

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE IBWL

EDITORIAL

The Indian Board for Wildlife

The Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL) finally met after five years. The National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP) too was approved and released. So are we in for a new era in India's wildlife history? Hard to say, for two reasons. One, some of the bold pronouncements of the IBWL and the NWAP need to be followed up with hard actions on the ground. Then there are also, some contradictory messages that are emanating from these processes, which need resolution.

Parts of the Prime Minister's speech at the IBWL meeting, and the IBWL statement itself, are excellent. In particular, the message against destructive projects in wildlife habitats is clearer than ever before. Of course we will need to push hard to

see something happening on the ground. A test case could well be the renewal of the mining lease in the Kudremukh National Park in Karnataka. While the State Government is inclined to renew the mining lease for only five years, the Centre seems to want to extend it to 20 years. We have to wait and watch what finally happens. In any case we do think that the PM and the IBWL needs to be congratulated for the strong stand they have taken.

However old biases continue, particularly with respect to the other critical issue that needs to be dealt with if conservation in India has to succeed: the neglect and the injustice meted out to thousands of resident communities whose lives are delicately linked to the natural resource base for survival. Para 4 of the IBWL statement, for e.g., says "protecting interests of the poor and tribals living around protected areas" (emphasis ours). Next, it says, "access to minor forest produce, outside of national parks and sanctuaries". Now why on earth are we trying to hide the 3-4 million people who are inside protected areas? Does the IBWL seriously expect them all to move out to eke a living? And that too in a country where land is at a premium, and the government has been consistently unsuccessful in resettling more than one or two villages?

We urban conservationists zealously protect our own turf when it is threatened. For our water and electricity, highways and expressways, we scream blue murder when the government does not deliver. At the same time we have no problems denying even the basic resources for survival to people who have lived for generations in an area.

Of course, this is not at all to say that all communities are conservationists, nor that villagers are any less prone to commercial and industrial pressures than anyone else. But these issues too cannot be ignored, just as the IBWL statement has done by only talking of people outside PAs.

The longer we hide these issues under the carpet, the trickier the problem will become. More and more communities will turn against wildlife conservation, and get more and more politicians on their side to demand denotification. No amount of guns and guards can protect wildlife habitats if local people decide to turn against them. And we are not even talking of the fundamental issues of social justice that are involved.

Similar is the case with Para 10 of the IBWL statement. While there is no doubt that poaching and encroachment by outsiders and / or for commercial purposes should be dealt with strictly, it is unfair to render all traditional practices as "illegal" with a single stroke of the pen. If access to Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) is to be allowed only outside PAs, the Chenchu adivasi inside Srisailem Tiger Reserve or the Soliga tribal inside Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Sanctuary, could now be imprisoned or fined for picking up a fallen twig or

collecting some honey. City-bred conservationists, on the other hand, will continue to zoom in and out of these PAs regardless of the impacts that these activities, and *our* own growing consumerism, is causing inside wildlife habitats. Can we really hope to save India's wildlife by making enemies of all these millions of people?

While the Wild Life Act has undoubtedly helped to save many wildlife habitats, so have the myriad mass movements against big dams, commercial trawling, mining, roads and railways, and other destructive projects. Indeed, IBWL's pronouncements against the industrial destruction of wildlife habitats will be ineffective, without the support of such mass movements. Yet it risks alienating them, if it continues to advocate an exclusionary vision vis-à-vis people inside protected areas.

Intriguingly even the speech by the Prime Minister at the IBWL does acknowledge this. He actually talks of people in and around protected areas, and even suggests that legal changes be considered if their involvement in conservation is to be made effective. Why then does the Resolution of the IBWL itself look so different on this aspect?

It is time that the IBWL accepted the reality of people's interaction with natural resources inside PAs, and boldly strode in the direction that many other tropical countries have already taken: of centrally involving local people in conceiving, managing, and receiving benefits from protected areas.

Obituary: Anil Agarwal

In the passing away of Anil Agarwal, founder of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), we have lost one of the strongest pillars of the environmental movement. He made some of the most significant and brilliant contributions towards maintaining India's (and the world's) ecological sanity.

We extend our condolences and heartfelt wishes to his family members and colleagues in the CSE.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Flamingoes flock to Pulicat

More than 2000 flamingoes were reported to have flocked to the Pulicat lake in the first week of October. Every year nearly 10,000 flamingoes can be

seen in Pulicat but for the last two years, a lack of rains coupled with the choking of the sea mouth had left the lagoon completely dry, adversely affecting the bird populations here.

However recent heavy rains in the region have changed the scenario and the lake had filled up with over a foot of water now.

Source: 'Flamingoes flock to Pulicat lake', *The Times of India*, 12/10/2001.

Rains bring hope for Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary

Heavy rains have also brought some hope to the Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary in the Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh. One of the world's largest Pelican breeding centres, Nelapattu, like Pulicat had been adversely hit by the absence of rain for the last couple of years.

The tank here is now reported to have filled up, and though the breeding pelicans are still to be seen, birds like the open billed stork and white ibises have arrived.

Source: 'Flamingoes flock to Pulicat lake', *The Times of India*, 12/10/2001.

Kambalakonda to be declared national park

The Kambalakonda forest region abutting the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam is to be declared the fifth national park in the state. This was announced by the Lok Sabha MP from Visakhapatnam, MVVS Murthy during the wildlife week celebrations.

The MP also inaugurated a Rs. 1.5 crore animal rescue centre in the zoo on the occasion.

Source: 'Kambalakonda to be AP's 5th national park', *The Times of India*, 03/10/2001

Call to declare Uppalapadu tank a bird sanctuary

A plea has been made for the declaration of the Uppalapadu tank located 7 kms from Guntur town a bird sanctuary. The Honorary Wildlife Warden of the region, Mr. M Rao has been pushing this idea with the Forest Department (FD) and other agencies for the last two years, but there has been no move in that direction yet.

The tanks biggest claim is the fact that a large number of pelicans (species not stated) have been nesting here for at least three years now. The FD has said that the nesting of the pelicans is a very recent phenomenon and has started because of the drying up of the Nellapattu lake in Nellore due to consecutive years of drought (also see story above). They have appointed a 'scientific officer' who will observe the area to see if the pelicans come to nest

regularly, following which some decision regarding sanctuary status will be taken. The other birds that are found in the tank area include cattle egrets, open-billed storks, white ibis and night herons

The other issue is the fact that the people in the surrounding area use the water of the tank for domestic purposes. They have been complaining that the bird excreta in the water causes skin rashes and other ailments. As a result, recently some acacia and ficus trees were uprooted resulting in the shrinkage of the nesting areas for the birds. The Collector of the region has been approached with a request to find alternative arrangements for water for the people.

Source: R Umamaheshwari. 'State ignores plight of pelicans', *Deccan Chronicle*, 13/10/2001

Contact: **CWLW**, Office of the Principal CCF AP Forest Department, Aranya Bhavan Saifabad Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

ASSAM

CEE workshop on elephant conservation in NE

The Centre for Environment Education (CEE) North East organised a three day National Environmental Education Programmes for Schools (NEEPS) in Guwahati in the month of October.

The workshop was attended by NGOs and teacher representatives of schools from Assam, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. The main aim of the workshop was to build up the capacities of the participants towards issues related to elephant conservation, and also to effectively communicate these issues to children and youth in the region.

Source: 'CEE workshop on elephant conservation in NE', *The Sentinel*, 15/10/2001.

Contact: **Soumen Dey**, CEE North East, Chenikuthy, KK Bhatta Rd., Guwahati – 781003. Tel: 0361 – 516382. Fax: 514914 / 515722. Email: ceeghy@sancharnet.in

UNESCO support for Kaziranga and Keoladeo

Two natural heritage sites in the country, the Keoladeo Ghana National Park in Rajasthan and the Kaziranga National Park in Assam are to receive a combined funding support of US \$ 46,000 from UNESCO. This was decided at a meeting held in November 2001 in Bharatpur that was attended by representative from organisations like the UNESCO, IUCN, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Nature Conservancy, UK and the University of Queensland, Australia. The meeting was organised by the WII.

As part of the strategy that was worked out, the WII will enter into a Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) with the Rajasthan and Assam Governments for the maintenance and upkeep of the parks. Site implementation groups have also been set up with the park authorities, experts from the WII, honorary wildlife wardens, NGOs and global organisations. In the 1st year an initial assessment of the status of the parks will be done, while the final assessment will be carried out at the end of four years. The draft initial reports are expected to be ready by April 2002.

The plan for Keoladeo NP will be coordinated by the Director of the Park, Mr B Praveen. The special invitees for this group will be Dr. VS Vijayan of Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Mr. VN Saxena, former Chief Conservator of Forests and Mr. Harsh Vardhan.

Source: 'A new deal for two national parks', *The Hindu*, 14/12/2001.

Contact: **SK Mukherjee**, Director, WII, PO Box 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun – 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-640111 – 15. Fax: 640117. Email: sujit@wii.gov.in
Director, Keoladeo NP, Forest Department, Bharatpur- 321 001 Rajasthan
Director, Kaziranga National Park, PO Bokakhat, Dist. Golaghat – 785612, Assam.

Manas opened for day tourists

Manas National Park was opened for day tourists in the first week of November. A new tourist travel circuit in and around this World Heritage site has been drawn up which involves boating, elephant safari, motor driving and a forest lunch for a single day trip. The tourists will be confined to the relatively safer Basbari range of the park and the Forest Inspection bungalow on the bank of the Manas River at Mathanguri was also being readied to welcome tourists.

Mr. Abhijit Rabha, who has taken over as the new director of the park has meanwhile said that, "over the years Manas National Park has not been damaged as much by Kalashnikov assault rifles as by traditional hunters and timber smugglers." He admitted that the infrastructure inside the park had been damaged in the recent past, but added that 'out of proportion' adverse publicity in the media about the presence of militants inside the national park had caused irreparable damage to its image as a tourist destination. (See *PA Updates* 30, 29, 26, 21 & 20)

Source: Bijay Sankar Bora. 'Manas National Park all set to receive tourists', *The Assam Tribune*, 07/11/2001.

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

Proposal for first sanctuary in Barak Valley

The Assam Forest Department (FD) has proposed the creation of a wildlife sanctuary over an area of 34,000 bighas in the Katigora area of Cachar district along the Indo-Bangladesh border. If notified, this will become the first protected area in the Barak Valley in Assam.

The forests support large populations of the Slow loris, Stump tailed macaque, Pig-tailed macaque, Assamese macaque, Rhesus macaque and the Capped langur. The area is also reported to be rich in other endangered fauna like the White winged wood duck and different species of hornbills. The FD has launched a 'Monkey Preservation Project' and a committee has also been constituted for this. This area suffers from severe conflicts between monkeys and the human populations as the monkeys stray into human habitat in search of food. The FD has launched a massive plantation drive of fruit trees like banana, guava and mango to deal with the problem and it is hoped that the creation of the sanctuary will help in this direction as well.

The proposal for the sanctuary is based on a study conducted in mid 80's by Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhury, a noted wildlife expert in the region.

Source: 'Maiden wildlife sanctuary on cards in Barak valley', *The Assam Tribune*, 25/12/2001.

Contact: **Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhury**, Ho. Chief Executive C/o The Assam Company Ltd., G Bordoloi Path, Bamuni Maidan, Guwahati 781021 Assam. Tel: 0361-663339. Email: badru1@sancharnet.in

Brahmaputra eroding Kaziranga

A paper recently presented at the Fifth International Conference on Geomorphology in Japan has pointed out that the Kaziranga National Park is losing 0.7 sq. kms every year to erosion by the Brahmaputra. The paper was jointly authored by Mr. Pobitora Mahanta of the Dergaon Kamal Dowerah College, Dergaon and Mr. AK Bora of the Department of Geography, Gauhati University.

They have pointed out that the park has lost around 37 sq. kms. between 1967 and 1999 to erosion and that the present area of the park is only around 350 sq. kms. These figures are based on 'multi dated satellite imagery done by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The most severe bank erosion takes place along the eastern boundary of the park, a little downstream of the Dhansiri confluence.

The paper points out that 'maintenance of the longitudinal profile of the bottom of the Brahmaputra river-bed at its upstream, starting from Pachighat is needed so save the park' (*Ed's note: The above statement has been reproduced as it appears in*

the news report. For clarifications please contact the authors of the report)

It has also been pointed out that the National Highway (NH) 37, which runs along the southern boundary of the park should either be diverted or a part of it (around two kms) should be made into an underground tunnel, to avoid knocking down of animals crossing the NH during floods. Further the authors have asked for the removal of all encroachers from the Park area. (Also see *PA Update* 29)

Source: Ajit Patowary. 'Maintenance of Brahmaputra bed at upstream stressed', *The Assam Tribune*, 23/10/2001.

Contact: **Pobitara Mahanta**, Dergaon Kamal Dowerah College, PO: Dergaon, Dist: Golaghat, Assam
AK Bora, Department of Geography, Gauhati University, Guwahati - 781 014, Assam

Pollution threat to Kaziranga wetlands

A study commissioned by the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council (ASTEC) has expressed concern on the pollution of the River Brahmaputra and its tributaries like the Difalu and Dhansiri, by increased industrial activities and the adverse impacts this will have on the wetlands of the Kaziranga National Park.

