani, Alipurduar, Buxa Durg and the Buxa Tiger Reserve. The development of these 21 spots is to be completed by the next tourist season and private investment has been invited for this. The local *zilla parishad* has also sanctioned Rs 75 lakh for repair and conservation of archaeological monuments of the district.

Other reports have indicated that the anti-militant operations here by the Bhutanese Army had adversely impacted tourism in the region, with tourist arrivals almost dropping to nil.

Source: 'Jalpaiguri to woo more tourists', *The Statesman*, 25/12/03.

Additions made to the Kunjanagar Tourism Centre in Jaldapara WLS

A number of additions have been made to the Kunjanagar Eco-Tourism Centre which is located at the southern end of the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary. These include a nature observatory, a bird rescue centre and a tower house.

This centre had been created in 1996. A boating complex with a permanent jetty having three pedal boats was also inaugurated. Tourists can now also avail of boating facilities at the Buri-Torsa river. The funds for these projects have been provided by the Jalpaiguri zilla parishad from the money sanctioned under the SGRY scheme.

Source: 'Nature observatory stands tall', *The Statesman*, 23/12/03.

Wild boar menace around Singhalila NP and Senchel WLS

There are reports of the growing menace of wild boars in the fringes of the Singhalila National Park, the Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary and areas of the Kurseong Division. The animals have not only caused heavy damage to crops, but also injured human beings in a few cases, forcing people to stay indoors after nightfall. The menace has forced many

farmers in the region to give up the farming of their staple crop, potato.

The Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council (DGAHC) is said to have brought the issue to the notice of the State government a number of times, demanding compensation for crop damage, just like villagers receive compensation for elephant depredation in the plains. However, no satisfactory solution to the problem has yet been found.

One of the solutions tried has been to fence croplands with barbed wire. This has been done for some villages such as Rambhi, Chattakpur, Pashim and Rampuria in the Senchel Wildlife Sanctuary. It has however been pointed out that it takes upto Rs. Five lakhs to fence one village and that this kind of money is not available.

Source: Niraj Lama. 'Wild boar menace on the rise in Kurseong', *The Statesman*, 15/12/03.

Contact: **DFO, Wildlife (II)**, Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-24907(O) / 30383 (R).

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Elephant corridors to be restored

The Forest Department (FD) is reported to have launched an effort for the restoration of certain key elephant corridors in an attempt to deal with the growing problem of depredation by wild elephants. Massive destruction of forests along the Assam - North Bengal border, in addition to continuous expansion of human habitat and tea plantations along the conventional route of the elephants have led to regular elephant attacks in North Bengal. Elephants have traditionally used this corridor from Eastern Nepal through the forest lands of North Bengal up to Assam in search of food.

The corridors that are proposed to be restored are the Reti corridor along the Bhutan hills, the Chilapata-Buxa Tiger Reserve-Nimti corridor and the Dhumchi-Tili-Lankapara-Bandapani. The Forest Department has also asked for a patch of about 700 hectares of land between the Gorumara and the Khaikata & Diana forests for the same purpose.

Source: 'Jalpaiguri's elephantine problem', *The Statesman*, 12/12/03.

Microchips for domestic elephants to combat trafficking

The first phase of placing microchips in 11 domestic elephants in West Bengal was initiated at the Buxa Tiger Reserve in North Bengal. The aim of the project is to prevent trafficking of *kunkis* to other regions.

A needle shaped chip is implanted inches below the left ear of every elephant. The programme was initiated in Assam a while ago and the authorities intend to plant such chips in all the 4000 domestic elephants across the country.

Source: 'Chips in elephants to combat trafficking',
The Hindu Business Line, 31/01/04.

Census indicates more cubs in Sunderbans

The recent tiger census in the Sunderbans Tiger Reserves has indicated an increase in the number of cubs in the area. Of all the 1018 pugmarks that were collected, 79 belonged to cubs. This is a substantial increase from the numbers counted in the last census, where, of the total of 825 pugmarks that were collected, 47 belonged to cubs.

Scientists from the Indian Statistical Institute were reported to have been involved in the census this time, to ensure maximum accuracy in the analysis of the data. NCC cadets also participated for the first time in the census here.

The full details of the census are awaited.

Source: Aditya Ghosh. 'Big cat counting with hi-tech help', *Times News Network*, 17/01/04.
'More cub pugmarks in Sunderbans', *Indian Express*, 26/01/04.

Contact: **Director**, Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve, Bikash Bhavan, 3rd Floor, North Block, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700091, West Bengal.
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NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Society for Conservation Biology awards 2004

The Society for Conservation Biology, recently announced its awards for 2004 to honour individuals for their work in the field of Conservation Biology.

The awardees this year include two Indians: Dr. AJT Johnsingh, Wildlife Institute of India. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Award under the category "Government" for "his exemplary contributions to the conservation of mammals and forests in South Asia through leadership, guidance and inspiration".

The other awardee was Mr. Bittu Sahgal, Editor Sanctuary Magazine under the category "Education and Journalism" for "his illustrious contribution to educating generations of Indians about preserving their global natural heritage".

Source: Email from Gopi Sundar dated 02/01/04.

Taj leisure group to foray into eco-tourism

Taj Leisure Hotels, one of the three strategic business units of the Indian Hotels Co. Ltd, has planned green-field investments in the area of eco-tourism. It is reported to be drawing up plans to build small resorts at selected locations of the Himalayan range for the purpose. These include places in Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Bhutan and the North Eastern states.

