

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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EDITORIAL

The Eco-Tourism Juggernaut

From Kerala to Uttaranchal, from Maharashtra to West Bengal, one of the most striking and prominent developments in our protected areas seems to be the coming in, or rather the bringing in, of eco-tourism. Everybody seems to be getting involved, be it the State Tourism Development Corporations, State Forest Development Corporations, State Industrial Development Corporations and the State Forest Departments in addition to the hospitality industry and the private sector. Everybody sees a cake and everybody wants to have a piece of it as well.

This is not the first time that tourism is the subject of the editorial of the *PA Update*. The reason why it is so again is the number of eco-tourism stories in this particular issue. One just gets the overwhelming feeling of a juggernaut, the eco-tourism juggernaut, being on the roll. Particularly so, because almost everything and anything is being passed off as eco-tourism, an excellent sampling of which is offered in this issue.

In Andhra Pradesh the major players for eco-tourism development are going to be the AP Tourism Development Corporation and the AP Forest Development Corporation. The Forest Corporation has been designated as the nodal agency for the implementation of tourism projects in 12 sanctuaries and three zoological parks in the state. Last year, ironically, key wildlife posts in the state fell vacant and some protected areas were left headless because senior officers were transferred to the Forest Corporation to take up eco-tourism projects. In Karnataka, a Rs. 100 crore night safari project with a 300 room luxury 'international resort' in tow is being planned in the Bannerghata National Park with the help of the Singapore Zoological

Gardens. In God's own Country, Kerala, plans are being putting together for opening up of all the 12 sanctuaries for tourism. The Kerala Forest Research Institute meanwhile has initiated a World Bank funded study to assess the capacities of some PAs for eco-tourism activities. In the Sunderbans in West Bengal the Sahara India group is putting together a mammoth Rs. 915 crores tourism project which they too are calling 'eco-tourism'.

In the Andaman islands, the Forest Corporation which is to be shut following recent orders of the Supreme Court is reinventing itself through the eco-tourism route. For the last three decades all that the Corporation has done in the islands is cut trees. Suddenly now, there is also expertise to start and sustain an ecotourism operation.

A few issues ago we had reported of the proposed opening up of the Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve and National Park for tourism and mountaineering activities. While local communities are not allowed to access the park areas for collection of resources for their bonafide needs, the State Forest Minister had promised that they would be allowed jobs as porters and guides when tourism starts.

It is not eco-tourism per se that is the problem and we have said that before. It should be done in way that is ecologically and socially sensitive and based on the consent, participation and even ownership of the local communities among other things. What is worrying, however, is that everyone is conveniently climbing on to this bandwagon to do what they want. There is little debate or even discussion on what eco-tourism is and what it should not be. Yet everyone is doing eco-tourism!

We also seem to have forgotten the very basic purpose of the creation of the protected area network of the country. It has to be conservation, not tourism promotion. It has to be primarily used to ensure the livelihood securities of the local communities and the environmental security of the country, not just as a cash cow that benefits the fortunate few.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Otters threatened in Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary

Increased poaching and habitat destruction has imperiled the existence of otters in the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary along the Godavari-Goutami Rivers in East Godavari district. These are the preliminary findings of an University Grants Commission funded study titled 'Habitat Ecology, conservation and management of otters at Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary', that has been undertaken by Prof

MV Subba Rao of the Dept. of Environmental Sciences in Andhra University.

Major threats include exploitation of the mangroves for fuel, wood, construction material and fodder for cattle and hunting for partial subsistence by the local population. The otters, particularly the young ones are relished by the local population for their meat, and also for their supposed medical value for curing ailments like asthma, TB and jaundice.

The main aim of the study is to establish the status and distribution of otters in the region, habitat evaluation in relation to the floral and faunal composition, breeding ecology and behavioural aspects, sociological status of human impacts, conservation programmes and management strategies.

The Forest Department is already reported to have initiated steps for the conservation of otters and for the afforestation of mangroves in the sanctuary.

Source: 'Otters' habitat faces extinction', *Newstime*, 22/04/02.

Contact: **MV Subba Rao**, Head, Dept. of Environmental Science, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam - 530003, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 0891- 554871 / 290. Fax: 555547

Major thrust to eco-tourism in the state

A major thrust is being provided for the development of eco-tourism in Andhra Pradesh, with two State Government Corporations initiating projects in this direction. The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) and the Andhra Pradesh Forest Development Corporation (APFDC) have both adopted their own strategies and are also likely to work together in select projects.

APTDC has decided to develop eco-tourism in three aspects: natural wonders such as caves and waterfalls; wilderness camping and trekking; and wildlife tourism. The wildlife areas being focussed at, are Farhabad near Srisailem and in the Pulicat and Nelapattu Bird Sanctuaries.

The APFDC has decided to develop tourism jointly with the private sector. The State Government had already issued a Government Order (GO) in 2001 to promote eco-tourism with private sector participation. The APFDC was designated to implement the projects identified in 12 sanctuaries and three zoological parks. They include those at Manjeera, Nelapattu, Pulicat, Kolleru and Coringa Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Source: M Somasekhar. 'State shifts focus to eco-tourism', *Hindu Business Line*, 23/07/02.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

State to initiate various steps for wildlife protection

The Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department (FD) is initiating a number of steps for wildlife protection in the state. The communication network has been improved through installation of Very High Frequency (VHF) sets to strengthen anti-poaching activities and the wildlife headquarters at Itanagar are to be connected with all divisional headquarters by the end of the financial year.

The proposal of the FD for the procurement of arms and ammunition has been approved by the MoEF and a final approval from the Defence Ministry for the same is awaited. Field staff has also been deputed to the Police Training Centre at Banderdewa for training for use of the arms.