The three year study that began in 1993 was conducted by a team of three researchers from the Dergaon Kamal Dowerah College. It looked at five beel systems inside the national park: Daflong, Kathpura and Arimora (in Kohora range), Sohola (in Agorotoli range) and Donga (in Bagori range).

The study has called for appropriate measures to prevent siltation of the beels and for a study for the commercial use of water hyacinth, the growth and spread of which is accelerating the process of siltation here.

Source: Ajit Patowary. 'Pollution poses serious threat to Kaziranga National Park', *The Assam Tribune*, 18/10/2001.

Contact: **Pobitara Mahanta**, see above.

Kaziranga officials plan using weedicide

The authorities of the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) are contemplating to spray weedicide to control the growth of the weed (*mimosa pudica*) locally known as *lazuki baan*. The weed has grown in over 60 hectares of land under the Bagori Range and had affected grazing of the animals. (Also see *PA Update* 30)

Agricultural experts from the Assam Agricultural University have suggested a particular composition to spray in the areas as a long-term way

to check the problem but authorities are yet to take the final decision. Apprehension is being expressed regarding the killing of other plants in the process.

Last year the authorities had ploughed the affected areas with tractors and had uprooted the weed which had grown and even flowered in the grazing land. This however does not seem to have helped in a long term solution to the problem.

Source: 'KNP officials plan using weedicide', *The Sentinel*, 05/01/2002

Bid to boost wildlife tourism in Assam

The Assam government is reported to have taken many steps to boost tourism in the state, particularly in wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. Starting from October 2001, many of the Assam Tourism Development Lodges including those at Kaziranga have been renovated. Lodges in other places like Bhalukpong, Orang, Hajo and Barpeta Road have been leased out to a group called *Purbanchal Banijya Vikash* with the agreement that the lodges will be run as per the guidelines set by the government.

Source: Bijay Sankar Bora. 'Bid to boost tourism drive in state', *The Assam Tribune*, 14/10/2001.

485 rhinos killed in Assam since 1985

It has been reported that 485 rhinos have been killed in Assam since 1985. The police has said that they have found evidence in a number of case of direct and indirect involvement of militant organisations like the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB).

Three poachers (including one surrendered NDFB militant), who were arrested recently admitted that they were being supplied arms by the militants. It has also been pointed out that the poachers operate in areas that are dominated by the NDFB, yet have never been attacked. At the same time however, woodcutters here are frequently attacked by the NDFB.

The police has also indicated that militants belonging to the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) may be involved with poachers operating in Kaziranga NP and wildlife sanctuaries in Laokhowa and Pobitara. It is suspected that the militants give their old and outdated weapons to the poachers.

Superintendants of Police in the districts with protected areas have been directed to pay special attention to anti-poaching initiatives.

Source: R Dutta Choudhury. 'Poachers kill 485 rhinos in state since 1985', *The Assam Tribune*, 12/09/2001.

Veterinary camp in Nambar, Garampani and Pobitora WLSs

The NGO, Early Birds organised a three day Veterinary – cum-awareness camp from Nov. 3-5, 2001 in the fringes of the Nambar and Garampani WLSs. 981 cattle including buffaloes were inoculated against the disease of HS+BQ in the villages of Tingbasti, Ahatguri, Purni Silonijan, Panikabasti, Chardeka Ingti, Tisubasti and Dihingiagaon.

The forests here are reported to be rapidly decreasing due to human and industrial activity, particularly the Numaligarh Refinery which is located only 45 kms from the sanctuaries.

Another similar camp was also organised around the Pobitora WLS from Nov. 24 – 25, 2001. The villages around Pobitora that were covered included Rajamayong, Hatimuriah and Morabari.

Source: Moloy Baruah. Letter to Kalpavriksh dated 06/11/2001.

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

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

BIHAR

SC issues notices to govt. regarding Valmiki

The Supreme Court (SC) of the country has issued notices to the Union Government and the Government of Bihar asking them to explain why the staff of the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR) had not been paid salaries for over a year. In October last year, the entire staff of about 150 had walked out in protest because of this.

The notices were issued in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed in the matter by Mr. Ashok Kumar of the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI).

Though Rs. 50 lakhs for the park had been transferred to the State by the Union Government in July 2001, the fact that it has not reached its desired destination is clear indication that it is getting siphoned off.

Source: Sonu Jain. 'Centre panics, 43 tigers left home alone', *Indian Express*, 18/10/2001. 'SC notice for better funds management in national parks', *Indian Express*, 09/01/2002.

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

CHATTISGARH

50 villages to be relocated from Indravati, Pamed

The Chattisgarh government has proposed the relocation of 50 villages from Indravati National Park and the Pamed Wildlife Sanctuary in a bid to save the rare Wild Buffalo.

Earlier the government of undivided Madhya Pradesh too had proposed the relocation of 56 villages for the same purpose (see *PA Update* 27), but the proposal had gone into cold storage.

Now with the creation of the new state of Chattisgarh, and more recently, the declaration of the Wild Buffalo as the state animal, the moves towards relocation have been revived. Senior officers from the Forest Department have however clarified that there was no move to relocate villagers, but the situation is yet not very clear.

Source: 'Vanbhaison ko bachane 50 gaon bedakhal kiye jaenge', *Dainik Bhaskar*, 21/10/2001

Contact: **Field Director**, Indravati Tiger Reserve, PO Jagdalpur, Bastar – 494001, Chattisgarh. **SC Varma**, Bastar Society for Nature Conservation, Jeevan Sadan, Nayapara, Jagdalpur – 494001, Chattisgarh

DELHI

Landfill proposal for Asola WLS

There is a proposal to denotify the Asola Wildlife Sanctuary and use the Bhatti mines as a land fill for the garbage that is generated by the city of Delhi.

An estimated 6000-7000 tonnes of garbage is generated daily in Delhi and the city is reported to be fast running out of landfills to deal with it. It is estimated that by the year 2021 Delhi will be generating around 20,000 tonnes of garbage every day, and it is to meet this need that the 1000 hectare Bhatti mines is to be converted to a landfill.

Source: 'A landfill in the midst of Asola Forest', *Toxics Dispatch*, October 2001.

GUJARAT

Vadodara wildlife division to be expanded

The State Forest Department (FD) has decided to expand the jurisdiction of Vadodara wildlife division to include the Jambughoda and Ratanmahal sanctuaries. So far, the Vadodara wildlife division did not have any sanctuaries within its limits. Forest management plans for both Ratanmahal and Jambughoda sanctuaries, which have already been formulated, will now be implemented by the Vadodara wildlife division.

Source: 'Vadodara Wildlife division to be expanded', *The Times of India*, 28/11/2001.

No more tigers in Gujarat: Its official

The 2001 wild animal census in Gujarat has confirmed that there are now no tigers in Gujarat. The 1997 census had recorded the presence of one tiger, while the 1992-93 census had recorded the pugmarks of five tigers. Forest officials admit that this is not surprising, as tiger habitat has been gradually destroyed in the state. Even the animals that have been recorded in the recent past are likely to be those that have strayed from the neighbouring states of Rajasthan or Madhya Pradesh.

Oral as well as recorded history mentions that Moghul emperors, rulers of the Gujarat Sultanate and princely states like Baroda regularly hunted tigers for years. Tigers were found in abundance even till the 1950s in Gujarat in areas like Valsad and Banaskantha.

Source: 'Tigers officially extinct in Gujarat', *The Times of India*, 05/11/2001

Tourist zone, interpretation centre in Jambughoda

The Forest Department has proposed to convert a small part (50 hectares) of the Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary into a tourist zone as part of a five year forest management plan. A tourist complex has also been proposed at Dhanpuri near Kada reservoir in the sanctuary. Watch towers are to be constructed at strategic points to facilitate visitors to watch wildlife and a five km long nature trail will also be prepared that will connect the watchtowers. The entire project is estimated to cost around Rs. 28 lakhs.

Source: Sajid Shaikh. 'Jambughoda forest to offer a slice of Gir sans lions', *The Times of India*, 20/10/2001.

Rs. 200 crores for PAs in Gujarat

A Rs. 200 crores management plan for all the protected areas in Gujarat (21 sanctuaries and four national parks) is reported to have been recently approved. The plan has been prepared by the State Forest Department (FD) with contributions from various institutions that include the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), and the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO).

Preliminary drafts for the management of the Dharangadra Wild Ass Sanctuary, the Ratanmahal Sloth Bear Sanctuary, the Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary and the Kutch Desert Sanctuary have already been prepared. 21 senior rank forest officers have taken on the task of putting the

management plan comprehensively in the form of a voluminous study report.

A part of the management plan is to be devoted to the various development schemes of forests. Ways are also being suggested to reduce human-wildlife conflict, reduce the dependency of villagers on forest resources and reducing the negative impacts on bio-diversity.

Source: Sajid Shaikh., 'Jungles of Panchatantra to come alive in Gujarat', *The Times of India*, 16/10/2001.

Battery operated bus in Gir

The Forest Department (FD) has introduced battery-operated bus for tourists visiting the Gir sanctuary. Three battery operated buses have been procured by the FD from BHEL. Petrol and diesel vehicles too have been banned in the forests.

Source: 'Battery-operated bus in Gir sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 25/11/2001

'Biodiversity Conservation Plan for Gir reviewed

The Biodiversity Conservation Plan for Gir (BCPG) – 1996- 2005 was recently reviewed in the context of the completion of its first five years. There are various components to the plan. Successes achieved include an increase in the ungulate populations, the creation of more check dams, water holes and fire lines.

The plan had targeted the manipulation of vegetation by thinning it in 35 hectares area each in Gir West and Gir East. This was not achieved and neither was the expansion of the core area of the park from the current 258 sq. kms to 510.94 sq. kms. The targeted eradication of lantana from 1600 hectares every year too could not be fully achieved. It was carried out only in 3676 hectares resulting in a short fall of 4324 hectares. There was also no progress in the attempt to breed the rare Rusty spotted cat.

On the whole, however, the FD has expressed its satisfaction over the progress of the BCPG.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'Gir management plan seeks swift corrective steps', *The Times of India*, 23/11/2001.

Contact: **HS Singh**, GEER Foundation, Indroda Park, Sector 9, Gandhinagar – 382009, Gujarat.
Tel: 02712-21385. Fax: 41128. Email: geerindia@sify.com

LPG use reduces dependance on fuelwood in Gir

A large number of villages in and around the Gir Protected Area (GPA) that includes the Gir Wildlife

Sanctuary and Gir National Park are reported to have shifted from using fuelwood for cooking to LPG. The introduction of LPG in the region was taken up under the World Bank (WB)– Global Environment Facility (GEF) Gir Eco-Development Project in 1999.

In the first stage, 200 families staying in and around Gir were provided LPG connections. By October 2001, nearly 8000 families living in 9 villages had switched from wood to LPG. People are preferring LPG because it is more convenient, is turning out to be cheaper and removes the various health problems associated with cooking on a fire. The Forest Department too has reported a drastic fall in the collection of firewood for commercial exploitation.

Source: Janyala Sreenivas & Stavan Desai. 'Fire in the forests', *Indian Express*, 18/11/2001

Poachers from Chattisgarh arrested in Gir

In a new development in Gir, suspected poachers from the Jabalpur district of Chattisgarh were arrested in the protected area a few months ago. Though local communities living in and around Gir are known to have been involved in poaching in the area, this is the first time that the involvement of a group from so far away has been reported. Iron traps, snares and skinning equipment that are not otherwise found around Gir were also seized from these people who were trying to enter park saying that they wanted to collect medicinal plants and herbs.

Source: Stavan Desai. 'Poachers from other states eyeing park', *Indian Express*, 05/09/2001.

Large number of lions now outside Gir

The recent lion census in Gir in May has put the total number of lions in the area at 327 (see *PA Update* 32). Though the total number of lions has increased, their population in the Gir Protected Area (GPA) comprising the national park and sanctuary has remained constant. Numbers in the peripheral areas have increased and this number was reported to be 56.

Much to the surprise of wildlife experts, 29 lions were found in the Bhavnagar circle and six were seen in the Hipawadli village located 40 kms from the GPA. The main reason for this is said to be the fact that the carrying capacity of the GPA for lions has been reached and new animals are being driven out by the existing population.

This increase in the population of the animal is also one of the causes of the increased human-animal conflict in the region. There have been a number of reports of deaths of lions in and

around Gir, many of which are clearly from unnatural causes.

Source: Stavan Desai. 'Gir space crunch driving lions out', *Indian Express*, 21/06/2001

Contact: **Mahesh Singh**, DCF, Sasan, Junagadh – 363125, Gujarat.

HS Singh, (see above)

Bharat J. Pathak, Gujarat Ecological Commission, GERI Campus, Race Course Road, Vadodara 390007 Gujarat.

Five lion deaths in Gir in September

There were reports of the death of at least five lions from areas in and around in the month of September 2001 alone. The death of these lions in quick succession was taken very seriously by the Forest Department which decided to review its conservation program here.

The deaths of the animals have been attributed to a range of causes including poisoning, old age and disease. (Also see story above).

Source: J Sreenivas & SH Bukhari. 'Gloom in Gir: 5 lions found dead', *Indian Express*, 26/09/2001.

Gulf of Mannar in UNESCO biosphere list

The Gulf of Mannar has been recently added to the UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves. It is now one of the three along with the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and the Sunderbans (see West Bengal Below), from India to be on the UNESCO list.