The eco-tourism projects planned include those related to Project Tiger, Bengal tigers, wildlife in India, national parks, sanctuaries, elephant safaris, angling, fishing, jungle lodges, wild trails, and bird watching across India, particularly in the Himalayas.

Source: 'Taj leisure to foray into eco-tourism', *Times News Network*, 05/02/04.

Heritage monuments in PAs to be restored

The Union Minister for Tourism, Mr. Jagmohan recently announced that an effort will be made towards the protection and restoration of heritage monuments inside protected areas. This is aimed at making these places more attractive for tourists and to provide them with a complete heritage-cum-wildlife experience.

He referred to the many forts and hunting lodges that were built by kings and the British in general and to the protected areas of Ranthambore TR in Rajasthan and the Bandavgarh and Panna TRs in Madhya Pradesh in particular,

Source: Saurabh Sinha. 'Heritage monuments in wildlife parks to be restored', *The Hindustan Times*, 09/11/03.

Sanctuary awards presented

The annual wildlife awards instituted jointly by Sanctuary magazine and ABN Amro Bank were given away recently in Mumbai.

Mr. Billy Arjan Singh was awarded the Lifetime Achievement award for his work in tiger conservation. Five 'Wildlife Service' awards were also given on the occasion. The recipients were Mr. Bhupen Talukdar from Assam, Mr. Girish Vashist from the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, Mr. T Venkatesh from Nagarhole National Park in Karnataka, Mr. Abdul Rehman Mir from Jammu & Kashmir and Mr. Sarang Kulkarni for his work in marine areas like the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Mr. Arvind Kumar Chalasani of Doon School, Dehradun was given the Green Teacher's award.

Source: 'Sanctuary -Wildlife awards for environmentalists', *The Pioneer*, 12/12/03.

Contact: **Bittu Sahgal**, Sanctuary, 602 Maker Chambers V, Nariman Point, Mumbai -- 400021. Tel: 022 – 283 0061 / 81. Fax: 2874380 Email: bittusahgal@vsnl.com

Six new books and website from the ZSI

The Zoological Survey of India has recently released six new books on various aspects of fauna in different parts of the country. These are

- *Status and Review of the Western Tragopan*
- *Status Survey of Wroughton's Free-Tailed Bat*
- *The Fauna of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve*
- *The Fauna of Eravikulam National Park*
- *The Fauna of Ujani and*
- *Common Vertebrate Species of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Borivali*

The website that has been created is dedicated to the water birds of Northern India.

Source: Kalyani Chandorkar. 'Zoological Survey has the last word', *Indian Express*, 03/12/03.

India's wolves most ancient in the world

Genetic studies have revealed that Indian wolves are the most ancient in the world. The conclusions are based on the work done by scientists at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad.

The CCMB had initiated molecular characterisation studies of the wolves in 1998 and compared the results with the data available for worldwide wolf populations. The analysis led to findings indicating that the wolves here (both the Himalayan Wolf and the Gray Wolf) are genetically unique and represent the world's oldest lineage.

Source: 'India's hoary wolves', *The Hindu*, 03/01/04.
Contact: **Dr. YV Jhala**, WII, see above

Postal Department issues stamp series on snakes

The Postal Department recently issued its first-ever stamp series on snakes. Titled, 'Nature-India Snakes', the series was issued in November 2003 and features the King Cobra, python, gliding snake and the bamboo pit viper. The series is supposed to be based on an idea submitted by Pune based herpetologist Neelinkumar Khaire almost a decade ago. The release of stamps also coincided with the recent publication of the 100th volume of the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society.

Source: Neil Pate. 'New postal series on snakes' *Times News Network*, 11/01/04.

SOUTH ASIA

Seminar on 'Smuggling of wildlife items across Indo-Nepal border'

A seminar on 'Smuggling of wildlife items across the Indo-Nepal border' was held in Patna in the month of February. Participants included customs officials and delegates of various enforcement agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Special Services Bureau (SSB), the forests and wildlife department of the state government, and officials of Central Excise Department.

The seminar was organised by the Patna Customs Commissionerate with a view to educate and sensitise the customs officials posted along the Indo-Nepal border on the legal framework for curbing smuggling in wildlife items and to promote their interaction with forest department, SSB, CBI and the state police to check smuggling of wildlife and wildlife products.

Source: 'Plea to check trading in wildlife items', *Times News Network*, 12/02/04.

ADB grant to South Asian countries for tourism promotion

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has sanctioned a US \$ 450,000 technical assistance grant to develop a tourism plan for four countries belonging to the South Asian Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC). The four countries are India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. The grant is to be used to make a tourism development plan for the region for a 10 year period starting 2004.

SASEC's tourism group has already identified the need for a sub-regional tourism master plan, with ecotourism and Buddhist based tourism as common themes.

Source: 'SASEC countries get ADB grant to boost tourism', *The Hindu Business Line*, 07/01/04.

BANGLADESH

Indian crocodiles for Bangladesh

India is reported to have sent 40 marsh crocodiles and 50 eggs to Bangladesh after an appeal for help to boost the country's dwindling reptile population.

The crocodile consignment is being sent following a letter from the Bangladeshi authorities seeking help as the number of marsh crocodiles in the country has dwindled to just three, all of which are in captivity. Bangladeshi conservators have been unable to successfully breed the reptiles since 1988.