Additionally, the FD has formulated a proposal for the creation of a mobile protection force to prevent poaching, trafficking and illegal wildlife trade. It is proposed to set up three mobile protection circles for the entire state - western, eastern and central circles.

Some ecodevelopment schemes are also being contemplated and proposed.

Source: 'Arunachal steps against poachers', *The Sentinel*, 16/06/02.

Contact: **CWLW**, Forest Department, PO Itanagar - 719111, Arunachal Pradesh.

NGO expresses concern over status of Namdapha

Early Birds, an NGO based in Guwahati has recently written a letter to the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh expressing concerns over the status and future of Namdapha National Park.

The issues that they have raised include the shortage of forest staff for the patrolling and protection of the park. They have also pointed out that members of the organisation while participating in the recent tiger census in the park noticed that poisoned food items were being used to poison and kill wild animals along the banks of the Naodihing River. Additionally they also found a number of poisoned arrows and field tripping devices that are allegedly installed by the Lisu tribals here.

The letter also states that the tribals are occupying 25 hectares of pristine land within the park and this needs to be vacated immediately and that the active role of the Indian army should be sought in the protection of this park.

Source: Moloy Baruah. Letter to the CM of Arunachal Pradesh. 31/01/02.

Contact: **Moloy Baruah**, Early Birds, 26, Surujmukhi, PO Silpukhri, Guwahati-

781003, Assam. Tel. 0361-666353. Fax:
550158. Email: baruahm@iocl.co.in
Field Director, Namdapha NP, PO Miao -
792122, Arunachal Pradesh. Tel: 03807-
22249

ASSAM

Sonitpur administration bans Demecron

The Sonitpur district administration has prohibited the sale and purchase of organophosphorous pesticide called Demecron throughout the district with immediate effect. The order was issued in view of a number of cases of death of wild elephants due to the consuming of the pesticide in Nameri National Park in Assam and the adjoining Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh (See *PA Update* 33).

Source: 'Pesticide banned', *The Assam Tribune*,
05/07/02

Assam may have eco-battalions, private forests

The Assam Forest Minister has suggested a number of steps to deal with the fast depleting forest cover of the state and heavy encroachments over the years.

These include a) raising two eco-battalions, one each for lower and upper Assam, with the responsibility to plant trees and regenerate forests; b) coming up with a comprehensive eviction policy and to regenerate the areas cleared from encroachers and c) examine the possibility of leasing out forest lands to private parties to grow trees and sell the timber on payment of royalty to the state government.

The process is at a very nascent stage and the minister is reported to be engaging in consultations regarding these suggestions with NGOs and serving and former forest officials and NGOs.

Source: 'And now, Assam may have pvt. Forests,
eco-battalion', *The Sentinel*, 14/06/02.

River dolphin population declines alarmingly

The 2002 River Dolphin census carried out in Assam by the Dolphin Conservation Society (DCS) with the help of WWF - India has revealed a decline in their numbers. 198 dolphins were recorded in the Brahmaputra river, with 89 adults, 60 adolescents and 49 calves. The previous census in 1997 had counted 218 dolphins. In the Kulsi river there were 25 dolphins in 1993 but the number has now fallen to only 11.

The fall in the numbers of the dolphin has been mainly attributed to large-scale poaching for its oil and accidental killings through entanglement in under-water gill nets. Dolphin oil has several uses, the most important being its use as fish bait. Habitat

loss and large scale silt deposition due to erosion in the upper reaches of the rivers also adversely affect the dolphins, as does large scale fishing.

Fear has also been expressed that the large scale dam construction proposals on the rivers in the North East will badly impact dolphin populations by population fragmentation and obstruction in the main drainage channels of the rivers.

In the River Kulsi river bed sand extraction was one of the major causes and the DCS has appealed to the state government to declare a 'Dolphin Sanctuary' here. It has also been suggested that a 'Project Dolphin' needs to be started on the lines of 'Project Tiger' to ensure the protection of these endangered creatures.

Source: 'Dolphin population declining alarmingly',
The Assam Tribune, 22/04/02.

Contact: **Sujit Bairagi**, Dolphin Conservation
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Kaziranga to seek Project Tiger status

The Director of the Kaziranga National Park (KNP), Mr. NK Vasu has said that Project Tiger status has been sought for the park. The park has the highest density of tigers in the country at 16.8 tigers per 100 sq. kms. The total number of tigers in Kaziranga excluding cubs is said to be 85. If cubs are also included the density is much higher at 22.4 tigers per 100 sq. kms.

It is hoped that once KNP is included into Project Tiger it would help in greater fund flows, besides boosting tourism.

The tourist arrivals to KNP have in any case been high this year, with 45,000 domestic and 2000 foreign tourists arriving here till March 2002. Till that date the park had already earned Rs. 33.12 lakhs from tourists which is much higher than Rs. 32 lakhs earned in the previous season.

Source: PP Singh. 'Kaziranga park roars with tigers',
The Times of India, 29/04/02.

Barun Das Gupta. 'More tigers in Kaziranga
Park' *The Hindu*, 16/06/02.

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

Rumble strips on NH 37 to protect animals fleeing from Kaziranga

The Central Government is reported to have allowed rumble strips on National Highway (NH) 37 to regulate speed of traffic and protect animals from the

Kaziranga National Park (KNP) being killed by speeding vehicles.

NH 37 runs along the southern boundary of the national park and cuts important corridors between the park and its extensions in the foothills of the Karbi Anglong hills. This becomes particularly important in the monsoons, when flooding of the low lying regions of the park forces animals to cross NH 37 in search of higher ground.