Source: 'Sunderbans finds place in UNESCO reserve list', *The Hindu*, 25/09/2001.

Contact: **Sudha Mehndiratta**, UNESCO House, 8 Poorvi Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi - 110 057. Tel: 011-614 0038/614 0039/614 6308. Fax: 011-614 3351/614 2714 Email: s.mehn@unesco.org

Dr. R. K. Rai, Member Secretary, Indian National MAB Committee & Jt. Director (CS), MoEF, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110 003. Tel: 011-4364592. Fax: 011-4362551. E-mail: ramakrai@yahoo.com

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

HARYANA

Bhindawas dry this winter

With local villagers allegedly having blocked the canals that bring water to Bhindawas, the lake is reported to have largely dried up. 98% of the sanctuary had dried up at the beginning of the winter season. The Chief Minister of the State had promised that water would be released for the lake, but it is not known if this was finally done.

Source: Bill Harvey. Email dated 21/10/2001

Contact: **Bill Harvey**. Email:

billharvey@mantraonline.com

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Sanctuaries proposed in six forest areas

The Jammu & Kashmir government has proposed to turn six major forest areas in the militancy affected Poonch and Rajouri areas into wildlife sanctuaries. The proposed forest areas range from 900 metres above sea level to as high as about 4700 metres. A large number of rare and endangered fauna like the snow leopard, markhor, brown bear and the Kashmir Flying Squirrel have been reported from these areas.

Apart from protecting the endangered fauna and flora, the declaration of the sanctuaries is also likely to help bring in more funds from the Central Govt. Additionally the State also hopes to earn from eco-tourism which can be started once the infrastructure is in place. However, the biggest hurdle expected is the fact that the entire area is severely militancy prone and unless a solution is found to this problem there cannot be much progress.

Source: Nishit Dholabhai. 'J-K likely to convert six forests into sanctuaries', *Indian Express*, 21/05/2001

Contact: **CWLW**, F D, Manda Deer Park, Manda, Near Hotel Ashok, Jammu - 180001, J&K

War affects birds at Gharana

The war in Afghanistan and the recent increase in the tension and military activity between India and Pakistan has drastically affected the arrival of migratory birds to the Gharana Wetland Reserve.

The Wildlife Warden of the park has said that during the ceasefire on the border last winter, nearly 25,000 birds had come to Gharana. This year the number is only about 10% of last year's.

Source: 'Unwitting victims of a world at war', *Hindu Business Line*, 20/12/2001.

JHARKHAND

Elephant numbers increase in Dalma

The latest census in the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary has reported a small increase in the number of elephants here. While the number counted in 1997 was 79, it is now said to be 82. This includes a large number (18) of young ones.

The census has also reported an increase in the number of other animals like the wild boar, barking deer and bear. The population of hyenas and wolf has however registered a steep fall.

Source: 'Baby boom in Dalma sanctuary', 11/09/2001.

First elephant reserve in Jharkhand

The Jharkhand government has announced the creation of an elephant reserve, the proposal for which has been accepted by the Central government.

Rs. 6.25 crores have been sanctioned by the Centre for work to be undertaken in Ranchi, Singhbhum, Gumla, Hazaribagh, Chatra, Latehar and Daltonganj. The State has proposed to use the money for large scale bamboo plantations and for the construction of huge reservoirs for water for the elephants.

Source: Abhijit Sen. 'Country's first elephant reserve in Jharkhand', *The Times of India*, 10/10/2001.

KARNATAKA

Eco-development project in Ranganthitu

The Forest Department (FD) has proposed the expansion of the area of the Ranganthitu Bird Sanctuary under an Eco-Tourism Development Project. The main aim is to extend services for tourists and bird watchers and a proposal has been sent to the Central Government for the same.

Three acres of revenue land adjoining the sanctuary have been identified and the FD has requested the Mandya Deputy Commissioner to initiate land acquisition proceedings. Facilities planned for the sanctuary in this extended area include a parking lot, a children's park, construction of several watchtowers, and addition of drinking water and toilets. There is also a proposal to connect all the five islands of the sanctuary by suspension bridges so that the entire area becomes accessible to visitors. Presently only one of five islands is accessible.

The FD is waiting for a nod from the Centre to commence with the proposed work.

Source: Shankar Bennur, 'Ranganatittu sanctuary expansion on cards', *Deccan Herald*, 20/12/2001.

Contact: **Forester**, Ranganathu Bird Sanctuary, Palahalli, Shrirangapatta Taluk, Mandya – 571401, Karnataka

Kudremukh mining lease extension: Centre says 20 years, state says five

The Union Minister for Steel, Mr. Brijkishore Tripathy recently announced in a meeting in Mangalore that the Centre has decided to extend the mining lease of the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd. (KIOCL) in the Kudremukh region to 20 years. A decision to this effect has been reportedly taken by the Sub Committee on Economic Affairs in the Union Cabinet.

He further added that it had been decided to urge the Karnataka Government to allow this and that the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests had already filed an affidavit in the Supreme court to allow the lease to be extended.

More recently, in the last week of January 2002, the Karnataka State Minister for Forest, Environment and Ecology, Mr. Ranganath is reported to have told the State Legislative Council that the Karnataka Government has submitted a revised recommendation to the Centre to extend the mining lease of KIOCL by only five years. The State has also filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court in this regard.

Source: 'KIOCL's mining lease period extended', *Deccan Herald*, 10/11/2001
'Proposal for lowering KIOCL mining period', *Hindu Business Line*, 29/01/2002

Entry curbs to enter Kudremukh NP

The Forest Department (FD) has restricted free entry to the Kudremukh National Park, following the final notification of the park recently.

Permission can now be sought at five entry points in the Range Wildlife offices at Karkala and Kundapur in Udupi district, Kudremukh and Kerekatte in Shringeri in Chikmagalur dist., and Venoor in the Belthangady taluk in the Dakshin Kannada dist.

The entry fee fixed ranges from Rs. 10 for children to Rs. 150 for foreigners.

Source: 'Entry curbs in Kudremukh National Park', *The Hindu*, 06/11/2001

One day workshop on protected areas held

A one day workshop on protected areas in Karnataka was organised recently in Bangalore by the Centre

for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science. Some of the issues discussed included delays in the final notification of the protected areas like the Anshi, Bandipur and Bannerghata National Parks, problems related to the removal of dead wood, pesticide pollution, encroachments and the need for the regular training and equipping of the field staff of the Forest Department.

A need was also expressed for the declaration of more protected areas particularly in the eastern and drier parts of the state.

Source: 'Govt. dragging its feet on notifying protected areas', *Deccan Herald*, 02/11/2001

Contact: **Prof. Madhav Gadgil**, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore-560012, Karnataka.
Email: madhav@ces.iisc.ernet.in

Tourism development for Gudvi Bird Sanctuary

The State Government has proposed the development of the Gudvi Bird Sanctuary in the Shimoga district of Karnataka into an 'attractive' tourist spot. An announcement to this effect was made recently by the Minister of State for minor irrigation, Kumar Bangarappa on the occasion of the inauguration of a canteen in the sanctuary.

Among the things proposed include the construction of an all weather approach road to the sanctuary from the main road. The Gudvi Lift irrigation scheme too is to be taken up soon. The details of this project and the impact that it will have on the sanctuary is not known.

Source: 'Bird sanctuary will be developed', *The Hindu*, 04/09/2001.

Bridge over Kabini in Rajiv Gandhi (Nagarhole) NP

The Karnataka and Kerala state governments have proposed to jointly construct a bridge across the River Kabini inside the Rajiv Gandhi (Nagarhole) National Park. The bridge at Byranakuppe would connect Wynad district of Kerala and the Mysore district of Karnataka. The all weather bridge estimated to cost Rs. 6.50 crores is being taken up under the Inter-State Road Development Fund. These decisions were taken recently during a meeting in Bangalore between the Karnataka PWD Minister Dharam Singh and his Kerala counterpart MK Muneer.

Both the states will shortly be approaching the Centre to get clearances under the Wildlife Protection Act – 1972 as the construction is to take place inside the national park.

Source: 'Bridge to cut Wynad-Mysore distance by 50 km.' *The Times of India*, 29/10/2001.
'Dharam, Muneer hold talks on bridge across Kabini', *The Hindu*, 29/10/2001.

Call to include Nagarhole under Project Tiger

The Karnataka State Government has asked the Centre to include Nagarhole National Park in the Project Tiger program. This is expected to help bring Bandipur Tiger Reserve and Nagarhole under a single authority

State forest officials have also expressed the hope that this step will help the state government mobilise additional funds for the development of the park. The latest animal census in the park has shown a growth in the number of wild animals and this is one of the justifications being used by the forest officials.

Source: MB Maramkal, 'Nagarhole too should be under Project Tiger ambit', *The Times of India*, 23/09/2001.

Meet to identify land for Nagarhole evacuees

The issue of identifying land in Kodagu district for the rehabilitation of tribals evacuated from the Nagarhole National Park dominated a meeting of the Kodagu District Planning (KDP) held in Madikeri in September.

The Deputy Commissioner, Mr. GV Ramachandra announced on the occasion that he would write to the Union and State governments on the need to dereserve the Majjigehalla forest areas and to evict encroachers from government land at West Nemmale village for the relocation of 950 tribal families living in the park. It has been suggested that the Majjigehalla farm, which had been leased to the Orange society (the lease has expired) could be ideal for the relocation of the tribal families.

A committee headed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat (ZP) was appointed and it was asked to submit an action plan for relocation within a month.

It was also pointed out that 45 tribal families from the Madenoor colony inside the park would be shifted to Veeranahosalli. Some other land had also been identified at Kadamullur, Arji, and Badaga villages in Virajpet taluk and at Kalur, Kunjila and Hachinad in Madikeri taluk.

It was also alleged at the meeting that the Forest Department had been harassing the tribals and that cases were being registered against them for resisting eviction. (Also see *PA Updates* 32, 27, 26, 23 & 22).

A more recent report has suggested that the proposal of the Deputy Commissioner, Mr.

Ramachandra has been routed through the State Government to the Centre for approval.

Source: 'KDP meet focuses on tribal people', *The Hindu*, 12/09/2001.

K Jeevan Chinnappa. 'Relocation within Kodagu recommended to Govt.', *The Hindu*, 07/01/2002

Bird sanctuary proposal in Almatti dam reservoir

Islands formed in the reservoir of the Almatti dam in the Bijapur district of Karnataka are reported to be attracting a large number of birds.

The Forest Department has proposed the declaration of a bird sanctuary in the biggest of these islands where 82 species of birds have already been recorded.

Further details are however not available.

Source: BS Satish Kumar. 'Park, bird sanctuary to adorn Almatti dam', *Deccan Herald*, 17/10/2001

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

KERALA

Illegal tree felling around Silent Valley

More than six hectares of the Kakkivani Malavaram evergreen forests connecting Silent Valley with the Muthilulam Reserve Forest coming under the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve have reportedly been denuded by the timber mafia. The activity is said to have been carried out in connivance with senior forest officers in the state.

Source: 'On a felling spree', *Down to Earth*, 15/12/2001

Kerala not to increase Mullaperiyar dam height

The impasse over the increase of the height of the Mullaperiyar dam continues. While the Tamil Nadu government has asked that the height of the 106 year old dam be increased from the present 136 feet to 152 feet, the Kerala government is refusing to do this on various grounds, including those of the safety of the dam and to a certain extent the impact of the rise in water level on the forests and fauna of the Periyar Tiger Reserve (also see *PA Update* 30).

A recent meeting all party meeting in Kerala resolved that the dam height would not be increased and measures were suggested to deal with the demand from Tamil Nadu. These include the

formation of a dam safety authority and invoking of various laws on forest protection.

A study on the 'Impact of raising of water level in the Mullaperiyar reservoir of the Periyar Tiger Reserve' was carried out a few months ago at the instance of the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state. The team included scientists from the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), the Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI), Centre for Water Resource Development and Management (CWRDM) and the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON).

The report has suggested that all kind of wild fauna including wild boar, gaur, sambar, otters, elephants and birds that nest in the reservoir will be adversely affected if the dam height is raised

Source: 'All-party meeting on Nov. 22', *The Hindu*, 11/11/2001.

'Kerala against raising level of dam', *The Hindu*, 23/11/2001

'Panel moots series of actions on dam issue', *The Hindu*, 03/12/2001

KPM Basheer. 'Raising of Periyar dam level, 'a threat to biodiversity'', *The Hindu*, 08/01/2002

Allegations of smuggling fauna from Parambikulam

There have been reports that a number of specimens of endangered fauna including tarantulas, reptiles and amphibians have been smuggled out from the Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary by a team of British and Canadian wildlife experts. The experts had come to attend a seminar that had been jointly organised in September 2001 by the Forest and Wildlife Department, Kerala, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Zoo Outreach Organisation (ZOO). The news report of the smuggling was first carried by the *New Indian Express*.

Mr. VK Sinha, Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife, who was mentioned in the news report has strongly denied that this incident took place. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Mr. PK Surendaranathan Asari has however said that he would order an enquiry into the entire episode.

The latest on the issue is not known.

Source: 'Fauna smuggling from Kerala to be probed', *The Times of India*, 26/09/2001.