The International Union for Conservation of Natural Resources (IUCN) officials had told Bangladesh that the surviving crocodiles might be infertile and the only option was to bring in new ones from elsewhere.

Marsh crocodiles in Bangladesh used to be found in large numbers in freshwater lakes, marshes

and rivers. Rampant poaching for the reptile's skin for use in leather products is reported to have led it to near-extinction.

Source: 'B'desh crocs in trouble; in steps India', *Times News Network*, 03/01/04.

NEPAL

New strategy curbs rhino poaching in Chitwan.

A new anti-poaching strategy adopted by the authorities in the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP), appears to be working well. In a four month period ending November 2003, no cases of rhino poaching were reported from here.

As per the new strategy, water patrols are being carried out along with land patrols. A steamer provided by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and with 10 security personnel aboard, patrols the park on the Narayani and the Rapti rivers. New camps have been set up in sensitive areas and mobile patrols have also been increased. Joint security teams have been created that comprise of park rangers and Royal Nepal Army personnel of the Gorakha Battalion.

Chitwan had witnessed a spurt in cases of rhino poaching in the last few years (see *PA Updates* 45, 43, 41 & 40) and the monthly average for rhinos poached was four. In light of this fact, the reduction to zero in the numbers of the animals killed is being considered a good success.

Source: 'New strategy curbs rhino poaching incidents', *The Kathmandu Post*, 05/11/03.

MoU signed for conservation projects in Nepal

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has recently been signed between the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), UK and the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) to further strengthen and foster the partnership subsisting between them.

Future work will include projects such as wildlife research, development, training and capacity building. This includes in particular, strengthening of KMTNC's existing Biodiversity Conservation Centre (BCC) in Chitwan, conservation and development activities in and around the Royal Bardia National Park (RBNP) and animal welfare and environmental education at the Central Zoo in Kathmandu.

Source: 'MoU signed on wildlife conservation projects', *The Kathmandu Post*, 28/11/03

Experts call for legal framework before permitting wildlife farming.

Conservationists and experts in Nepal have urged the government to formulate legal frameworks before putting into place its policy to allow wildlife farming (see *PA Update* 45). The Nepalese Government had in August 2003, introduced its 'Wildlife Farming, Reproduction and Research Policy' with the objectives of 'promoting sustainable conservation and use of wildlife'.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) is reported to have already received applications for permission to start wildlife farming for the purpose of research.

Experts have opined that in the absence of a legal framework to monitor it, the policy will actually help in wildlife trade under the guise of research. The DNPWC, on the other hand, has assured that the government would not accept any application seeking permission for wildlife farming till the interested parties meet the stipulated requirements.

Source: *The Kathmandu Post*, 30/11/03.

Jayakot forest to be declared a bird sanctuary

The Jayakot community forest situated in the Pokhara region is to be made a bird sanctuary. A team of ornithologists is reported to have started feasibility studies. The Pokhara Sub-Metropolitan City has promised an assistance of Rs 1,00,000 for the same. An 11-member committee with local Tika Bahadur Karki as the chairman has been constituted for the development of the forest.

It is also aimed to develop the forest as a centre of tourist attraction and to have an open zoo in the future. It is hoped that these forests here would be developed as a centre of study for botanists and students of forestry.

Source: 'Jayakot forest to become bird sanctuary' *The Kathmandu Post*, 18/12/03.

Depredation problem around Royal Bardia National Park solved by changing crops

The problem of crop depredation around the Royal Bardia National Park has been solved by changing

the crops that are grown here by the farmers. The locals here have been encouraged to grow an herbal plant called *mentha*, which is used locally in the treatment of various maladies and also fetches a good price in the market. Importantly the crop is not eaten by the wild animals from the reserve that had earlier been causing a lot of damage to crops.

The Bardia Conservation Program of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation has said that this switch has also helped reduce the conflict between the locals and conservation office.

Mentha farming had started here in the Thakurhara VDC two years back and has now been adopted by many surrounding VDCs.

Source: 'Switching crops relieves farmers of wildlife encroachment' *The Kathmandu Post*, 04/03/04.

Move to cross-breed wild with domestic buffaloes at Koshi Tappu

The World Conservation Union (IUCN), with assistance from the World Bank has proposed to use semen from wild buffaloes in the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve to inseminate domestic buffaloes is an attempt to produce a more hardy and valuable cross. The reserve is home to over 150 threatened Asiatic Wild Water Buffaloes

The project, titled 'Reduce Land Use Conflicts through Local Incentives', seeks to conserve biodiversity and prevent overgrazing by creating incentives for poor farmers to reduce livestock pressure to wildlife inside the reserve.

IUCN-Nepal bagged the US\$ 194,000 World Bank project under the Global Environment Facility funding. Proponents of the project argue the project is innovative in many ways. If implemented, it would be the first example of the use of any wild animal's genetic material as an incentive for biodiversity conservation in Nepal. They have also argued that the project will tackle the challenge of reducing cattle population in Nepal's socio-cultural context. The project is also expected to raise the income of at least 200 households by 20 per cent, and improve the relationship between the protected area authority and local communities. It would also cause a 15 per cent decline in the number of domesticated cattle inside the park.