This year too a large number of animals including a tigress, a leopard and several deer have been killed by speeding vehicles while crossing the highway.

Through a recent notification, the Central Government has directed the state Public Works Department (PWD) to ensure 15-20 strips - to be marked with thermoplastic paint- on suitable locations on the highway near Kaziranga. This would be supplemented with limiting the speed to 20 kmph in the section and with cautioning signboards in adequate numbers.

Wildlife experts have suggested the installation of the rumble strips in three places - the eight km Burhapahar - Kanchanjuri corridor, the two km Haldibari corridor and the four km Panbari corridor.

Source: 'KNP animals slowly migrating before floods, speed limit clamped;', *The Sentinel*, 20/06/02.

Shankhadeep Choudhury. 'Rumble strips to check animal killings in Kaziranga park', *The Times of India*, 17/07/02.

Prabin Kalita. 'Floods driving animals to death under wheels', *Hindustan Times*, 26/07/02.

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga NP, see above.

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

Proposal to scrap Deepor Beel Sanctuary dropped

The Assam Forest Department recently issued a notification (dated May 29, 2002) to scrap the 1989 draft notification declaring Deepor Beel as a wildlife sanctuary. The justification for this was the fact that a large number of people who were dependant on the Beel for their survival were opposed to the sanctuary.

The May 2002 notification was prompted by a January 1994 report of the Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup, who in his capacity as the District Collector had examined the prevailing condition in and around the wetland. He had concluded that the sanctuary would affect the 400 fishermen families who live in and around the beel and that their livelihoods could not be summarily

done away with without making alternative arrangements.

The notification for scrapping of the sanctuary, however evoked strong responses from other sections including a large number of environmental and wildlife groups in the state. These included Aaranyak, Nature's Beckon, Assam Science, Technology and Environment Council (ASTECC) and Nature's Bonyapran. Taking cognizance of these protests the State Forest Minister has said that the status quo regarding Deepor Beel will be maintained for the time being and there was a need for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to resolve the matter. The Kamrup Deputy Commissioner, Absar Hazarika has now been entrusted the job of preparing a feasibility study for declaring the Deepor Beel as a wildlife sanctuary.

Source: 'Deepor Beel proposal dropped', *The Assam Tribune*, 30/07/02.

'Govt. for status quo on Deepor Beel', *The Assam Tribune*, 05/08/02.

Contact: **Aaranyak**, Ever Green, Samanwoy Path, Survey Beltola, Guwahati – 781028. Tel: 0361-228418 / 222976. Fax: 266087. Email: firozahmed@onlysmart.com; bibhab1@sancharnet.in

Prof. PC Bhattacharjee Dept. of Zoology, Gauhati University, Guwahati – 781014, Assam. Tel: 0361-636768. Fax: 570133. Email: bhattapc@sancharnet.in

Elephant survey conducted in Assam

A recent survey conducted by the Assam Forest Department has put the total population of elephants in the state at 5246. This includes 1048 elephants in Kaziranga, 500 in Manas, 113 in Nameri, 324 in Dibru-Saikhowa, 156 in Sonai-Rupai and 220 in East Karbi Anglong.

The survey that was conducted in all the forest divisions and protected areas in the state was completed in seven days.

Source: 'Elephant population goes up', *The Assam Tribune*, 08/08/02.

Central funds for Gibbon WLS

The Central Government has recently approved a five year plan submitted by the Assam Forest Department (FD) for the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary. The plan includes infrastructural development like construction of internal roads, facilities for tourists and 'beautification of the sanctuary'.

The Rajya Sabha MP from the region Mr. BK Handique is also contributing funds from the MP's fund.

Source: 'Central Govt. Funds Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary', *Sentinel*, 08/05/02.

Elephant and cattle treatment camp at Orang, Laokhowa, Sona Rupai and Nameri

The NGO, Early Birds (EB) organised an elephant and cattle treatment camp at Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park from June 16-18. All the 19 departmental elephants were examined thoroughly and FMD vaccines were administered to them. Domestic cattle from nearby villages of Nalbari and Bezimari were also treated and given FMD vaccines for the first time.

A similar pre-flood and vaccination camp for cattle was held around Laokhowa WLS on July 6 and 7, and between July 13 and 15 around the Sonai Rupai WLS and the Nameri National Park.

The work is being done as part of a grant received by EB from the US Fish and Wildlife Services for the purpose.

Source: Moloy Baruah. Emails to Kalpavriksh dated 20/06/02, 17/07/02 & 18/07/02.

Contact: **Moloy Baruah**, Early Birds, see above

Meeting held on bio-diversity conservation in Assam

A three day meeting from April 26 to 28, 2002 was organised in Bedeti, Sonitpur to discuss issues of forests and bio-diversity conservation in Assam in general and the Behali Reserved Forest in particular. The meeting was organised by the NGO, Nature's Bonyapran.

A resolution was also passed at the end of the meeting that called for the protection of the Behali Reserved Forest as it was an important wildlife habitat and also part of the proposed Kameng Sonitpur Interstate Elephant Reserve.

Contact: **RP Sharma**, Nature's Bonyapran, Gauhati High Court, Guwahati - 781001, Assam.

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

GUJARAT

Flash floods kill 105 blackbuck in Velavadar

A rare monsoon flood in and around Bhavnagar's Velavadar National Park killed at least 105 blackbuck in the first week of July. The animals were found trapped in a low lying area outside the park under water six to seven feet high. A rising water level after heavy rains had forced officials of the

nearby Kalubha and Maleshiri dams to open the emergency floodgates.

Officials clarified that the park authorities were not prepared with a contingency plan, as flooding of this kind was a rare occurrence in the region.

Source: '105 blackbucks die trapped after heavy rain in Bhavnagar', *Indian Express*, 03/07/02.