Sabrimala in Periyar in crisis: Study

A study commissioned by the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) and conducted by the School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University has pointed

out that the Sabrimala Enclave (SE) within the PTR is in grave crisis, ecologically, demographically, legally and managerially.

The study emphasises the critical status of the ecology of the PTR and says that the flow of pilgrims into the SE has far exceeded the carrying capacity of the area. The pilgrim population here is reported to have gone up by 200 times in the last five decades. It has been estimated that the total number of people that presently pass through this region annually is about 51,50,000, and this will mean greater urbanisation and construction of many more permanent structures in the years to come.

The study also notes that the Neelimala area is under severe threat of erosion, with about 7000 tonnes of soil having been washed away in the last three decades. It says that the four km stretch from Pampa to Sannidham as well as the other pilgrimage routes are disturbed zones where the forests have already changed from evergreen to deciduous.

The other serious ecological problems here include severe pollution of all water sources, disturbance of fluvial paths, deforestation and piling up of non-degradable wastes. It has further pointed out that the Travancore Dewaswom Board (TDB), which presides over the economic and ritual aspects of the pilgrimage had been resorting to ad hoc measures to tackle the situation and had been grossly violating the acts and rules relating to forest land. (also see *PA Update* 30, 27, 24, 23 & 21)

Source: P Venugopal. 'Sabrimala in grave crisis: study', *The Hindu*, 14/12/2001

Contact: **Vinod Kumar Damodar**, Friends of Elephants Forum, Near Cherooty Nagar, Calicut – 613006 Email: vinodkumard@hotmail.com

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

MADHYA PRADESH

Underground cable laying in Madhav NP without permission under FCA

The State Chief Wildlife Warden has reportedly granted permission for the laying of underground optic fibre cable (OFC) by Reliance Telecommunications in the Madhav National Park. This has been done without the prior approval of the Centre, a statutory requirement under the Forest Conservation Act (FCA).

The Union Ministry had clearly written to all states with guidelines regarding submissions of proposals for diversion of forest land in protected areas. The CWLW has however gone ahead with the

permission using Section 33 of the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) saying that the cabling would facilitate the telecommunication set up in the park and help arrest illegal poaching besides providing beat and forest guards the mean to further systemise their work.

It has however been pointed out that Reliance will in any case not provide any telephone exchange in the area because the basic telephonic facilities are being provided by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited.

Source: 'OFC in national park: MP in a quandary', *The Hindu*, 16/11/2001.

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

Update on work in Kuno

The Samrakshan Trust which is working with villagers in the Kuno Palpur Sanctuary on the 'Lion Reintroduction programme' has released its Fourth Kuno Project Report which has an update of the work done in the last six months. For details please contact Arpan Sharma at the address below.

The trust has also issued a clarification with regards to the news carried by the *PA Update* 33. The neelgai capture operation was carried out by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and not the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) as had been reported. The WTI has donated 30 bicycles to the sanctuary staff.

Contact: **Arpan Sharma**, Samrakshan Trust, C/o C-II/2, IIPA Campus, IP Estate, Ring Road, New Delhi – 110002. Tel: 011-2795088 / 3351648. Email: asmitak@vsnl.com

Tiger electrocuted in Panpatha WLS in Bandavgarh TR

A tiger was poached in November in the Bandavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) by using a high-tension electricity transmission line that runs through the reserve. The incident happened near the Kathahara village in the Majholi – Sejwahi forest of the Panpatha Wildlife Sanctuary, which is a part of the BTR. Four people have been arrested in this connection so far.

This is not an isolated report of poaching of wild animals here. A few months ago a panther was killed in the Umaria area and its teeth had been removed. Earlier in May, another tiger was killed, reportedly by strangulation (Also see *PA Update* 33).

Some senior forest officials have said that the villagers living inside the buffer zone of the protected areas or those who still continue to retain their rights inside the park are helping the mafias that

are interested in the purchase of the skin and other body parts of the killed animals. Others have pointed out that the tiger may have been killed accidentally in the trap laid by villagers for killing wild boar and spotted deer.

Source: 'Tiger falls prey to poachers', *The Hindu*, 12/12/2001

Contact: **Director**, Bandavgarh TR, Umaria – 484661, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07653 - 22214

MAHARASHTRA

5th State Sanctuaries Conference held

The 5th Maharashtra State Sanctuaries Conference was held on November 25 & 26, 2001 at Totladoh in Nagpur district. For details of the conference and statement issued contact

Kusum Karnik, Shaswat, PO Manchar, Dist Pune 410503, Maharashtra. Tel: 02133-24107. Fax (C/o) 23690 / 23696.

Mohan Kothekar, S-87, Bharat Nagar, Nagpur, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 – 547438.

Stray dogs threat to deer in Sagarshwar

Stray dogs from surrounding villages are posing a big threat to the deer population in the Sagarshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. There are a number of reports of weak animals and fawn being killed by these dogs.

The villagers however have no complaints and point out that the increasing number of deer has resulted in huge losses to their crops.

Various solutions including killing of the intruding dogs and the fencing of the sanctuary have been suggested, but a workable solution is still to be found.

Source: Madhav Gokhale. 'Marauding dogs threaten Sagarshwar deers', *Indian Express*, 09/11/2001.

Meet on relocation of villages from Melghat held

A multi-stake holder meeting on the relocation of villages from Melghat Tiger Reserve was held at Paratwada on November 11. Various decisions were taken regarding the relocation of village Bori. This included issues related to the Schedule V status of the land where the original village was located, the need for a public hearing for the relocation of the villages of Koha and Kund, the establishment of a rehabilitation committee and the need for a joint meeting of representatives of all the 22 villages in Melghat.

Source: Letter from Khoj dated 09/11/2001.
Contact: **Director**, Melghat TR, Amravati- 444 602
Maharashtra.

Khoj, C/o Sri Prajapati, Near Mahavir
Bhavan, Paratwada – 444805, Maharashtra.
Tel: 07223- 20425/22569. Email:
khojmelghat@vsnl.net

Kishore Rithe, Pratishta, Bharat Nagar,
Akoli Road, Near Sai Nagar, Amravati,
Maharashtra. Tel: 0721-672359. Fax:
670308. Email: ncsa@bom3.vsnl.net.in

Monitoring Committee for Mahabaleshwar Eco-Sensitive zone

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has set up a nine member monitoring committee for the newly declared Mahabaleshwar – Panchgani Eco-Sensitive Zone (see *PA Update* 30).

The committee will be chaired by Mr. Jamsheed Kanga, former Mumbai Municipal Commissioner. The other members include environmentalist, Mr. Shyam Chainani; MoEF Director, Mr. R Anantkumar; Conservator of Forests, Mahabaleshwar; Dist. Collector, Satara; Deputy Director, Town Planning Dept., Pune Division; and a representative each of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) and the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB).

The tenure of the committee will be two years and its terms of reference include regulation and control of noise pollution, growth in traffic and keeping a check on the use of plastic. The committee will also consider proposals and take decisions for providing relaxations with regard to raising of larger dairies, poultry, mushroom rearing and other units in the nature of allied agricultural activities and structures connected therewith in the non-municipal areas in excess to one-eighth built up area.

The committee has also been authorised to file complaints under Section 19 of the Environmental (Protection) Act – 1986.

Source: Gunvanthi Balaram. ‘Monitoring committee set up for Mahabaleshwar – Panchgani zone’, *The Times of India*, 05/11/2001

Contact: **Shyam Chainani**, 9 St James Court, Marine Drive, Mumbai – 400020 Email is shyam@beag.net

Zoo to release monkeys into Radhanagari WLS

The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has asked the Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad Municipal Corporation’s Pratapsinh Park to release most of the wild animals and birds into wildlife sanctuaries. The Pratapsinh Park is one of the 17 zoos in the country that has been asked to release the animals held.

Accordingly the Park has decided to release the monkeys held into the Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary in the Kolhapur district.

Source: Ravindra Daftardar. ‘Zoos directed to release animals into sanctuaries’, *The Times of India*, 10/01/2002.

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

MIZORAM

Sanctuary status for Palak lake, Thorang area

The Mizoram Environment and Forest Minister has recently said that the state government was actively considering a proposal to declare areas around the Palak lake and the Thorang mountain as wildlife sanctuaries. The announcement was made during the wildlife week in October 2001.

Further details are however not known.

Source: Sanctuary status likely to Palak lake, Thorang areas, *The Assam Tribune*, 06/10/2001.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Forest Department, Government of Mizoram, Aizwal- 796 001 Mizoram

ORISSA

151 elephants poached in Orissa in last decade

151 elephants are reported to have been poached in Orissa in the period 1991 to 2001. This figure has been given in the report of the Evaluation Committee on Project Elephant that has been set up by the government. A total of 200 people were arrested in the context of these poaching cases and so far only four have been convicted.

It has also been announced that from the next fiscal year, 60% of Project Elephant’s budget would be spend on elephant reserves and that this would also be doubled from Rs. 20 crores to Rs. 40 crores. Three elephant habitats: Mayurbhanj, Mahanadi and Badarama – Khalasuni are also to be made elephant reserves (Also see *PA Update* 33).

That the human –elephant conflict is on the rise is evident from the fact that in the last two years alone, 54 people in the state have been mauled to death by elephants. The worst hit region has been that of Keonjhar.

Recently, on September 25, 87 people were injured when police took action against an 8000 strong crowd that had gathered in Keonjhar to protest against elephant attacks. It has been pointed out that

while compensation for elephant related deaths in Orissa is Rs. 10,000 only, states like Karnataka pay upto Rs. 1 lakh. Though the Central government does give Rs. 1 lakh for every victim, it is upto the states to utilise it. In Orissa though 60 elephant related deaths have been reported in the last five years, the compensation sanctioned has been only Rs. 4.97 lakhs and money actually disbursed is only Rs. 79,654.

Source: 'Project Elephant faces question mark as toll rises', *Indian Express*, 01/09/2001
Satyasundar Barik. 'Fights for space', *Down to Earth*, 31/10/2001.

Contact: **DK Lahiri Choudhury**, 45 Subarban School Road, Kolkata - 700 025, West Bengal. Tel: 033-4551144. Email: dklc@cal.vsnl.net.in

Crocodile attacks in Bhitarkanika

Atleast one person has been killed and five others injured in attacks by crocodiles in villages along the Brahmani river in and around Bhitarkanika National Park. Authorities were planning to erect nets as an artificial barrier to keep the crocodiles from straying into adjoining water bodies, but concern was expressed over the impacts that this would have on the movement of other aquatic life.

It has been reported that the attacks were mainly taking place in areas where villagers were illegally resorting to fishing within protected forest area limits.

It will be recalled that the forest authorities had in May 2001, banned all tourists from entering Bhitarkanika for a period of one month. This was also in an attempt to prevent attacks by crocodiles as that is the breeding period of the animals and they are very sensitive to disturbance (see *PA Update 32*).

Source: 'Crocodiles kill one in Bhitarkanika', *The Times of India*, 04/10/2001.

Contact: **DFO**, Bhitarkanika NP, At/PO Rajnagar, Dist. Kendrapada – 745225. Orissa. Tel: 06729-72460/64. Fax: 06727-20775.

Long term management plan for Chilka

The Chief Minister of Orissa recently announced that the state was commissioning the services of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) to formulate a long term management plan for Chilka lake.

The announcement was made during a function inaugurating wildlife week in Bhubaneswar. Details of the plan are not known. (Also see *PA Updates 30 & 27*)

Source: 'Chilka set for major facelift', *The Statesman*, 04/10/2001

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

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

New legislation for Chilka

A draft bill of the proposed law to prevent illegal fishing in the Chilka lake has been recently approved by the Orissa state cabinet (see *PA Update 30*) It was to be introduced in the winter session of the Assembly

As per the new law, fishing in any form, other than the traditional method will be prohibited within 1000 m of the lake area and there will be no culture fishing of any kind inside the lake.

The Chilka Development Authority (CDA) will monitor the activities on a day to day basis. A multi-disciplinary team, with officials from the CDA and the Departments of Revenue, Fisheries and Forest, will be formed to ensure enforcement of the legislation. Any violation will be treated as a criminal offence and attract a maximum imprisonment of seven years and a fine upto Rs. 50,000.

Source: 'Bill to prevent illegal fishing', *The Hindu*, 13/12/2001.

Contact: **CDA**, see above

Financial assistance for Chilka bird poachers

Work by the NGO, Wild Orissa, along with the FD has helped convince some 400 bird poachers from village Sorona around Chilka to give up the killing of birds (see *PA Update 32*). Efforts are now being made for their rehabilitation. In September 2001 a function was organised at the village and financial assistance from the Allahabad Bank was disbursed to these people. Also present on the occasion were the Chief Wildlife Warden of Orissa, the Chief Executive of the Chilka Development Authority and other senior forest officers.

Details of the exact nature of the assistance and the rehabilitation plan that has been worked out can be obtained from Wild Orissa

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

Joint action for protection of turtles

With the onset of the turtle nesting season, the Forest Department (FD), NGOs, the Fisheries Department and the Coast Guard have chalked out a joint strategy for the protection of the turtles.