However there is a strong body of opposition to the project as well. It is felt that it would be illegal to move ahead with such a project

UPCOMING

without, first, framing the legal basis for it. It has been argued that the extraction of semen is an instance of exploiting wildlife and that there is yet no law in Nepal to govern such a process. Doubts have also been expressed on the claim that the project will contribute significantly to poverty reduction, as buffaloes are in any case kept by the better-off families. Further, since the grazing problem has still not been dealt with there is scepticism about the claim that the conflict between the park and the people will be addressed.

IUCN -Nepal has argued that the initiative was just a pilot project and that all guaranteed and precautionary measures would be taken to ensure that there was no adverse impact on wildlife. The Nepalese Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation too has clarified that the project had not yet been approved.

Source: Shree Ram Subed. 'This merger is not on, argue bio experts', *The Himalayan Times*, 20/03/04.

Nepal government to allow export of primates to the USA for biomedical research

The Government of Nepal is has recently agreed to allow the export of primates to the USA for biomedical research. Monkeys will be provided for this from the wild, including from national parks. The primates will be sold to the Nepali Natural Society, a Nepali NGO that works with the Washington Primate Research Center (WPRC).

The WPRC is known for establishing overseas breeding and research facilities where oversight is said to be completely impossible and obtaining information, exceedingly difficult. People have already started catching the monkeys to sell to middlemen at the rate of Rs. 25,000 (US 300) each.

Source: Lucia de Vries, Email dated 23/01/04.

Contact: **Lucia de Vries**, Friends of SPCA Nepal.

Email: lucia@wlink.com.np

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

Course in Tropical Conservation Biology

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) has announced its 6th Course in Tropical Conservation Biology for Senior Undergraduates and Post Graduate Students. The 15 day course is scheduled for the 2nd week of June 2004. It will be made up of a set of 16-18 lectures and a 7-8 day module comprising fieldwork at ATREE's field station in the Biligiri Rangan Hills and other sites in the Western Ghats.

Topics that will be discussed included distribution and status of biodiversity, conservation of biodiversity at species and community levels, threat to biodiversity, role of protected areas in conserving biodiversity and policies & institutions to conserve biodiversity.

Contact: **Dr. T Ganesh**, ATREE, No. 659, 5th A main, Hebbal, Bangalore - 560 024, India.
Tel: 080-23530069/23533942/23638771.
Fax: 23530070. Email: tganesh@atree.org.
Web: www.atree.org

OPPORTUNITIES

Junior Research Fellow for Butterfly Park project

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) has invited applications for the position of Junior Research Fellow under the Department of Biotechnology project 'Butterfly Park- A Center of Research Education using butterfly resources' for a period of 5 years.

Qualifications: M.Sc in Ecology/Forestry/Horticulture. The candidates are expected to have some experience working with butterflies or on some aspects of pollination.

The broad objective of this program is to create awareness about the ecological importance of butterflies among children and adults through periodical training programs.

Contact: **Dr. M.Soubadra Devy**, ATREE, see above
Email: soubadra@atree.org

Assistance required for fieldwork on Indian brood parasitic birds

Assistance is needed for a project on Indian brood parasitic birds and their hosts, in particular Pied Crested Cuckoos and Common Hawk Cuckoos and their hosts - the Turdoides babblers. Fieldwork will take place between mid-May and end-September 2004 in the vicinity of Madanapalle (near Horsley Hills), Chittoor Dist., Andhra Pradesh.

It will involve netting and banding birds, searching for and monitoring nests, recording calls

and conducting playback experiments, and conducting behavioural observations.

The person would be free to work on other part-time projects of one's own interest. The project will cover travel (within India) and living expenses in the field, and probably a stipend (depending on the experience of the person).

Contact: **Suhel Quader**, Department of Zoology
University of Cambridge. Email:
sq210@cam.ac.uk

SPECIAL REPORTS

Joint NGO Statement on PROTECTED AREAS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND EQUITY

Issued at 7th Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity,
February 2003, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

In the context of the continuing and alarming rate of biodiversity loss, all countries need to *act now* to achieve enhanced levels of conservation. In order to reach the targets agreed at COP6 of significantly reducing biodiversity loss by 2010, and of ensuring equity for and participation of indigenous and local communities, we the undersigned NGOs, urge all Parties to agree to an ambitious and time bound programme of work on protected areas. We therefore welcome the proposed Programme of Work on Protected Areas, and urge Parties to adopt all the recommendations agreed to at the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) concerning the elements, goals, and targets. In particular, in support of indigenous and local communities, we stress the importance of accepting the proposed activities under Programme Element 2 on "Governance, participation, equity, and benefit sharing".

In addition, we urge the integration of the following activities into the draft decision and Programme of Work:

0. Recognition of the history and legacy of government-designated protected areas, which in many countries have caused forced displacement, settlement, and dispossession of indigenous and local communities; in this context:
 - () adoption from the text of the World Parks Congress "Durban Accord and Action Plan", of the following text: "Participatory mechanisms for the restitution of indigenous peoples' traditional lands and territories that were incorporated in protected areas without their free and informed consent (to be) established and implemented by 2010." This needs to be read in the context of the overall recommendations of the Durban Accord and Action Plan, and to be expanded to include non-indigenous local communities.
 - (a) adoption of policies that prohibit forcible displacement of indigenous and local communities, and forcible settlement of mobile peoples, in relation to the establishment of protected areas.
1. Providing full attention and adequate resources to protected areas (including developing and honouring commitments by northern governments to financing and supporting protected area programmes in the south), and tackling the key threats that they face from unsustainable developmental and commercial projects.