Contact: **Bharat Pathak**, CF (Wildlife) Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/ 630051. Fax: 632900

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

KARNATAKA

Night safari proposed in Bannerghata

The Karnataka State Cabinet is reported to have agreed to a proposal to start a night safari in the Bannerghata National Park. A team of officials from the Singapore Zoological Gardens, led by its Chief Executive Officer, Bernard Harrison, recently made a presentation to the State Tourism Minister in this regard. The project would take about two years to come up from the time of clearance, would need about 50 acres of land and would be run on corporate lines.

It is estimated to cost Rs. 100 crores, with the Centre and the State having a stake of Rs. 25 crore each and rest to be borne by a joint venture. The project would include a 300 room international resort which would cost about Rs. 50 crores. The Tourism Minister has sought a detailed project report on the proposal.

The proposal for the night safari is one among many others cleared by the state in an attempt to promote tourism in the state. These include Palace-on-wheels, development of Badami, Pattadakal and Aihole, improving Brindavan Gardens, Jog falls and other historical sites. All these proposals are part of a Rs. 126 crores investment package approved by the State Cabinet for the promotion of tourism.

Source: 'State plans to invest Rs. 126 cr. In tourism', *The Hindu*, 19/04/02.

'Night safari proposed in Bannerghata', *The Hindu*, 03/05/02.

Journalists arrested for trespassing in Nagarhole

The DCF Forests, Mr. Annaiah, incharge of the Nagarhole National Park recently arrested two journalists and their car driver for trespassing into the core area of the Nagarhole National Park. The incident occurred on the 29th of April.

Even residents of the area including Tourism resort owners came out in support of the action taken by Mr. Annaiah, who has a reputation for strictly following the rules.

Source: 'Arrest of scribes: villagers support forest official', *The Hindu*, 02/05/02

Eco-development project in Nagarhole to be extended by a year

The World Bank Team that made a three day visit starting May 17, to the Nagarhole (Rajiv Gandhi) National Park has indicated that the World Bank sponsored 'Eco-Development Program' may be extended for another year. The team reviewed the progress of the Eco-Development program and is reported to have expressed its overall satisfaction with its implementation.

Of the Rs. 39.49 crores that had been earmarked under various heads, a sum of Rs. 23.93 crores had been spent till January 2002. Rs. 13.15 crores has been spent on Improved Protected Area Management (IPAM), Rs. 9.74 crores were spent on the Village. Eco-Development Plan (VEDP), Rs. 60.12 lakhs on environment education and awareness programme (EEAP), Rs. 33.36 lakhs on Impact Monitoring and Research (IM&R), and Rs. 10.62 lakhs on information technology (IT).

The project was started in 1997-98, by the end of which Rs. 59.99 lakhs had been spent. Rs. 3.77 crores were spent in 98-99, Rs. 7.1 crores in 99-2000, Rs. 7.25 crores in 2000-01 and Rs. 5.19 crores in 2001-02 (upto January 2002)

Under the IPAM, 155 tribal families were rehabilitated at Veeranahosalli in Hunsur taluka and each family was provided with two hectares of agricultural land, a house, electricity, water, seeds, fertilisers and facilities for the education of children. Under the VEDP, 78 villages were identified where selected NGOs were entrusted with the job of apprising villages of the eco-development plan, following which eco-development committees were established in the villages.

Source: K Jeevan Chinnappa. 'More time sought to complete Eco-Development Project', *The Hindu*, 03/05/02.

'WB may extend eco-project in Nagarhole park', *The Hindu*, 01/06/02.

Contact: **DCF (WL), Hunsur**, Forest Department, Hunsur PO, Mysore - 571 105, Karnataka

Fishermen prevented from fishing in Bhadra

The Bhadra Fishermen Co-operative Association has alleged that officials of the Forest Department were not allowing their members from fishing in the Bhadra reservoir. 50 members of the association are

reported to have obtained licenses from the Fisheries Department, and they have said that the FD is harassing them and has filed 'false' cases against them saying that they had indulged in smuggling of sandalwood from the forests.

Source: 'Fishermen complain against forest officials', *The Hindu*, 20/05/02.

Plan to control wild elephant menace

The State Forest Minister, Mr. KH Ranganath recently stated in the legislative assembly that the State government is planning a series of measures to deal with the increasing menace of wild elephants that is resulting in an increasing loss of human lives and destruction of property.

The suggestions include raising jackfruit and banana plantations in and around wild elephant habitats to dissuade the animals from coming into villages. 200 watchers and 100 guards are also to be recruited to assist forest officials in patrolling. He said that rules would be amended to relax fitness and age clauses to facilitate the recruitment of tribals who had a good idea of elephant behaviour. Installation of solar fences was also being considered and the Minister suggested that the farmers, rather than the Forest Department could install these fences and the government would grant a subsidy for this.

It has been reported that 31 people have died and 21 were injured in Kodagu alone in elephant attacks in the last six years. Over 50 elephants and nine calves too have died in Virajpet division due to various reasons like gun shots, poisoning and electrocution. A recent survey of people in the region has revealed that inspite of the elephant menace, people largely believed that the animals had a right to exist. Most people believed that non availability of fodder in the forests and a preference for crops were the main reasons for crop raiding. Elephant capture, taming and elephant proof trenches were suggested as the most suitable methods to reduce the conflict and 19 % of those surveyed had even suggested culling as a solution.

As far as solar powered fences were concerned, it was found that pressure from local people requiring access to forests for fuelwood and grazing cattle was responsible for its failure and there was also concern expressed over the sub-standard solar fencing that had been erected by the FD.