The Coast Guard has decided to deploy one ship to keep watch on illegal fishing trawlers including those from Bangladesh and Burma. It will also deploy a small vessel for supplementing the actions of the ship. It will also use its aircraft, helicopters and a hovercraft for the same. The Coast Guard will aim at checking if fishing trawlers have the turtle excluding devices (TEDs) when they leave the harbor itself.

The FD will be using three boats to thwart illegal fishing. Contact points have been established at Paradip, Dhamra and Rajnagar to coordinate action between the various departments. The Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) has decided to give 2000 (TEDs) to the Fisheries Department and this is expected to help reduce turtle mortality.

A little south in Andhra Pradesh, the Vishakha Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has in conjunction with the FD chalked out their own program to protect turtles that come to nest on the beaches in Visakhapatnam, Pudimadaka, Gangavaram and Bhimli.

The West Bengal FD too has decided to equip trawlers and mechanised fishing boats with the TEDs to reduce turtle mortality

Source: RK Radhakrishnan. 'Coast guard bid to save turtles', *The Hindu*, 23/09/2001
Satyasundar Barik. 'NGOs in Orissa, Coast Guard plan to save sea turtles', *The Asian Age*, 19/11/2001.
'Move to protect sea turtles', *Deccan Chronicle*, 28/11/2001
'Govt. move to save turtles', *Hindustan Times*, 22/12/2001

Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty** Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack – 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671 – 334625. Fax: 610980. Email: biswajit@cal.vsnl.net.in
DFO - Bhitarkanika National Park, Forest Department, At/Po Rajnagar, Dist Kendrapada – 745225, Orissa. Tel: 06729 – 72460/64. Fax: 06727-20775

Over 1300 olive ridleys killed

Over 1300 olive ridley turtles are reported to have been already killed along the Orissa coast since they started arriving in November. While 842 turtles were killed in the stretch between Gahirmatha and Devi river mouth, 436 were killed between the Devi mouth and Chilka mouth and another 110 between the Prayagi and Rushikulya mouths.

This is happening inspite of the many measures taken (described above) by the various agencies to prevent it. It has been alleged by the Wildlife Society of Orissa that illegal trawling by Andhra Pradesh trawlers within 10 kms of the coast is one of the main reasons for the turtle deaths.

Source: '1,300 Olive Ridley turtles killed', *The Hindu*, 22/12/01

Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, see above

Elephants to patrol Simlipal

Three elephants from the Nagarhole National Park in Karnataka, trained to protect forests from poachers and timber smugglers will now do duty in the Simlipal Tiger Reserve. The Orissa government had requisitioned the three elephants from Karnataka way back in 1991 for a sum of Rs. 10.52 lakhs.

Source: Elephants to patrol Orissa tiger reserve', *The Hindu*, 02/12/2001

Honorary Wildlife Wardens appointed

The Forest & Environment Department of Orissa has, in a notification dated July 27, 2001 appointed 27 Honorary Wildlife Wardens (HWW) for different parts of the state. The period of their appointment is two years from the date of the publication of the notification in the Orissa Gazette.

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

PUNJAB

No funds for Abohar this year

The Central Government has stopped the grants to the Wildlife wing for the Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary as funds allocated during the last two years were not utilised and the grant utilisation certificate for the last three years was also not submitted.

The grant sanctioned by the Centre was Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 1.20 lakhs for the years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 respectively.

As a result of this the forest staff here continues to be understaffed and have to depend of the help and support of the local Bishnoi community in protecting the sanctuary (See *PA Update* 32).

Source: Dinesh Kumar Sharma. 'Bishnois of Abohar sanctuary worried', *The Times of India*, 06/11/2001.

Hyacinth threat to Harike again

The water hyacinth menace in Harike Wildlife Sanctuary that had been cleared to a great extent last year by the Project Sahyog of the Indian Army (see *PA Update* 30) is reappearing in the lake

Large areas are again reported to be covered by the weed. This has been attributed to the release of less water from the reservoirs of Bhakra on account of less rain in the catchment areas. Researchers from the Zoology Dept. of the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar have pointed out that though the water level in the lake has come down, the quantities of pollutants has not. The water has thus become more eutrophic, stimulating growth of the plant.

Source: 'Harike wetland faces hyacinth threat again', *The Tribune*, 12/10/2001.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Forest Department, Punjab, SCD 2463-64, Sector B-C, Chandigarh.

RAJASTHAN

Bird populations in Bharatpur drastically down

The birds populations in the Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur are drastically down compared to previous years. It is estimated that the population this year is less than 25% of what it was five years ago. Bird breeding too has come down drastically. While 224 nests of spoonbills were counted here in 1995, this season the number is only 30. The number of nests of cattle egrets too has come down from 340 to 51 for the same period.

One of the biggest issues is the shortage of water, a problem that is being faced by the rest of Rajasthan as well. Only 184 million cubic feet (mcft) were released to park this year from the Ajan bund whereas the annual requirement is about 500 mcft. It has also been pointed out that due to crop cultivation in the Ajan bund for nine months of the year, a large quantity of pesticide enters the park. This inhibits breeding of fish and other aquatic life that are the prime food sources for the birds.

Other problems that the park faces include the bad condition of the roads, large annual forest fires, clogging and siltation of the canals that feed the lake and uncontrolled growth of grass, which is further compounded by the ban on buffaloes grazing in the park.

Source: Sukhmani Singh. 'Park in a flap as birds stay away', *Indian Express*, 21/12/2001

Contact: **Director, Keoladeo NP**, see above

UNESCO support for Keoladeo NP

See Above: ASSAM: UNESCO support for Kaziranga and Keoladeo NPs.

Contact: **SK Mukherjee**, Director, WII, see above
Director, Keoladeo NP, see above

SIKKIM

Court frees Russians caught in Khangchendongza

Two Russians who had been caught with a large number of specimens of butterflies and other insects inside Khangchendongza National Park (see *PA Update* 33) have been freed by the courts. They were also allowed to leave the country

The court dropped the charges and allowed them to leave the state after they agreed to pay a fine of Rs. 20,000 (US \$ 417) each.

Source: 'India frees two Russians arrested for catching bugs', *Reuters News Service*, 19/10/2001

Contact: **TR Sharma**, Forest Secretary, Deorali, Gangtok - 737102, Sikkim
Sandeep Tambe DFO (WL), Dept. of Environment and Forests, Govt. of Sikkim South and West Namchi, S Sikkim-737126, Sikkim. Email: sandeep_tambe@lycos.com
Pema Bhutia, KCC, PO Yuksam, West Sikkim - 737 113, Sikkim

TAMIL NADU

Anthrax prevention measures in Mudumalai

Following developments in the United States of America, fears have also surfaced over the spread of anthrax in the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary. The recent death of an elephant, reportedly of Anthrax further galvanised the authorities into action.

Vaccination of cattle in areas adjoining the forests was taken up and handbills were distributed to people at Mudumalai, Masinagudy and Mavanhallah in an attempt to raise awareness about the disease. Strengthening of inter-state checkposts to prevent cattle from Bandipur to Mudumalai has also been proposed.

Source: D Radhakrishnan. 'Anthrax prevention measures at Mudumalai', *The Hindu*, 13/10/2001.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Mudumalai WL Sanctuary, Forest Department, Mahalingam Bldgs, Coonor Road, Udthagamandalam- 642 001 Tamil Nadu

Project Elephant workshop calls to protect corridors

A workshop was recently held in the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary (Annamalai) to mark the completion of ten years of Project Elephant.

A plea was made for the protection of elephant corridors. It was pointed out that special efforts were needed to first identify these corridors. The latest status of these corridors was not available and this was a major hurdle in the preparation and implementation of any action plan for the acquisition of private and community lands falling within the corridors. A need was also expressed for an effective conflict resolution mechanism between the Forest Department on the one hand and the plantation companies and local bodies on the other.

Other suggestions made included dovetailing of funds available with various development agencies for promoting community elephant barriers to minimise conflict; promotion of social security measures like the Janatha Group Insurance and Crop insurance schemes; implementation of site specific eco-development programs; enhancement of surveillance in elephant migratory routes; creation of seasonal anti-poaching camps and ensuring sufficient arms and ammunitions and training to anti-poaching staff.

A special mention was also made of the need for the complete protection of the corridor connecting the Eastern and the Western Ghats, especially the Moyar and Sathyamangalam forests.

Source: 'Steps sought to maintain elephant corridors', *The Hindu*, 11/10/2001

UTTARANCHAL

Villagers, NGO organise workshop on ecotourism in Nandadevi

The Gram Sabha of Village Lata in the buffer zone of the Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve along with the NGO, Janadhaar, organised a three day workshop on ecotourism development in Joshimath from Oct 29-31, 2001. Various issues related to the Nandadevi National Park and Biosphere reserve including access to resources, development of tourism, people's control, and mountaineering were discussed at the workshop.

Earlier, on October 14, the people of Niti Valley in the region also released their 'Nandadevi Bio-Diversity Conservation and Eco-Tourism Declaration' that had been signed in a meeting called by village Lata .

Contact: **Dhan Singh Rana**, Pradhan, Gram Sabha Lata, Joshimath, Dist. Chamoli, Uttaranchal

Sunil Kainthola, Janadhikar, 682, Indiranagar, New Forest, Deharadun – 248086, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-764393. Email: dhaar@vsnl.com

FD issues show cause notices to IMF for Nandadevi expedition

The Uttaranchal Forest Department (FD) has issued two show cause notices to the Indian Mountaineering Federation (IMF) for violation of wildlife rules during the recent expedition that went into the Nandadevi National Park.

The first notice has been issued under Section 35 (6) and Section 51 of the Wildlife Protection Act (WLP) – 1972 to Mr. Harish Kapadia, the leader of the expedition. According to the notice the team took 109 people on the expedition when permission had been granted for only 40. It has also been pointed out that despite instructions regarding commercial photography, one of the members of the expedition did make a commercial film.

It had also been alleged by the Pradhan of Village Lata that horns and a skull of bharal and some rare medicinal plants were taken out from the park. This was subsequently confirmed by forest guards who had accompanied the expedition.

The second notice takes up the issue with the IMF of allegedly publicising routes to various peaks that go through the core zone in its information handbook. (Also see *PA Updates* 33 & 32)

Source: Namita Kala. 'IMF receives wildlife dept show-causes', *The Pioneer*, 05/10/2001

Contact: **AS Negi**, CWLW, Uttaranchal, 85, Rajpur Road, Dehradun, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-744225 / 679817. Fax: 675138/747669

Harish Kapadia, 72, Vijay Apts, 16 Carmichael Rd., Opp. Usha Kiran Bldg, Behind Jaslok Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-4950772. Email: harikaps@vsnl.com

Dhan Singh Rana, Village Lata (see above)
Sunil Kainthola, Janadhaar, (see above)

Garbage removed from Nandadevi

A 40 member team of the Garhwal Rifles regiment of the army which scaled the Nandadevi peak in September 2001, also came with nearly 800 kgs of garbage from within the Nandadevi biosphere reserve. This is the garbage that had been left behind by previous expeditions into the region.

Source: 'Garbage removed from Nanda devi bioreserve', *The Hindu*, 26/11/2001
Army removes 800 kg of garbage from Nanda Devi, *Indian Express*, 26/11/2001

Census figures from Corbett

The Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) recently announced the census figures for the reserve for the year 2001. While the tiger and big cats were counted by the pugmark method, other animals like the elephant were counted by the block count method.

Following are the numbers of the different animals counted: tigers, 137; elephants, 600; spotted deer, 29,898; sambar 4247; barking deer, 1541; bear, 65; hog deer, 284; porcupine, 55; ghoral, 373 and neelgai, 488.

Source: '137 tigers, 600 elephants in Corbett', *The Corbett Foundation Newsletter*, Oct-Dec. 2001

Contact: **Field Director**, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar –244715, Nainital, Uttaranchal. Tel: 05947 – 85489. Fax: 85376

Two elephants poached in Rajaji

Two tuskers were reported poached in early December in the Rajaji National Park, and the tusks had been cut away with axes. The most likely method of the killing was poisoning. A massive search operation was launched with the help of battalions of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC), but no success was achieved in apprehending the poachers.

Source: 'Tusker poaching in Rajaji park alarms experts', *The Times of India*, 10/12/2001. Ajay Suri. 'Poachers kill two Rajaji elephants', *Indian Express*, 10/12/2001. Kulwinder Sandhu. 'Killing of tuskers: need to revamp park admn.', *The Tribune*, 24/12/2001

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP

WTI study investigates causes of elephant deaths by trains in Rajaji

An investigation taken up by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) under its Rapid Action Program (RAP) has revealed the various causes that have led to the death of more than 18 elephants in train accidents in the Rajaji National Park.

Some of the major findings are the following: Most of the accidents have occurred between 6pm and 6am. More adult females were killed in the accidents and the mortality patterns were found to be directly related to temperature and inversely to rainfall. The maximum deaths occurred during the summer months of high temperature and low rainfall with a peak in May. It was also found that the peak crop depredation period is between March and May, thus coinciding with the peak mortality period. There was no difference in human disturbance as shown by the indicators of the study.

High temperatures and water appeared to be the deciding factors forcing elephants to cross the tracks during the late dry season when water sources on the southern side dry up. Furthermore, the presence of crops on the edge of the forest, close to the water sources was an added attraction for the animals.