2. Avoiding the increasing tendency to turn over such areas to private corporations and companies through concessions and leases, which more often than not harms the rights of indigenous and local communities, and induces the loss of biodiversity. The free and prior informed consent of indigenous and local communities for any projects and plans relating to concessions affecting their territories and resources, needs to be built into national policies and laws.
3. Ensuring that all PA governance regimes adhere to standards of performance relating to conservation effectiveness, social equity, cultural sustainability, and meaningful participation, arrived at through an open, participatory process involving indigenous and local communities, NGOs, and other experts.
4. Committing to the recommendation from the Parks Congress, to ensure that “protected area management strives to reduce, and in no way exacerbates, poverty.”
5. Providing for transparent, publicly accessible, and culturally sensitive mechanisms of monitoring to assess the conservation effectiveness and equity aspects of protected areas.
6. Ensuring that the declaration of marine and coastal protected areas incorporates Element 2 of the Programme of Work, on governance, participation, equity, and benefit sharing, and in particular the rights and participation of fishworker communities. Such a thrust is currently missing from the proposed decision on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity.
7. Recognising and supporting management at landscape and seascape level, within which protected areas of different governance types and management categories are organically embedded; such landscape and seascape management should be based on and guided by the bio-cultural connectivity provided by indigenous and local communities.
8. Recognising and supporting, including through incorporation into legally backed PA systems, a range of community conserved areas including indigenous protected areas.

For the activities proposed above and for those already contained in the draft Programme of Work, we urge Parties to adopt specific targets and timelines.

We also urge Parties to set up an ad hoc open-ended working group on protected areas, with full and meaningful participation of indigenous and local communities, NGOs, and other experts, to pursue the implementation of the Programme of Work, and report back on progress at every COP.

Finally, we urge Parties to welcome the outcomes of the 5th World Parks Congress, which include recommendations on the above issues arrived at after considerable deliberations amongst several thousand government officials, indigenous peoples and local communities, NGOs, and researchers.

Delivered by Ashish Kothari, Kalpavriksh, on behalf of:

Biom Kyrgyzstan
 CELCOR / Friends of the Earth Papua New Guinea
 Conservation International (CI)
 Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism
 Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI)
 Fauna and Flora International (FFI)
 Friends of the Earth Ghana
 Friends of the Earth International (FOE – I)
 Friends of the Siberian Forests
 Global Forest Coalition (GFC)
 Greenpeace International (GPI)
 International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)
 Kalpavriksh
 The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
 Tourism Investigation and Monitoring Team
 Viola Russia
 Wildlife Conservation Society
 World Wide Fund for Nature – International (WWF)
 Zelkova Georgia

Workshop on Community Reserves, Conservation Reserves and other legal spaces for Community Conserved Areas

3rd and 4th February 2004

Conservation Education Centre, Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai

Summary of discussions and recommendations

0. Background to workshop

2002 saw the enactment of two important laws, with provisions which appeared to be recognizing and facilitating participation of communities and private bodies in the conservation and management of biodiversity and habitats. These are the two new categories of protected areas (Community Reserves and Conservation Reserves) in the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act (WLPA) 2002 and Biodiversity Heritage Sites under the Biological Diversity Act (BDA) 2002.

A meeting was jointly organized by Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and Kalpavriksh (KV) on the 3rd and 4th of February 2004 at the Conservation Education Centre of BNHS, Goregaon, Mumbai.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Gain a clearer understanding of these provisions, their strengths and weakness, and the possible implications of their implementation;
- Discuss conditions and situations under which these would/could be implemented and would work;
- Discuss the “benefits” for which communities or private bodies would want to bring areas (which may already be controlled by them) under any of these categories;
- Lay out the need, content and process of drafting the guidelines for operationalising these provisions;
- Explore the need and possibilities of a campaign for a wider awareness and implementation of these categories; and
- Explore the need and possibilities of setting up a system of support to communities and state governments that would like to establish these new categories.

The participants included, community members, forest officials, lawyers, conservation activists, conservation NGOs including groups which are already helping the processes of declaration of

community reserves and conservation reserves in their respective areas, or have proposed exploring the possibilities of declaration of community reserves. Participants were from several states of India, including a strong contingent from the north-east region, where the category of Community Reserves has much greater significance as land is largely under community ownership.

1. Overview statement of the workshop

Two days of intense discussions could only cover the two new provisions under the WLPA, namely the Conservation Reserves and the Community Reserves. The participants discussed overviews and specific case studies from various parts of India, where communities are conserving ecosystems and species, and assessed whether and how these areas could be brought under these categories. Some examples of where communities have already been approached for declaration, such as in Manipur and Mizoram, and others where conservation reserves are being proposed such as North Sikkim, were discussed in greater detail.

At the end of the deliberations, however, participants strongly felt that though the inclusion of these categories in the WLPA may indicate an appreciation by government of the need to involve communities in conservation, their implementation without some critical amendments (given below), could be ineffective and in many cases could create serious conflicts on the ground.