Source: Jeevan Chinnappa. 'Elephant menace: Who is to blame?', *The Hindu*, 09/07/02

'Elephant menace: Plan to install fences', *The Hindu*, 19/07/02

Contact: **Deputy Director**, Bandipur National Park, Gundlupet, Chamrajnagar 571 111, Karnataka

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Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore
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Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala,
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KERALA

Tourism Dept. invites bids to develop sanctuaries for eco-friendly tourism

In an advertisement in national newspapers, the Kerala Departments of Tourism and Forests had invited prequalification bids from consultants having experience and expertise in preparing ecotourism and wildlife master plans, particularly for the twelve wildlife sanctuaries in the state.

The deadline for sending in these bids was July 10, 2002, following which the short listed consultants were to be sent detailed tender documents. Further details are not known.

In addition the Tourism Department has also issued notices for the development of tourism master plans for Thrissur District and the hill station of Ponmudi.

Earlier, a workshop on 'Development Of Ecofriendly Practices In Tourism Industry In Kerala' had been organised by the Tourism Department on 19th April 2002 at Thiruvananthapuram. The various ideas that emerged during the workshop have been compiled and published on the web (in the home page of official website of Kerala Tourism www.keralatourism.org) under the heading 'Ecofriendly practices in Tourism Industry in Kerala' The Department intends to put together a "Practical Ready Reckoner", which will benefit tourism industry as a whole.

Contact: **Director**, Department of Tourism, Park View, Thiruvananthapuram - 695033, Kerala. Tel: 0471 - 326812. Fax: 322279

KFRI to study possibilities for eco-tourism in protected areas in state

The Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) has embarked on a World Bank funded study aimed at selectively opening some wildlife sanctuaries in the state for tourism. The study is focusing on visitor management strategies and priorities for Ervikulam National Park in Munnar, and Parambikulam and Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuaries in Palakkad and Thiruvananthapuram respectively.

Further details of the study are not available.

Source: CJ Punnathara. 'Eco-tourism set to take root in Kerala', *Hindu Business Line*, 18/06/02.

Contact: **KFRI**, Peechi – 680653, Kerala. Tel: 0487 – 282365 / 884 /037/ 061-4. Fax: 282249. Email: libkfri@md2.vsnl.net.in

MADHYA PRADESH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MAHARASHTRA

Tiger population declines in state

The 2001 census in Maharashtra has reported a decline in the tiger population in the state. 238 tigers were counted this time as against 276 in 1993 and

257 in 1997. 15 of the 31 protected areas in the state reported tiger populations. Of these Melghat Tiger Reserve has 70 - 75 tigers, Tadoba Andhari, 36-40 and Pench 12-15.

Significantly more than half the tigers (total number 155) in the state have been reported from outside protected areas.

Source: 'Tiger population in state declines', *Free Press Journal*, 01/04/02

State to set up 'Forest Courts'

The Maharashtra Forest Department has proposed the setting up of special forest courts in Nagpur and Thane for conducting a more efficient and speedy trial of forest offences. There are presently more than 7000 forest related cases pending before the courts and more than two lakh cases before the forest officials empowered with quasi-judicial powers. Forest officials say that these special courts will help in the quick disposal of the pending cases and further help curb violations of the Indian Forest Act, the Forest Conservation Act and the Wildlife Protection Act.

If the proposal comes through, Maharashtra will be the first state in the country to have such special 'forest courts'.

Source: 'Forest crimes need special courts: dept.', *Indian Express*, 20/04/02.
Prafulla Marpakwar. 'Govt. to set up forest courts', *Indian Express*, 24/07/02.

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

MEGHALAYA

Balpakhrum NP to be remeasured

The Government of Meghalaya has asked the Survey of India to re-measure the area of the Balpakhrum National Park to lay to rest the controversy over the exact size of the park.

A massive scandal had broken out in the state in 1995 after the State Forest Department survey by the then Chief Wildlife Warden, Mr. SB Singh revealed during a routine check that the area of the park was 50% short of what was officially recorded. Since the land was acquired at a rate of Rs. 60 lakhs / sq. km, the amount of money that may have been fraudulently paid for non existent land ran into a few crores.

The state government has finally given the go ahead to the Forest Department which in turn has approached the Survey of India (SI). However the

FD has said that the price of Rs. 25 lakhs that was quoted by the SI to do the survey was too steep

According to the latest information however, the State Government has decided to provide the required amount for the resurvey. The Survey Of India would now start the work after the monsoons are over and on receipt of the funds from the State Govt.

Source: 'Govt. orders Resurvey', *Grassroots Options*, Spring 2002

Contact: **TTC Marak, CF (WL)**, Forest
Department, Lower Lachumiere, Shillong -
793001, Meghalaya. Email:
tonymarak@yahoo.com

MIZORAM

Two new bird sanctuaries to be set up at Reiek Mountain and Tamdil Forest

The Mizoram Forest Department (FD) has proposed to set up two new bird sanctuaries at Reiek Mountain and the Tamdil Forests. The two sites are located at 1485 m and about 1000 m above sea level respectively and are home to many endangered species of birds and 10 species of wild animals.

The State FD has completed the survey of the two areas and is now planning a project to plant fruit bearing trees in these two areas.

Source: '2 bird havens to be set up in Mizoram', *The Assam Tribune*, 06/07/02.

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

ORISSA

Ramsar award for Chilka

The Chilka Development Authority (CDA) has been selected for the Ramsar Wetland Conservation Award for 2002 for its outstanding achievements in restoration and wise use of wetlands as well as the impressive way in which local communities have been included in the these activities.

The award, that has been constituted by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is to be presented at the Conference of Parties (COP) to be held in Valencia, Spain, in November later this year.