Other issues that were related to the accidents were several dangerous turnings of the railway track where visibility beyond the curve is restricted; certain mounds along the track that were too steep, trains running at speeds of upto 72 kms, considerably more than the 45-50 kmph that is claimed by the railway authorities; waste disposal on the tracks and the lack of familiarity with the track stretch by train drivers outside the Dehradun area. (Also see the following story).

Source: Kounteya Sinha. 'Wildlife trust to protect Rajaji elephants from rail accidents' *The Asian Age*, 07/10/2001.

Contact : **WTI**, PO Box 3150, New Delhi - 110 003. Tel: 011-6326025/6 / 6325775 / 6. Fax: 6326027 Email: ashok@wildlifetrustofindia.org

Railways to be requested to move track outside Rajaji

The Uttaranchal government has decided to request the Railways to shift the Doiwala – Haridwar rail track and to reduce the speed of all trains passing through the area in an attempt to avoid the continuing deaths of elephants in train accidents.

A high powered Task Force set up by the Centre met recently in this regard in the Motichur range of the park. It was also decided to set up a technical sub panel headed by Dr. AJT Johnsingh of the Wildlife Institute of India to give final recommendations regarding the shifting of the track and establishing under-heads and overhead rail bridges in the park area to facilitate the smooth movement of elephants.

Railway officials attending the meeting said that most of the trains passing through the park area have now been fitted with air brakes which can bring the train to a stop within a distance of 100 metres. These brakes were however still to be installed in the Mussoorie and Janata Express trains.

The Task Force has also decided to put up atleast six signboards as warning signals in those areas of the park, which are considered sensitive elephant areas. All drivers are also being given VHF wireless sets so that they can remain in touch with the forest officials about the location of the elephant herds. It is also being recommended that the speed of the trains be lowered from 35 to 25 kmph

Meanwhile, however, another elephant was hit by a train in Rajaji National Park on the night of

24th January. The animal was a calf and was hit between Haridwar and Motichur railway stations in KharKhari Beat of the park.

Source: 'Uttaranchal tries to save elephants', *Deccan Herald*, 19/01/2002.

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP, Shivalik House, Dehradun – 248001, Uttaranchal.
Divisional Railway Manager, Northern Rlys., Moradabad – 244001, Uttar Pradesh.
Tel: 0591-411519. Fax: 429885

UTTAR PRADESH

Highest fine slapped for poaching

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has slapped 12 poachers with a fine of Rs. 10 lakhs for poaching in the Chandraprabha Wildlife Sanctuary. The poachers were wealthy businessmen and the fine was imposed considering their affluence. This is reported to be the highest ever fine in the country for a case of poaching.

Weapons and ammunitions worth Rs. 7,00,000 were also seized from the poachers. They were freed after paying half the fine amount with a promise that the rest would be paid in a week's time.

Source: 'Poachers slapped with Rs. 10 lakh fine', *Reuters News Agency*, 19/11/2001.

Foresters to be armed

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has begun the process of arming foresters in sensitive forest areas and PAs. Recently a consignment of 12 guns was sent to the Kashi Forest Range. Additionally ordnance –make pistols were also issued to three wildlife conservators in the state for the first time.

The FD has also begun the review of licensed arms holders who reside within 10Kms of any wildlife sanctuary or national park in the state. This is being done following a recent direction of the Supreme Court of the country in this regard.

Source: 'Foresters get arms to fight poachers', *The Times of India*, 27/11/2001.

Sanctuary proposal for Gangetic dolphin

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department (FD) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – India has proposed a series of measures in an attempt to conserve the endangered Gangetic dolphin. Special efforts are being taken in the three river sanctuaries of the state – Katarniaghat, Chambal and the turtle sanctuary near Varanasi. It also been proposed to declare a 165 Km. stretch of the River Ganga from Bijnor to Narora a wildlife sanctuary. Recently all

Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) of the Gangetic belt, specifically between Bijnor and Narora and River Ghagra near Lakhimpur Kheri were asked to be extra vigilant since the dolphins face an imminent threat of being netted in winter.

Attempts are also being made to rope in the sadhus living on the banks of the river. The FD is relying on the mythological importance of the Ganga and an appeal is being made to the sadhu community to come forward to some save some of the endangered species of the Ganga river system like the Gangetic dolphin, crocodiles and the gharial.

Another study by the Environmental Biology Laboratory of the Patna University has pointed out that large scale pollution of the Ganga due to pesticide runoff is one of main reasons for the high mortality rate of the dolphins. While investigating the pesticide residues in dolphin tissues from various parts of Bihar, a maximum of the 64,000 parts per billion (ppb) of DDT residue was found in the blubber of a calf dolphin. The concentration of the PCB in the same animal was 13,000 ppb and that of hexachlorocyclohexane (HCH) was 1,900 ppb. This is a very high incidence of the pesticides.

It is reported that this high runoff of pesticides into the water is affecting the bird populations that depend on the fish in the river and human populations as well.

Source: 'Sadhus to the rescue of Ganga dolphins', *The Times of India*, 04/10/2001.
'Succour for Gangetic dolphins', *The Times of India*, 09/10/2001.
SK Sinha and RK Sinha. 'The unholy accrual', *Down to Earth*, 31/12/2001

Nawabganj desilting; soil to be used for highway construction

In a 'one of its kind' arrangement, the state Forest Department (FD) will be loaning out soil from the Nawabganj Wildlife Sanctuary to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for the ongoing construction of the express highway between Kanpur and Lucknow. The FD is happy with the arrangement as the difficult task of desilting the 1.5 sq. kms of the rapidly shrinking lake will be done for free and this would also make the habitat more attractive for the migratory birds.

The soil has been tested and approved for the purposes of road construction as well. It is expected that the lake will be 0.5 – 2.0 metres deeper at different points and would be flushed with water.

Source: Mohit Dubey. 'Soil 'loaning' to help Nawabganj bird sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 09/09/2001.

Rail tourism package for Dudhwa

The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation and the North East Railways are reported to have put together a Dudhwa rail package from November 3, 2001. The package entails a stay of two days and three nights. The tourists would be brought to Dudhwa by train and will be put up in the rail coaches itself where all the facilities would be provided. Additional provisions for jeeps and elephants has also been made to traverse through the forests.

Similar other packages have also been suggested on other routes on the railway network.

Source: 'Dudhwa rail package from Nov 3' *The Times of India*, 21/10/2001

WEST BENGAL

Sunderbans in UNESCO biosphere list

The mangroves of the Sunderbans have been added to UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Along with the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve which was added to this last year (see *PA Update* 30) and the Gulf of Mannar (see Gujarat, above), it is the third area from the country to be on this list.

A grant of Rs. 3.5 lakhs has also been disbursed by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) for working on a biosphere reserve project, which will be completed in March 2003.

Source: 'Sunderbans finds place in UNESCO reserve list', *The Hindu*, 25/09/2001
Sougata Mukhopadhyay. 'Sunderbans biosphere on UNESCO list', *The Statesman*, 21/10/2001

Contact: **Sudha Mehndiratta**, see above
Dr. RK Rai, see above

ADB technical mission advices against nuclear plant in the Sunderbans

An Asian Development Bank (ADB) Fact Finding Mission for the Sunderbans Conservation and Livelihoods Project has in a recent Aide Memoir, said 'that the proposal for setting up of a nuclear power plant in the Sunderbans is not in line with the conservation and development priorities for the area. It was also made clear that any future assistance from ADB for the project would be 'contingent upon the Government of West Bengal response to these concerns'.

Senior wildlife officials in the state have also now clarified that there is no proposal for a nuclear plant in the Sunderbans.

Source: 'Aide Memoir of the Fact Finding Mission, 20 November –1 December 2000.

Appeal to declare Santragachi a sanctuary

A Howrah based NGO, People for Animals has been attempting to get the Santragachi lake in Howrah district declared a bird sanctuary. The lake is home to a number of resident birds and also plays host to large number of migratory birds. Some of the problems faced by the lake include the proliferation of water hyacinth and large scale dumping of garbage.

The NGO has made a list of demands for the lake, which includes repairs of the breaches of the lake's embankment, fencing its borders, beautifying the area with fruit and flower trees, creating a 200 metre by 50 metre island in the centre of the lake and the building of a watch tower and an interpretation centre for visitors.

The group had approached Member of Parliament, Mamta Banerjee, to declare the lake a sanctuary. She is also reported to have written to the Union Environment Ministry almost a year ago, but there has been no development on this front.

Source: Sougata Mukhopadhyay. 'From Siberia to Santragachi', *The Statesman*, 08/01/2002.

Animal census in North Bengal from Feb. 8

Around 500 people including foresters, NGO and Tea Garden volunteers will be participating in the forthcoming wild animal census in the forests of North Bengal. The census will cover the regions of the Dooars, Darjeeling, Cooch Behar and the Alipurduar belt.

In the first phase of the census exercise, experts from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) will train a select group of forest officials during 24-26 January, who will, in turn train the field workers.

Source: Niraj Lama. 'North Bengal readies for hunt for horn and hoof' *The Statesman*, 08/01/2002.

Contact: **Ujwal Bhattacharya**, CF (WL, North), West, Bengal Forest Dept., Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, Tel: 03561-25627(O) 25596 (R), Email: ujjwal_b@yahoo.com

Train injures another elephant in North Bengal

Another elephant, this time, a calf was badly injured by a speeding train on the Siliguri – Alipurduar meter gauge track in North Bengal. The accident occurred at Mong Pong some 25 kms from Siliguri. The calf was badly injured with a pelvic fracture and there was little chance of its survival. At least five

elephants have been killed by speeding trains on this track in the last two years.

The track is presently being converted to broad gauge, a development that is expected to increase the possibilities of such accidents in the future. This is a Rs. 380 crores project that was approved in the railway budget of 1997 and cleared by the Union Cabinet in 1999. This track passes through a number of protected areas in the region including Buxa Tiger Reserve, Gorumara National Park, Mahananda WLS, Mahananda WLS and the Jaldapara WLS.

The WWF – West Bengal State Office has filed a writ petition in the Kolkata High Court against this gauge conversion (see *PA Updates* 32 & 29). After a recent order of the court, a joint inspection team comprising of Forest, Railway and Project Elephant authorities had visited the entire track a few months and formulated some recommendations for the railways to follow. However, according to forest officials none of these recommendations are being followed.

State Forest Minister, Jogesh Burman too has voiced a strong opinion against the gauge conversion project.

Source: Debasis Sarkar. 'Calf elephant hit by train', *The Times of India*, 06/10/2001.

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

First Dhole sighting in the Neora Valley NP

The dhole was recently seen in the Neora Valley National Park for the first time ever. The last time the wild dogs were seen in the region was in the Buxa Tiger Reserve more than four decades ago.

Source: 'Extinct dog makes a come back', *The Telegraph*, 16/10/2001

Contact: **Raju Das**, DFO, Wildlife (II) West Bengal Forest Dept., Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, Tel: 03561-24907(O) / 30383 (R), E-mail: wild2@dte.vsnl.net.in

More compensation for tiger victim families

The West Bengal Government has announced that compensation given to families of those killed by tigers will be raised from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 35,000. The compensation for the injured will however remain at Rs. 500.

Source: 'Tiger victims to get more aid', *The Times of India*, 04/10/2001

Tourism, deforestation threaten Singalila

The Federation of Societies for Environmental Protection (FOSEP) has pointed out that increasing tourism and deforestation over the years has seriously threatened the Singalila National Park.

Stone and wooden structures have been constructed for tourists instead of creating tented accommodation. Rhododendron and silver fir trees have been used for the construction. While five to six logs are needed for the construction of one hut, it is reported that more than 1000 trees were cut and smuggled out with the support of some sections within the forest department.

Source: Anjana Pradhan. 'Singalila national park under threat', *The Times of India*, 21/12/2001.

Contact: **Bharat Rai**, FOSEP, Red Cross Building, Darjeeling. – 734101, West Bengal. Tel: 0354 - 53589 (O)/ 53246, 56460

CWLW, Government of West Bengal, Vikas Bhawan, North Block, Salt Lake, Calcutta 700 091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3346900/3583208. Fax: 3345946. Email: wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

National Wildlife Action Plan released

The National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP), which has been under preparation for the last three years, was released at the recent meeting of the IBWL that was held in New Delhi. The plan is for a 15 year period from 2002 – 2016 and has thirteen chapters: i) Strengthening and Enhancing the Protected Area Network; ii) Effective Management of Protected Areas; iii) Conservation of Wild and Endangered Species and their Habitats; iv) Restoration of Degraded Habitats outside protected areas; v) Control of poaching, taxidermy and illegal trade in Wild Animal and plant species; vi) Monitoring and research; vii) Human resource development and personnel planning; viii) Ensuring people's participation in Wildlife conservation; ix) Conservation awareness and education; x) Wildlife tourism; xi) Domestic legislation and international conventions; xii) Enhancing financial allocation for ensuring sustained fund flow to the wildlife sector; and xiii) Integration of National Wildlife Action Plan with other sectoral programmes. (Also see Edit and Resolutions passed by the IBWL and Preamble of the NWAP below)

Contact: **SC Sharma**, Addl. IGF, Wildlife, MoEF,

National Workshop on Community Conserved Biodiverse Areas

A National workshop on Community Conserved Biodiverse Areas (CCBA) in India was held from November 21-23, 2001 at the Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal. About 90 participants representing local communities, NGOs, government agencies, academics, and research organisations from various parts of the country participated in the workshop that had been jointly organised by Kalpavriksh, the IIFM, and Winrock International –India.