Broadly, participants concluded that both these categories:

- Do not spell out the benefits to the communities and private bodies for declaration of these reserves;
- Are unclear about the process of declaration and impacts on existing rights and responsibilities of the people;
- Do not recognize the local rules, regulations, and institutions, but instead impose a uniform

institutional structure that could be completely inappropriate;

- Hand over the control over land use change to the state, even on community and private lands; and
- **Do not apply to a majority of community conservation initiatives since these are on lands that belong to the government (and in so doing, show that the government continues to distrust the ability of communities to conserve).**

(for more details on the above, pl. see Section 5 on Pros and Cons below).

Given all the above, these categories are likely to be strongly rejected by the communities and private bodies conserving biodiversity. Indeed, it appears that in many places where suggestions have been made to communities to get their areas declared under these categories, they have expressed the suspicion or fear that this could be an effort to gain greater governmental control over community and private lands in the name of biodiversity conservation.

If it is assumed that these categories were brought in with the following two intentions:

-) To initiate a participatory conservation programme in areas rich in biodiversity but also supporting large human populations;
- a) To legally support areas where local communities have already initiated some action towards conservation;

Then, in both kind of situations, the two categories fall way short of achieving the stated objective and for most existing efforts of community conservation may even be a step in the wrong direction. There would be an extremely limited number of situations in which they may be applicable and beneficial.

3. Application in existing Community Conserved Areas (CCAs)¹

¹ CCAs can be defined as natural or modified ecosystems (including those from minimum to substantial human influence) containing significant biodiversity values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous, mobile and local communities through customary laws or other effective means. This is a working definition being discussed globally and currently being debated with and outside of the IUCN (International Conservation Union).

In case of areas where communities or private bodies have already initiated conservation action or Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) it was felt that both Community Reserves and Conservation Reserves will have very limited use and in fact are likely to be detrimental by undermining such efforts and creating more conflicts than resolving them.

Conservation Reserves

Most CCAs, fall within the areas considered to be government controlled. In these areas communities have taken de facto control over the land and resources to regulate external and internal use and protect them from destruction. However.

- 0) The Act does not specify what would happen to the recorded and unrecorded uses, rights and responsibilities of the conserving community if such an area were to be declared a conservation reserve?
- 1) If declared a conservation reserve, the Act does not recognize the local (traditional or new) customary institutions, rules and regulations that are being used by these communities for conservation. Instead, a uniform institutional structure composed of panchayat members, forest officials, etc. has been prescribed to **advise** the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW). This effectively means that the law disempowers the community to manage and conserve by vesting the control out of their hands to the CWLW.

Community Reserves

Community Reserves, as per the law can only be declared on non-government land. This category, therefore, is a non-starter in most CCAs as they are on government controlled lands which cannot be declared as Community Reserves. In north east India, Western Ghats, and a few other examples in the rest of the country where conserved land is under community and private land ownership, this provision could have been applied, but could create problems as:

- 0) After declaration the community or the private body loses the mandate to manage and conserve their own area with their local rules, regulations, and institutions.

The Act provides for a uniform institution consisting of panchayat heads and others. Particularly in north-east India the traditional village council or the traditional decision-making bodies thus cannot be involved in the management.

- 1) Once the area is declared a community reserve the community or the private body can no longer make any changes in the land use without the permission of the state government.
- 2) No process for denotification has been specified in case the concerned community or individual desire to opt out of the arrangement.
- 3) The benefits or incentives for a community or a private body for getting their area declared as a community reserve are unclear. They will in fact be losing their present exclusive rights to manage the area, and will be losing control over the decisions related to land use change! Under such conditions, communities or private parties are unlikely to be willing to have their areas declared community reserves.
- 4) The imposition of a uniform institutional structure is likely to undermine the enormous diversity of effective institutions already managing existing CCAs; in addition, the mandatory inclusion of a forest official on the CR Managing Committee is likely to be viewed with suspicion by communities whose past or ongoing experience with government agencies has not been positive.

The only limited areas where Community Reserves may be useful are in community or private lands where the community is strong enough to be able to resist the above problems, where they can force the government to accept their own terms.... but even in these there remains a long-term risk of losing control over their lands/other resources.

4. Application in areas where community action has not been initiated

Conservation Reserves

Conservation reserves may have an applicability in areas with biodiversity significance under various government departments' control, where there does not exist a community action on conservation. This could include some sites important as wildlife

corridors, containing a high human population; it could also include irrigation, armed forces, railway, and other such lands where neither wildlife officials nor local communities currently have much say. In fact it does provide a space for the panchayat bodies to be involved with the management of the PA, although, only in an advisory capacity. The category, however, has the following problems even in such cases:

- 0) It does not specify the process of declaration; will the consultation with the local communities mean informed consultation and consent, such that the entire community is involved and has the information to make appropriate decisions?
 - 1) It does not specify what happens to the existing rights and uses.
 - 2) Most importantly, it calls for participation from *panchayats*, rather than the village level *gram sabhas* or in the case of north east India the village councils or other traditional or local decision-making bodies².

Community Reserves

Community Reserves are not applicable for areas where communities are not volunteering to conserve or on government lands where community based conservation is already in place.