There are two other winners of this award for 2002. One is a consortium of NGOs working in the Morava Dyle Floodplain Transboundary region in Europe. The other is an Australian company, for its outstanding achievement in restoration and wise use of wetlands on its own property, public awareness and the sponsorship of wetland conservation in Australia and also other countries.

Source: 'Ramsar award for Chilka', *The Hindu*, 23/06/02

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

Defence units, off-shore oil projects to affect sea turtle nesting on Orissa coast

Bright illumination by the DRDO's missile test range on the Wheeler island close to the Gahirmatha beach is said to be one of the major factors for the Olive Ridley Turtles skipping the annual mass nesting this year.

New threats include the off shore oil projects that are coming up here. One of the seven offshore blocks in the coastal Orissa and Bengal basin bagged by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Limited (OIL) under the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) falls right along the path usually taken by Olive Ridley Turtles to reach the nesting sites at Gahirmatha (See *PA Update 25*).

Once exploration and production of gas starts, the turtles would be increasingly exposed to the danger of an oil slick and flaring, apart from the noise emanating from routine oil and gas exploration activities. It is also feared that the normal use of high tech gadgets and the continued presence of human beings in the region would have an additional adverse impact on the turtles.

Source: 'Defence units a threat to Olive Ridleys', *Statesman*, 10/06/02.
Prasanta Kaul. 'Olive ridley turtles face danger from offshore oil projects', *Deccan Herald*, 02/04/02.

Khariar Forests, adjacent to Sunabeda surveyed

The NGO, Wild Orissa recently surveyed the Khariar forests adjoining the Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary as part of their attempt to get the area declared a Tiger Reserve. The five day survey found that the forests here were in very good shape and supported a large diversity of wild fauna, prompting the suggestion that these forests too should be included under Project Tiger along with Sunabeda.

It was also found that these forests were linked to the forests of the Udanti and Sitanadi Wildlife Sanctuaries and there was proof that the highly endangered wild buffalo from these two PAs were also frequenting the Khariar forests.

Source: Basanta Kumar Kar. Email to Kalpavriksh dated 06/08/02.

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

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

RAJASTHAN

Census reports 70 tigers in Rajasthan

The latest census of wild animals in protected areas in Rajasthan has reported a total of 70 tigers, an increase of about half a dozen animals in the last three years.

30-35 tigers were reported in Ranthambore, while the count for Sariska was 24-26. Five to six tigers were counted in the Kailadevi sanctuary in Karauli district and two in the Sawai Man Singh Sanctuary in Sawaimadhopur district.

Source: 'Wildlife census reports 70 tigers', *Indian Express*, 05/07/02

Ranthambore villages to move out of park

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

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

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

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

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

Contact: **GV Reddy**, DCF and Dy. Field Director (Core Area), Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Sawai Madhopur - 322 001, Rajasthan.

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

TAMIL NADU

11 new PAs proposed in Tamil Nadu

The Tamil Nadu Forest Minister, P Mohan recently announced in the state assembly that there was a proposal for the creation of 11 new protected areas. Though full details are not available, the areas that are proposed include those at Krishnapuram in Villupuram district, Sujalkuttai at Bhavanisagar (Erode), Meghmalai (Theni) and the Suchindram Teroor Bird Sanctuary.

Source: '11 more wildlife, bird sanctuaries', *The Hindu*, 30/04/02.

Traditional crops of tribals from Anaimalai going extinct

The Wildlife Warden of the Indira Gandhi (Anaimalai) Wildlife Sanctuary has reported that some of the traditional crops grown by the tribal communities who live in the forests of the sanctuary are going extinct, particularly in the plains.

The forests here are home to about 5000 tribals belonging to six groups; the Malasar, Malai Malasar, Kadar, Muduvar, Ervallars and Pulayar. These crops that are cultivated under rain fed conditions and without the use of chemicals include rice, ragi, samai, seed amaranth, *thenai*, *kudiravali*, *avarai*, *poosani* and *manathakkali*,

The Wildlife Warden has suggested that there was the need for the documentation of the traditional knowledge and the wisdom of the tribals.

Source: 'Tribal crops of Anaimalai plains becoming extinct', *The New Indian Express*, 04/06/02.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden, Indira Gandhi WLS** 178, Fisheries Dept. Road, Govt. Timber Depot, Pollachi 642 001, Tamil Nadu.

Tribals help curb poaching in Indira Gandhi (Anaimalai) WLS

The involvement of the local tribals in the anti-poaching squads has helped bring down the incidence of poaching and felling in the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary (IGWLS). Anti-poaching camps have been set up at 19 vulnerable

locations in the sanctuary. Each camp is manned by a forester, four forest guards and an equal number of tribal watchers.

The involvement of the tribals in the operations has reported to have yielded double benefits: the jobless tribal youth have been weaned away from felling and poaching, and have also been profitably employed.

Recent incidents have however pointed to the necessity to strength these camps. Threats from poachers need to be dealt with and recently one of temporary camps was destroyed by elephants. The FD is also planning to increase the number of the anti-poaching camps so that at least one person from each of the 36 settlements will get employment. There is also a proposal for the setting up of mobile anti-poaching camps.

The tribal watchers too have some complaints. This includes the fact that there was no increase in pay even three years after their induction, and the need for more schools in addition to the one at Top Slip, so that children have easy access to school and do have to miss classes, like is presently happening.

Source: P Oppili. 'Tribals help to curb poaching in Indira Gandhi Sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 30/06/02.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary, see above

Nilgiri Tahr population rises in Indira Gandhi WLS

The population of the Nilgiri Tahr, the state animal of Tamil Nadu has registered a 15 % growth in the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary in the Anaimalai forests. A recent census counted 507 animals this year as against 441 last year.