Major issues that were discussed included the need and kind of legal support for CCBA, institutions for CCBA, and global and national context within which CCBA exist. During the workshop four statements were signed by the participants in support of communities who are struggling in various parts of the country to save their surrounding areas from destruction. It was felt by all participants that there was very little information available about areas where local people are conserving and protecting biodiversity; the systems that they are following, the threats that they are facing and the support that they need.

An email discussion group ccaind@yahoo.com to discuss these issues has also been started.

Contact: **Neema Pathak**, at the editorial address

First meeting of the IBCN held

The First meeting of the Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN) was held in Mumbai from September 13-15, 2001. The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the progress and development of the IBCN in the next two years. The core areas of the work of the Network have been identified as Research and Monitoring, Partnership and Sustainability of the Network, Conservation Action, Policy and Advocacy, and Awareness and Education. Sessions were also held on the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) programme and the National Biodiversity and Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP)

Source: 'Conservationists flock together to strengthen the network', *Mismet*, July-Sept., 2001

Contact: **Farah Ishtiaq**, IBCN, C/o BNHS, Hornbill House, SB Singh Rd, Mumbai – 400023, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2821811. Fax: 2837615. Email: bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in

IBA survey projects sanctioned

Following are some details of the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) surveys that have been recently

sanctioned by the Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN):

- The NGO Aaranyak for a survey of the Nokrek National Park in Meghalaya and for an awareness campaign for the protection of the highly endangered Greater Adjutant Stork
- Green Hearts Nature Club, Kokrajhar for a survey of eight IBA sites in Arunachal Pradesh
- Kulajyoti Lahkar for a survey of the Norpoh Block II and the Saipung Wildlife Sanctuary in Meghalaya
- WWF – I, North East for a survey of the Chaglaum and Ditchu Reserve Forest Areas.

Contact: **Farah Ishtiaq**, IBCN, see above

Project for a Protected Area Network on wetlands in India

The Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) has been awarded an United Nations Development Program (UNDP) / Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) project to prioritise wetlands for formulating a Protected Area Network of wetlands in the country. The project involves: a) Mapping all wetlands above 2.25 hectares at the scale of 1:50,000; b) Prioritising them on the basis of biodiversity values, mainly waterfowl, aquatic vegetation and fish; c) Classifying them on the basis of water quality and d) Collection of socio-economic data in the areas where the selected wetlands are located.

Contact: **Dr. Arun Kumar**, Addl. Director, ZSI, 218, Kaulagarh Road, Dehradun – 248195, Uttaranchal. Email: zsisiwal@sancharnet.in
Dr. N. Prasad, SACON, Annaikatty, Coimbatore 641108 Tamil Nadu

Ban on fishing marine species relaxed

Bowing to public and political pressure, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) partly relaxed its ban on hunting and trading in sharks and 52 species of molluscs. The ban had been imposed a few months ago in an attempt to protect populations of some of these species that are reported to be severely threatened (see *PA Update* 33)

The revised notification by the ministry still accords protection to 10 shark species including the whale shark. Of the 52 species of molluscs, the hunting and trading ban has been lifted on 28, while the ban on sea cucumbers and sea horses remains.

The relaxation of the ban order came in response to large scale protests in different parts of the country. The blanket ban, it was argued would affect the livelihoods of tens of thousands of fisherfolk and lakhs that were indirectly dependant on fishing for survival.

The MoEF is reported to have consulted a number of research and scientific organisations before the partial relaxation of the ban. These include the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), the Fisheries and Zoological Surveys of India, the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and the Government's Fisheries Commissioner.

Source: 'Review ban on shark trade, Centre told', *The Hindu*, 24/11/2001.

'Shark hunting ban raises a stink', *The Times of India*, 26/11/2001.

Chandrika Mago. 'Ban on fishing sharks eased', *The Times of India*, 10/12/2001.

Contact: **SC Sharma**, Addl. IGF, MoEF, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodi Estate, New Delhi – 110003. Tel: 011- 4362285.

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

Sarang Kulkarni, Reefwatch, c/o Offspring, Ground Floor, Priyanka Bldg., St. Paul's Road, Chimbai village, Bandra (W) Mumbai - 400 050 , Maharashtra. Tel: 022-6518223. Email: coral110@rediffmail.com; reefwatch@usa.net

Amendments to the Wildlife act

The Union Minister for Environment and Forests has said that amendments have been proposed in the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) – 1972 to make it more stringent and effective. He added that some provisions have also been drawn from the Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances Act which provides stringent measures for confiscating the property of smugglers and punishment of upto 10 years even for first timers.

Source: Manoj Anand. 'Wildlife act will be made stricter: Balu', *The Assam Tribune*, 18/11/2001.

Contact: **Mr. SC Sharma**, see above

SC notice on Wetlands

The Supreme Court of the country has issued notices to the Centre and all State and UT governments on a public interest litigation seeking protection of wetlands. It has been pointed out that though a national wetland committee was set up by the Centre in 1987, no efforts had been made to protect wetlands that are getting increasingly threatened.

Examples of the loss of wetlands that were cited by the petitioner, Adv. MK Balakrishnan include the Kolleru Lake in Andhra Pradesh, Deepor

Beel in Assam, Hokarsar Lake in J&K and the Pyagpur and Sitadwar jheels near Lucknow in UP.

The petitioner has pointed out that India has about 4.1 million hectares of wetland, excluding paddy fields and mangroves, of which 1.5 million are natural. An estimated 42% of the wetlands in the country are unprotected and face various threats.

Source: 'SC notice to Centre on wetlands', *The Times of India*, 11/10/2001.

Contact: **Adv. MK Balakrishnan**, Apex Advocates Association, 37, Lawyers Chamber, Supreme Court, New Delhi – 110001. Tel: 011-3070449

Wildlife crime intelligence cell fails to take off

The proposal of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for the establishment of a 'modest' wildlife crime intelligence cell has failed to take off more than six months after it was first proposed (see *PA Update* 30). The initial plan to set up a unit of 8-10 members was scaled down to an unit with only four members: two officers of the assistant inspector-general level and two data processors. The annual cost for the cell too was put at Rs. 20 lakhs (low by present government standards) but this too has not helped things move.

The Department of Expenditure had refused permission to create any new posts or allow surrender of existing vacant ones. There is also reported to be some tension between the forest and environment departments over the surrender of posts issue.

Source: Chandrika Mago. 'Wildlife cell is ...dead as a dodo', *The Times of India*, 19/10/2001.

Crane conservation meet uncertain

Crane conservationists were scheduled to have two meetings on cranes in the month of February 2002. While one was to be held in Bharatpur in India the other was planned for Bannu in Pakistan. However, now, with a deterioration of the political situation in the region in general and between India and Pakistan in particular the fate of these meetings has become uncertain. More details on this are awaited.

Source: 'Crane conservationists to meet', *The Hindu*, 05/08/2001.

SOUTH ASIA

Afghan war to affect migratory birds?

Fears are being expressed that the Afghan war and the incessant bombing by the US will adversely

affect the large populations of migratory birds that fly through this region in winters. There are no confirmations about this based on any studies or surveys, but experts are expecting that impacts will be seen.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has in fact estimated an 85 % reduction in the number of migratory birds and a team was sent recently to Bannu, Gambila and River Kurram in the southern parts of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The final findings of the team are not available.

It has been reported earlier (see *PA Update* 27) that important wildlife habitats like the Lake Ab-I-Estada, the Ajar Valley Wildlife Reserve and Lake Hashmat Khan have been badly affected by the severe drought that has affected this region over the past few years. The war is only expected to cause further deterioration in the situation.

Source: Zulfiqar Ali. 'Wildlife too bearing the brunt', posting on nathist by Ashish Fernandes. 10/11/2001.
Sudhir Vyas. Email to rajnat@yahoogroups.com. 03/11/2001
Ramesh Tanna & Sukrat Desai. 'Afghan war may take a toll of migratory birds', *Indo-Asian News Service*. 24/10/2001

Indo-Nepal border curbs affect elephant migration

Heightened security on either sides of the Indo-Nepal border along the Mechi river to check criminal activities has adversely affected the traditional migration of elephants in the region. Additionally, as a result of regular crop losses, villagers on the Nepalese side have posted night vigils along the river to check the entry of elephants.

This has resulted in increased elephant – human conflicts in the Naxalbari and Bagdogra areas on the Indian side of the border. A worried Darjeeling district administration has taken up the matter with their counterpart in the Jhapa district of Nepal and meetings have been proposed to resolve the matter.

Source: Sudipta Chanda. 'Border curbs drive elephants to paddy fields' *The Statesman*, 15/11/2001.

NEPAL

Bengal Florican survey in Royal Suklaphanta WR

Results of an Oriental Bird Club (OBC) funded survey of the Bengal Florican in the Royal Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve have been recently published. The survey was carried out in the Reserve

between 5-14 May 2000 and a total population of 12 birds (10 adult and two sub-adult males) was reported.

Major threats to the floricans were identified as fire, predation by jackals and grassland succession to scrub. The recorded population of the bird was lower than those in previous studies and it is thought that the population is slowly dwindling.

The survey has called for better grassland management, control of overgrazing, shrub growth and predators, and radiotelemetry research to study the movement of floricans outside the breeding season.

Source: 'Population status and distribution of Bengal Floricans in Royal Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve, Nepal', *Oriental Bird Club, Bulletin 33*, June 2001.

Contact: **Bijay Tamang & Nabin Baral**, PO Box 907, Kathmandu, Nepal.
OBC, C/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG192DL, UK. Email: mail@orientalbirdclub.org
Website: <http://www.orientalbirdclub.org/>

PAKISTAN

Plea against oil exploration in Kirthar rejected

A Pakistani court recently rejected a petition filed against a license awarded to Britain's Premier Oil for exploring gas in Kirthar National Park (Also see *PA Updates* 30, 25 & 22

The petition was filed by the Karachi based organisation, Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment. The court reportedly dismissed the petition saying it was beyond its jurisdiction to decide in the matter.

Source: 'Destructive Rejection', *Down to Earth*, October 31, 2001

INTERNATIONAL

Global Tiger Forum meet held

A three day meeting of the Global Tiger Forum (GTF) was held in New Delhi in November 2001. The meeting was attended by representatives from 12 of the 14 tiger range countries including Bangladesh, Nepal, Vietnam, Myanmar, Bhutan, Cambodia, Russia, Laos, Indonesia and China. Observers from international agencies and voluntary organisations also took part.

Source: 'With sub-species dying, it's 'save tiger' cry again', *The Times of India*, 08/11/2001.

Contact: **Tariq Aziz**, WWF – TCP, 172-B, Lodi Estate, New Delhi - 110 003. Email: areasindia@vsnl.net

New fund for turtle conservation

The United Kingdom based Marine Conservation Society (MCS) has recently launched a Turtle Conservation Fund (TCF) to support marine turtle research and conservation projects worldwide.

Grants will be awarded to non-profit organisations and individuals who are significantly contributing to the conservation of marine turtles and their marine and terrestrial habitats.

Contact: **Sue Ranger**, Wildlife Projects Officer, MCS, 9, Gloucester Rd. Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 5BU, UK. Tel: ++ 44 1989 566017. Fax: 567815. Email: info@mcsuk.org. Website: <http://www.mcsuk.org>

World Wetlands day on Feb. 2

‘Wetlands: water, life and culture’. This is the theme that has been chosen for this year’s World Wetland Day, which is being celebrated on Feb. 2.

The Ramsar Bureau has sent out a sizeable quantity of resource material to use for the promotion of the message of wetland conservation on the occasion. Those who may be still interested in receiving the materials and / or want to make suggestions for the ‘Day’ can write to the Ramsar Bureau at the address below

Contact: **Dwight Peck**, Convention on Wetlands, CH-1196 Gland, Switzerland. Email: peck@ramsar.org; dwight.peck@bluewin.ch Website: <http://ramsar.org>
Taej Mundkur, Wetlands International - Asia Pacific, 3A39, Block A, Kelana Centre Point, SS7/19 Petaling Jaya, 47301 Selangor, Malaysia. Tel: +60-3-704 6770. Fax: +60-3-704 6772 Email: taej@wiap.nasionet.net Website: www.wetlands.org

OPPORTUNITIES

Research assistants for tiger survey project

The Tumkur, Karnataka, based group, Green Watchers has announced that they are looking for research assistants who are willing to work in any part of the country on their tiger survey projects.

The applicant is expected to be physically fit, must possess a valid 4 wheeler driving license

and must be science graduates or post graduates with a keen interest in field research work.

Contact: **Sanjay Gubbi**, Green Watchers, 2208 / B, Sadhana Road, Kr Extension, Tumkur – 572101, Karnataka. Email: greenwatchers@yahoo.com

Grants from Field Veterinary Program, WCS

The Field Veterinary Program (FVP) of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), New York is trying to identify candidates from Asia, Africa, South America or Eastern Europe for the award of a grant that will sponsor the individual or the institution in the Wildlife Disease Association (WDA) for one year.

This professional development award is meant to foster better communication between wildlife health professionals internationally. In the past 2 years the program has sponsored over 50 new WDA members around the world.