Participants discussed the pros and cons of these categories in detail and strongly felt that their use would be extremely restrictive and even counter-productive. The categories are at best a very half-hearted attempt at supporting community conservation initiatives, and at worst prone to

² It is now widely understood and accepted that gram panchayats (An executive consisting of elected representatives from one or more villages) are most often not truly representative of individual villages or communities, particularly of the different gender and socio-economic groups within them. These can be highly politicized bodies, prone to financial and social malfunctioning. The *gram sabhas* (village assembly meetings) are considered to be more representative of the diversity of interests within a village/hamlet. The inclusion of panchayats instead of gram sabhas or village councils in the Act, displays an ignorance of ground level situations.

serious misuse by giving governments control even on community and private lands. If these categories are intended at creating community support for

conservation then some serious amendments will have to be made as is clear from the pros and cons of these categories given below.

5. Pros and Cons of Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves

Conservation Reserves

Pros	Cons (<i>and recommended action</i>)
<p>•Simple process of declaration, useful where traditional / customary community land/resource use do not exist and there is an imminent threat of biodiversity destruction, requiring quick action.</p> <p>•Will be helpful in protecting / managing corridors and other important habitats falling under Reserve Forests, or areas of wildlife importance falling within the control of the Defence Forces, surface transport department, irrigation departments, railways, revenue, public corporate, educational institutions, and other departments.... due to more flexible provisions than for national parks or sanctuaries, and because all relevant depts. can be involved in the Conservation Reserve Management Committee (CRMC).</p> <p>•Greater possibility of involving NGOs and communities in protecting the area, where such involvement does not already exist....and especially <i>if</i> customary rights can continue, “consultation” is defined to include full informed community consent, and the “advice” of CRMC is binding.</p>	<p>•Inappropriate for lands/resources which have been customarily/traditionally under communities, and taken over by governments. Or in lands where communities and government are in conflict about the ownership such as the Unclassed State Forests of Arunachal, unsettled forest lands in Orissa, and others. In these areas the category can be applied only if following conditions are met: customary rights and community institutional structures are firmly established, such institutions have the power to make rules, devise management strategies, and benefits to communities are clearly defined.</p> <p><i>Operational guidelines need to be formulated clarifying status of rights and benefits to conserving communities. Amendments are needed in the Act to accommodate local institutions, rule-making, other local situations.</i></p> <p>•Does not enable communities to declare Conservation Reserves, particularly where communities are engaged in conservation initiatives or fighting against destructive forces.</p> <p><i>Act needs an amendment to facilitate this to happen.</i></p> <p>•Process of declaration is similar to that of declaring a Sanctuary from a Reserve Forest, and could create problems for communities with customary rights in the area.</p> <p><i>Operational guidelines need to clarify the process of declaration and status of rights and responsibilities.</i></p> <p>•Consultation with communities is very limited.</p> <p><i>Operational guidelines need to clarify and eventually an amendment is needed to define consultation as “full, informed community consent”.</i></p> <p>•Community membership of CRMC is unclear. It is unclear what is meant by “<i>panchayats</i> under whose jurisdiction the area falls” will be part of the CRMC. Would this also take into account the villages that have a traditional, cultural, or conscriptive association with the area but the area is not within the jurisdiction of their <i>Panchayat</i>? “<i>Jurisdiction</i>” of <i>panchayats</i> should include</p>

	<p><i>areas where customary rights exist to enable membership of all relevant settlements.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •CRMC has only advisory functions. <p><i>Operational guidelines need to clarify that its advice should be in some ways binding to the authorities.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No process of alteration of boundaries or denotification is mentioned. <p><i>Needs clarification in guidelines.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Existing national parks or sanctuaries cannot be converted, even if such conversion may help conservation and reduce conflicts. <p><i>Needs amendment in the Act.</i></p>
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Community Reserves

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Recognizes, for the first time in wildlife legislation, the need to protect traditional cultural values and practices favourable to conservation. •Could help provide greater security to communities against external and internal threats, or against destructive changes in land use. •Could help legally establish boundaries of conservation vis-à-vis other land uses within community lands. •In situations where communities do not have appropriate existing institutional structures, it helps create an institution (Community Reserve Management Committee), as the “Authority” for managing the area for conservation. •Unlike other PA categories, Community Reserves are not envisaged (in the Statement of Objects) as a “No Use Zone”; rather, as stated in the “Objects and Reasons”, these are areas which are to be “managed on the principles of sustainable utilization of forest produce”. 	<p>Applicable only to community and privately owned land, cannot be established on government lands, even where communities are actively conserving these.</p> <p><i>Needs an amendment in the Act to include government lands on which CCAs exist or have potential.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unclear on what is “community land”. Is it defined by ownership, or by control/jurisdiction? <p><i>Needs clarity in guidelines to include lands that are under control or de facto jurisdiction of communities, or having customary rights of communities.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Community initiative or consent for declaration of CR is not built into the provision (though this is implied in the Statement of Objects), only requires communities “volunteering to conserve wildlife”, which could be misused to impose decisions from above. <p><i>Needs an amendment to require full community consent for declaration.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No change in land use is permitted once a notification has been issued, without CRMC and state approval, while no such provision exists for a Conservation Reserve. <p><i>Needs an amendment to assure communities and private persons that they retain control over their lands.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unlike, all other categories of PAs, procedure for denotification and alteration is not mentioned for Community Reserves. <p><i>Needs elaboration in guidelines.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Prescribed uniform institutional structure could undermine existing CCA institutions. <p><i>Needs an amendment to authorise existing</i></p>