At the IGWLS, 50 potential tahr habitats have been identified and the IGWLS and the neighbouring Ervikulam National Park in Kerala form the most significant conservation unit for this animal.

Source: VS Palaniappan. 'Rise in Nilgiris Tahr population', *The Hindu*. 01/04/02.

Kani tribals prove successful forest watchers in Kalakad-Mundanthurai

According to the officials of the Forest Department (FD), the Kani tribals who were employed as forest watchers in the forests of Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts including the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) are doing a very good job of forest protection. Some of these individuals were appointed way back in 1992 and

1994. Presently there are 34 of them employed in KMTR.

The FD had in fact, relaxed minimum qualifications, both educational and physical, when they were appointed in the early 90s. The tribals have benefitted because they now all earn in the range of Rs. 4000 per month and have been able to educate their children as well. Their intimate knowledge of the forest area and skills have made them an asset for the FD.

The job of the forest watcher is to assist the forest guard, and a team of one guard and one watcher is given a beat of a minimum of 5000 hectares for patrolling. The guard is armed with a 0.315 rifle and a walkie-talkie.

Source: Gladwin Emmanuel. 'Kaani tribals prove their mettle as forest watchers', *The New Indian Express*, 19/06/02.

Heat affecting coral reefs in Gulf of Mannar

A four-year study undertaken by the Madurai Kamaraj University has found that the Coral reefs in the Gulf of Mannar have been adversely impacted because of the heat wave sweeping across the southern parts of the country and El-Nino southern oscillation. Normally corals here lose their colour during April and May but this year the phenomenon was reported in March and continued till June, when 80% of the corals were reported to have got bleached.

Source: 'Heat affecting coral reefs in Gulf of Mannar: Study', *The Times of India*, 20/07/02

Contact: **Dr. AK Kumaraguru**, Professor & Head, School of Energy, Environment & Natural Resources, Kamaraj University, Madurai - 625021, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0452-859080 (O), 0452-661199. Fax: 0452-858261. Email: akkguru@pronet.net.in

Proposal to declare the Pallikaranai marsh a 'protected wetland'

The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) has decided to approach the Central Government to declare the Pallikaranai marsh located near Chennai, as a 'protected wetland'. A local NGO, Care Earth has recently conducted a base line study of the marsh, the findings of which were released recently.

The marsh is reported to be home to 61 naturally occurring species of plants, 46 species of fish, 106 species of birds, 21 species of reptiles and seven species of butterflies. However indiscriminate dumping of garbage on the adjacent Perungudi landfill and letting out of untreated garbage into the

marsh have threatened the system. The marsh that was once spread out over an area of 40 sq. kms has now been reduced to a shallow water body choked by grass, reed and sedges. It has been greatly affected by organic waste disposal and contamination, indicated by high levels of chlorine, sulphates and even mercury.

The report has suggested that the marsh be trifurcated into a critical zone, a sensitive zone and a controlled zone. While the first two zones should be completely cordoned off to prevent any further damage, eco-restoration could be taken up extensively in the controlled zone. At a recent meeting attended by the Chennai Corporation, Metrowater, the Forest Department, Onyx (a private company involved in conservancy operations in the city) and the TNPCB, a decision was taken to stop all activities detrimental to the lake.

Source: 'Move to make Pallikaranai marsh 'protected wetland'', *The Hindu*, 16/07/02

Contact: **Chairperson**, TNPCB, Anna Salai, Opp. TN Dr. MGR Medical University, Guindy, Chennai - 600025, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044-2353076. E-mail: tnpcb_chairperson@lycos.com.

Proposal to declare Kattupalli island an 'environmental heritage site'

A proposal for preserving the Kattupalli island as an 'Environmental Heritage site' has been forwarded by the Ennore Pulicat Environment Protection Forum (EPEPF) to the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB).

A recent study has pointed out that the vegetation here is a rare combination of diverse types with about 290 species of plants belonging to 210 genera and 82 families of angiosperms, one pteridophyte and nine aquatic algae. Additionally the island is also rich in fauna and olive ridley turtles are reported to nest on the beach here.

It would be recollected that there was proposal to develop this island into a Petroproducts Park, but fortunately the plan was shelved (see *PA Update* 24)

Source: Akila Dinkar. 'Proposal to preserve Kattupalli as environment heritage', *The Hindu*, 25/07/02.

Contact: **Dr. P. J. Sanjeeva Raj** 17/1724, 21st Main Road, Anna Nagar, Chennai - 600 040, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044-618 5188. Email: sanji_15@hotmail.com

WEST BENGAL

Naxalites oppose sanctuary in Mayurjharna

Naxalites operating in South Bengal are against the Forest Department move of declaring the forests of Mayurjharna as an elephant sanctuary. The ruling party in the state, too has asked the FD not to go ahead with the notification, as they fear the issue will be turned into a political one.

The Wildlife Advisory Board of the state which met recently is reported to have suggested going ahead with an alternative, 'intensive habitat management' program here.

Source: 'Naxalite hurdle to elephant haven', *The Telegraph*, 17/03/02.

Sahara tourism project in Sunderbans to start soon

The Rs. 915 crore tourism project of the Sahara India Group in the Sunderbans is expected to be started soon. The land surveys for these are reported to have been completed and the company is expecting to receive all the necessary clearances from the state government very soon. The project is expected to be commissioned by the end of 2005.

The project is being carried out by a Sahara group company called Sahara India Commercial Corporation Ltd and the West Bengal State government is expected to take up a token equity participation through the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation.