Contact: **Krista Poppe**, FVP, WCS, 2300 Southern Blvd. New York 10460. Tel: 718-220-5892. Fax: 718-220-7126. Email: kpoppe@wcs.org Website: www.fieldvet.org

UNEP – WCMC Biodiversity scholarships

The United Nations Environment Program - World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP – WCMC), in collaboration with the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office, has announced six UNEP-WCMC Chevening Scholarships in Biodiversity, beginning September 2002. The scheme will draw scholars from all regions of the world to work for one year at the Centre in Cambridge. This scheme aims to help young researchers to prepare for a role in national and regional policy development and decision-making to resolve biodiversity-related challenges.

One scholar is to be selected from each of the following six regions: Africa, Asia & the Pacific, Europe, Latin America & the Caribbean, North America, and West Asia. Candidates must be under 35 years of age and hold a good degree, and preferably also a postgraduate degree, in a biological or environmental science.

Closing date for applications: March 1 2002.

Contact: **Head of Human Resources**, UNEP-WCMC, 219 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK. Tel: +44 1223 277314; fax +44 1223 277136; Email: brenda.gillian@unep-wcmc.org. Website: <http://www.unep-wcmc.org>.
Or the UK Embassy, High Commission or British Council office,

WHAT'S AVAILABLE ?

- *Woodpecker*

This is the newsletter of the Chhattisgarh Wildlife Society (CWS), which was formed in 1998. The latest issue of the newsletter dated June 2001 (Vol 3, No. 1) reports that the Wild Buffalo and Bastar Hill Myna have been declared the state animal and state bird respectively.

Contact: **CWS**, B-101, Gayatri Nagar, PO Shankernagar, Raipur – 492 007. Tel: 0771-428136. Email: cwsraipur@hotmail.com

- Tarun Bharat Sangh, Alwar, Rajasthan. *A Report of Workshop on Sariska Conservation.*

This is a report of a workshop held in the Sariska Tiger Reserve in September, 2000 (also See *PA Update 27*), where an arrangement was worked out between the government, forest department and villagers in the neighbourhood for the joint management of the park.

Contact: **Rajendra Singh**, Tarun Bharat Sangh, Bhikampura, Kishori, via Thanagazi, Alwar – 301002, Rajasthan. Tel: 01465-25043
Director, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Sariska, Alwar – 301022, Rajasthan. Tel: 01465-25043

- Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta. *Fauna of Renuka Wetland.*

This publication is part of the ongoing programme of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) on national wetlands. The present report is based largely on surveys done by the High Altitude Zoology Field Station in Solan during the period 1992-93. In all 24 species of mammals, 103 species of birds, 14 species of reptiles, 9 species of amphibians and 19 species of fishes among vertebrates, and 225 species of insects and 49 species of other invertebrates have been listed from the wetland and surrounding fringe area of the sanctuary.

The report also points out the number of threats faced by the lake. These include eutrofication, extensive growth of macrophytes on the eastern and western sides, silting up on the northern side due to construction of communication links and dumping of non-biodegradable waste into the lake by tourists and pilgrims.

Contact: **Dr. JM Julka & Dr. HS Mehta**, High Altitude Zoology Field Station, ZSI, Solan 173212, Himachal Pradesh.

- *The Corbett Foundation Newsletter*

This is a new newsletter started by the Ramnagar based Corbett Foundation. It will be a quarterly publication.

Contact: **Gyan Sarin**, Editor, The Corbett Foundation Newsletter, The Corbett Foundation, PO & Vil. Dhikuli, Ramnagar, Dist. Nainital – 244715, Uttaranchal. Tel: 05947-84156. Email: gyansarin@yahoo.com; corbett_foundation@yahoo.com

- Choudhury, Anwaruddin. *The Birds of Assam*, World Wide Fund for Nature – India, North East Regional Office & Gibbon Books, Guwahati, 2000.

This is a useful guide-cum-reference book which has also has the current status on the avi-fauna of the area. It is probably the most comprehensive publication on birds of the region

Contact: **Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhury**, see above.

- Shekhar, KS. *Status of Felis caracal in MP, India*, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal. 2001

This is a report based on a study conducted in the northern parts of Madhya Pradesh bordering Uttar Pradesh to the northern parts of MP bordering Rajasthan. The districts covered include Satna, Panna, Chatterpur, Tikamgadh, Shivpuri, Sheopur and Guna. The major findings of the study include the fact that though not abundant the animals are still found in northern MP. IT is however greatly threatened due to shrinking forest cover and disturbance from human beings.

Contact: **Shekhar KS**, IIFM, Nehru Nagar, Post Box 357, Bhopal – 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0755 – 775716 / 773799 / 765125.

UPCOMING

6th National Consultation on Wildlife Conservation and People's Livelihood Rights

The 6th National Consultation on Wildlife Conservation and People's Livelihood Rights is

being organised from Feb. 23- 25 at the Bansbari range of the Manas National Park in Assam.

It is being jointly organised by Kalpavriksh, Nature's Foster, Bongaigaon and Green Hearts Nature Club (GHNC), Kokrajhar.

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

NK Dey, Nature's Foster, 815B, BRPL Township, P. O. Dhaligaon, Bongaigaon - 783385, Assam. Tel: 03664 - 41431(R) / 41029(O). Email:

naturesfoster@indiatimes.com

Bablu Dey, Green Heart Nature Club, Ward No. 6, Kokrajhar, - 783370 Assam, Tel: 03661 - 70970 Fax: 70694.

National Seminar on Relevance of Biosphere Reserves and Protected Areas

Muzaffarnagar based NGO, Nature Conservators and Department of Zoology & Environmental Science, Gurukula Kangri Vishwavidyalaya, Haridwar have announced a two day National Seminar on 'Relevance of Biosphere Reserve, National Parks & Sanctuaries (Protected Habitats) in Present Context'. It will be held on March 2-3, 2002 at the University campus in Haridwar.

Contact: **Dr. DS Malik**, Dept. of Zoology, Gurukula Kangri University, Haridwar - 249404, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0133-415143. Fax: 415940. Email:

devendrasmalik@rediffmail.com

Dr. SR Verma, Nature Conservators, 1351, South Civil Lines, Circular Rd., Charan Singh Colony, Muzaffarnagar - 251001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0131-401414. Fax: 431039. Email:

nature_conservators@yahoo.com

PA UPDATE MATTERS

Funding support from FES to continue

The Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), Anand, Gujarat, which has supported the production and distribution of the Protected Area Update for the last one year has now agreed to extend the funding for another year starting April 2002.

The team at the PA Update would like to extend its thanks to the FES for its continued support.

Information needed / Back issues available/ Update available on CD

It is constantly are attempt to make the *PA Update* as comprehensive as possible and cover PAs from all parts of the country. Information in terms of reports, newspaper cuttings etc. are most welcome and readers are requested to keep sending us information regularly.

A set of 10 back issues of the *PA Update* (Nos. 20 - 29, April 1999 to February 2001) is now available in a single hardbound volume. It is available for Rs. 150/- (One hundred and fifty only). Please add an additional Rs.20 for postage and handling and Rs. 20 in case of an outstation cheque.

In an effort to reach out to a larger number of people we are now making the entire set of 35 Protected Areas Update available on a CD. Costs and other details are being worked out. If you are interested in receiving one please do get in touch.

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

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

THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN

PREAMBLE

Background

First National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP) was adopted in 1983, based upon the decision taken in the XV meeting of the Indian Board for Wildlife held in 1982. The plan had outlined the strategies and action points for wildlife conservation which are still relevant. In the meanwhile, however, some problems have become more acute and new concerns have become apparent, requiring change in priorities. Increase in commercial uses of natural resources, continued growth of human and livestock populations and change in consumption patterns are causing greater demographic impact. Biodiversity conservation has become a focus of interest. The National Forest Policy has also been formulated in 1988, giving primacy to conservation. Hence this new National Wildlife Action Plan.

Overview

- The term wildlife encompasses all uncultivated flora and undomesticated fauna. Every species has the right to live and every threatened species must be protected to prevent its extinction.
- Water, wilderness and wildlife are irrevocably interlinked. With mounting agricultural, industrial and demographic pressures, wilderness areas which are the richest repositories of wildlife and biodiversity have either shrunk or disappeared. Their continued existence is crucial for the long-term survival of the biodiversity and the ecosystems supporting them.
- Effective ecosystem conservation is the foundation of long-term ecological and economic stability. Natural processes, forests and other wild habitats recharge aquifers, maintain water regimes and moderate the impact of floods, droughts and cyclones. Thereby they ensure food security and regulate climate change. They are also a source of food, fodder, fuel and other products supplementing the sustenance of local communities.
- India ranks sixth among the twelve mega bio-diversity countries of the world. Conservation of bio-diversity is directly linked with conservation of ecosystems and thus with water and food security. These together constitute a major plank of Indian economy.
- National planning has not taken into account the adverse ecological consequences of shrinkage and degradation of wilderness from the pressures of population and commercialisation. As a result, we have witnessed the alarming erosion of our natural heritage which is comprised of rivers, aquifers, forests, grasslands, mountains, wetlands, coastal and marine habitats, arid lands and deserts. This has also affected natural phenomena such as breeding, ranging and migration of wildlife and geomorphological features.
- The increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters, the plummeting fertility of our soils and the accelerated degradation of our fresh water resources have imposed a crippling financial burden on the nation. This underscores the need to realign development priorities to take into account ecological imperatives including the protection of wild species, which sustain and enhance natural habitats, even as they depend on such areas for their survival.
- Rural development for communities inhabiting forest lands and other wilderness regions suffers both from inadequate resources and inappropriate measures. It has failed to address their strong dependence upon natural biomass resources vis-à-vis the shrinking and degrading resource base. Farm productivity has also declined due to lack of proper support, causing impoverishment and enhanced pressures upon natural areas. Resource impoverished communities have therefore begun to place even greater pressure on the biomass of our forests and has led to widespread alienation of people from the goals of nature conservation efforts.
- Habitat loss caused by developmental project such as dams, mines, etc. compound the problems of wildlife conservation.
- The constraining impact of habitat loss has been compounded by illegal trade fueled by a rising demand of wildlife products and their lucrative prices in the international market.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION STRATEGY 2002

(Resolutions passed by the IBWL under the chairmanship of the PM on January 21, 2002)

1. Wildlife and forests shall be declared priority sector at the national level for which funds should be earmarked.
2. Law enforcement agencies must ensure that those engaged in poaching, illicit trade in wildlife and wildlife products, destruction of their habitat, and such other illegal activities are given quick and deterrent punishment.
3. We should fully tap the potential in wildlife tourism and at the same time take care that it does not have adverse impact on wildlife and protected areas. The revenue earned from increased tourism should be used entirely to augment available resources for conservation.
4. Protecting interests of the poor and tribals living around protected areas should be handled with sensitivity and with maximum participation of the affected people. They should have access to the minor forest produce, in the forest outside of national parks and sanctuaries. Employment and means generation for these people is crucial for maintaining symbiosis between the forests, wildlife and the people. People should be encouraged to take up afforestation and conservation in new areas.
5. While strengthening protective measures against traditional threats to wildlife, we should also respond to newer threats such as toxic chemicals and pesticides.
6. There should be greater governmental as well as societal recognition and support for the many non- governmental organisations engaged in wildlife conservation. Mainstream media to better highlight their activities as also successes of governmental initiatives that have worked.
7. Creatively produced Television Programmes on wildlife and ecology are widely appreciated by young and old as seen from the popularity of dedicated T.V. channels like, Discovery, National Geographic and Animal Planet. It is proposed that Prasar Bharati and our private channels alongwith with agencies like WWF for Nature should collaborate and increase original Indian content in different languages on our television.
8. No diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes from critical and ecologically fragile wildlife habitat shall be allowed.
9. Lands falling within 10 km. of the boundaries of National Parks and Sanctuaries should be notified as eco-fragile zones under section 3(v) of the Environment (Protection) Act and Rule 5 Sub-rule 5(viii) & (x) of the Environment (Protection) Rules.
10. Removal of encroachments and illegal activities from within forest lands and Protected Areas.
11. No commercial mono-culture to replace natural forests.
12. The settlement of rights in National Parks and Sanctuaries should not be used to exclude or reduce the areas that are crucial and integral part of the wildlife habitat.
13. More than 2000 vacant posts in the frontline staff of Protected Areas shall be filled immediately and provided basic infrastructure for efficient discharge of duties. Ban on recruitment of staff against vacant post should be lifted on lines with the Police Department. Innovative initiative such as redeployment of surplus employees in other departments, hiring local people on voluntary or honorarium basis, raising donations from business houses and other members of the public in return for a greater role for them in implementing programmes need to be explored.
14. Every protected area should be managed by forest officers trained in wildlife management.
15. Mitigation measures for human-animal conflict and mechanism for crop insurance as also expeditious disbursements of ex-gratia payments, should be instituted by States.
16. Forest Commission should be set-up to look into restructuring, reform and strengthening the entire forest set up and affiliated institutions in the country.
17. A working group shall be constituted to monitor implementation of Wildlife Action Plan.
18. Most importantly let us all resolve that we should end the relative neglect of wildlife conservation in recent years. To begin with Board should meet more often. Wildlife conservation is too important a task to be treated lightly or ritualistically.

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<http://www.indianjungles.com>;

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