	<p><i>community institutions where available, and to clarify relationships with other existing formal and informal local institutions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Possible imposition of uniform formats for management planning, etc. <p><i>Needs clarity in guidelines that management planning needs to be completely open and flexible for communities to decide upon how to achieve conservation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Membership of forest officer, and “control” of CWLW that could be exercised through this officer, could increase possibility of interference by government? <p><i>This will be taken care of when the Act or guidelines accept the local institution as the management authority. Representatives of the government agencies could play the role of advisors and observers, in consultation with the concerned community.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Authority to elect/select CRMC with panchayat could cause problems. <p><i>Needs an amendment to specify pre-eminent decision-making role of gram sabhas or village councils, ensuring gender, class, caste, other, equity concerns.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No incentive and other benefits are mentioned for the community or individual wanting to declare an area as Community Reserve. <p><i>Appropriate schemes/incentives are needed to be built into the guidelines.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Setting up CRMC for privately owned land is unlikely to be a common occurrence, as most land owners are unlikely to be willing to give control over their lands to the government or other outsiders. <p><i>Needs an amendment of the provision prohibiting changes in land use, with a more flexible provision that generates trust. Also the institution managing a CR on private lands will have to be constituted in consultation with the concerned private body.</i></p>
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6. Other Possible Legal Spaces, and Pre-conditions for Legal Backing

It was felt by the participants that apart from the two⁹ categories discussed during the workshop, there were a number of other legal spaces available for supporting and facilitating Community Conserved Areas. These included Biodiversity Heritage Sites under the Biological Diversity Act 2002, Village Forests under the Indian Forest Act 1927, Ecologically Sensitive Areas under the Environment Protection Act, and others. *These could not be discussed in detail at the workshop.* However, participants agreed that the operationalisation of any of these spaces (including Community Reserves and⁰ Conservation Reserves) for supporting community initiatives for conservation can only be effective if the following principles and pre-conditions are taken¹. into account.

Principles and pre-conditions for legal backing to community conservation

0. The concerned community has shown an interest² in conservation, and the area has biodiversity significance.
1. Legal backing and security of tenure is necessary for CCAs, but a range of legal and non-legal³ arrangements should be available to choose from, as appropriate to local situations.
2. The legal backing must enable communities to conserve the area in the face of external or internal⁴ threats rather than itself becoming a threat to their existing system of conservation.
3. Recognition and acceptance of customary laws and cultural beliefs/practices, and their integration⁵ into the legal arrangement, are needed. This should be with no dominance of statutory laws, but should take into consideration broader principles of equity (gender, others), ecological sustainability, conservation of threatened species and ecosystems, and so on.
4. Conservation priorities need mutual agreement between government/NGOs and communities.
5. Clear demarcation is needed of rights, responsibilities, and roles of all concerned parties.
6. "Consultation" should imply informed, negotiated consent of the full community.
7. "Conservation" should imply the protection of habitats and species esp. those that are threatened, and/or sustainable use of resources that does not threaten such species/habitats.

8. In conservation and sustainable use, indigenous and locally needed species should be prioritised.

The main decision-making body should be the entire community, while the management body could be selected/elected by this community. Management of resources built on local/traditional/customary practices and institutions, and not on political grounds. Decision-making should be by consensus in the community, and not only by proportional representation.

7. Recommendations

Some critical amendments are needed in the WLPA sections relating to these categories, as indicated above in the analysis of pros and cons.

Till such amendments are introduced, operational guidelines are needed for the two categories in the limited number of cases where applicable/appropriate, as indicated above in the analysis of pros and cons. These guidelines should be framed through a widely consultative process.

The full implications of the categories need to be understood by, and explained to all relevant agencies, NGOs, and communities; for this, there is a need for state-level and local-level consultations.

Governments need to explain in a transparent and open manner, the full implications of these categories, to communities in those cases and sites where there is already a proposal for declaration.

There is in such cases a need for a clear MOU between the government and community, in local languages, including clarification on all the points mentioned in the pros and cons section above.

Governments, NGOs, and communities, also need to explore other available legal spaces for CCAs (Village Forests, Biodiversity Heritage Sites, Ecologically Sensitive Areas, and management under the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, using the above basic principles.

Participants ended the workshop by chalking out some strategies on public outreach of the above analysis through regional workshops and translation into regional languages, further deliberations with wildlife and social action groups, officials, and communities, discussions on steps forward with specific Chief Wildlife Wardens and other senior officials, and further development of guidelines for cases where the categories may be applied.

Box 1: Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves as per Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act 2002

Conservation Reserves: “The State Government may, after having consultations with the local communities, declare any area owned by the Government, particularly the areas adjacent to National Parks and Sanctuaries and those areas which link one protected area with another, as a conservation reserve for protecting landscapes, seascapes, flora and fauna and their habitat”.

“**The State Government shall constitute a conservation reserve management committee to advise (emphasis provided) the Chief Wildlife Warden to conserve, manage and maintain the conservation reserve**”

Community Reserves: “The State Government may, where the community or an individual has volunteered to conserve wildlife and its habitat, declare any private or community land not comprised within a National Park, sanctuary or a conservation reserve, as a community reserve, for protecting fauna, flora and traditional or cultural conservation values and practices”.

“The State Government shall constitute a Community Reserve management committee, which shall be the authority responsible for conserving, maintaining and managing the community reserve”.

“The Committee shall consist of five representatives nominated by the Village Panchayat or where such Panchayat does not exist by the members of the gram sabha and one representative of the State Forests or Wildlife Department under whose jurisdiction the community reserve is located”.

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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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