The proposal here is to develop the Sunderbans into a major tourist hub with floating vessels and world class facilities. It is also proposed that different types of vessels with five-star facilities will ferry the tourists to and from Kolkota. A new jetty on the Hooghly River is also to be constructed as a part of this project. (Also see *PA Updates* 33 and 30)

In response to this news item, sources in the West Bengal Forest Department have issued the following clarifications: 'The news report is wrong. Sahara India is trying to develop a private eco-tourism project in non-forest areas of Sunderbans. There is no question of allowing unsustainable tourism project in Tiger Project area or Sunderban mangrove forests. Forest Conservation Act and Supreme Court's order are quite rigorous in this respect. They will require clearances from Environment Dept also erg CRZ regulations. The project is still in the discussion stage.

Source: Kohinoor Mandal. 'Sahara expects Sunderbans project to be cleared soon', *Hindu Business Line*, 13/06/02.

Ramsar tag sought for Sunderbans

A proposal is being put forward by the State Forest Department (FD) to declare the mangroves of Sunderbans Tiger Reserve (STR), a Ramsar site. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands lists high priority conservation zones in countries which are its signatories. India has been a member since 1971 and presently has 8 sites listed under the convention.

The Bangladesh Sunderbans were recently declared a Ramsar site (see *PA Update* 32) and the officials are hoping that as a result of this, it should not be difficult for Indian Sunderbans to be so declared as well.

Source: 'Ramsar tag sought for Sunderbans', *Telegraph*, 02/06/02.

Contact: **Field Director**, Sunderbans Tiger Reserve, PO Canning, Dist. South 24 Parganas 743329, West Bengal

US \$ 25 million trust proposed for Sunderbans

The regional advisor to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Dr. MS Swaminathan has suggested the creation of a Centre for Eco-entrepreneurship for economic development of the masses in the Sunderbans area. He has suggested the formation of a trust with US \$ 25 million for providing seed money for eco-jobs. The suggestions were made during a workshop titled, 'Sunderbans: Dimensions and Strategies' that had been organised in Kolkata in April 2002 by Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS).

The meeting was also attended by the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, Forest Minister, Mr. Jogesh Burman. It has also been reported that a new department for the area has been created in the state government, with Mr. Kanti Ganguly being appointed as the Minister for Sunderbans development.

Source: '\$ 25m trust planned to fund eco-jobs' *Statesman*, 22/04/02.

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

SC appoints Central Empowered Committee to deal with forest cases

The Supreme Court has through its order dated May 9, 2002 constituted a Central Empowered Committee

(CEC) to look into issues of forests in the context of two ongoing writ petitions. These are the Writ Petitions (Civil) Nos. 202 of 1995 and 171 of 1996.

The Committee that was constituted by the MoEF on June 3, 2002 has the following members: Sri PV Jayakrishnan (presently Secretary, MoEF), Sri NK Joshi (presently Addl. Director General of Forests), Sri Valmik Thapar (Ranthambhore Foundation), and Sri Mahendra Vyas (Supreme Court Advocate). Sri MK Jiwrajka, presently Inspector General of Forests, MoEF, is the Member Secretary of the Committee.

Anyone having any grievance against any steps taken by the government or any other authority in purported compliance with orders passed by the SC will be at liberty to move the Committee for seeking suitable relief. The Committee has the authority to dispose off any application in conformity with orders passed by the court.

Source: Notification issued by the MoEF dated 03/06/02.

Contact: **MK Jiwrajka**, Member Secretary, Central Empowered Committee, Room No. 106, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110003. Tel: 011-4361297

ZSI project on 'endangered species' fails to take off

An ambitious project of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) to assess the status of a number of threatened and endangered species from across the country has failed to achieve the targets that had been initially set.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) had in 1987, directed the ZSI to conduct a survey to find out the status of 77 species of mammals, 46 of birds, 15 of reptiles, three of amphibians and a large number of invertebrates that were reported to be endangered. The ZSI has however initiated the survey with regard to only 11 mammal species and even this truncated programme remains incomplete. The survey of just eight mammals has been completed. These details were pointed out in a report submitted recently to the parliament by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India.

In addition the CAG has also pulled up the ZSI for being way behind schedule in terms of survey of various ecosystems in the country for their faunal resources. The ZSI was to have surveyed 12 areas by 1993. These included the tropical rainforests in the Western Ghats and North Eastern States, the Himalayan Ecosystem in Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh; the desert ecosystems in Rajasthan, Gujarat

and Ladakh and the marine island systems in Lakshadweep and the Andaman & Nicobar islands.

An additional 17 areas were to have been surveyed by 1996. These included the biosphere reserves in the Nilgiris and Nandadevi; the wetlands of Asthamudi (Kerala), Ujni (Maharashtra), Osman Sagar (Andhra Pradesh), Dal & Wullar (J&K), Gobind Sagar (Punjab), Loktak (Manipur) and estuarine and brackish water systems in the Krishna - Godavari delta in Andhra Pradesh, Chilka, Mahanadi Delta and Rushikulya in Orissa, Sunderbans & Hooghly- Malta in West Bengal and the mangroves of the Sundarbans and in the Andamans.

However the survey has been completed in only three areas - Sikkim, Rajasthan, and Lakshadweep in the first block and only five - Ashtamudi, Ujni, Osman Sagar, Hooghly-Malta and Mahanadi Delta in the second.

Source: P Sunderarajan. 'Project on 'endangered species' yet to take off, *The Hindu*, 12/04/02

KIOCL surveying new sites for mining

The Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited (KIOCL) is now surveying new sites for mining. Chairman, Mr Murari recently issued a statement saying that the survey of sites was being carried out in Jharkhand, Orissa and Tumkur and Bellary in Karnataka

Source: 'Kudremukh surveying new sites for mining', *Canara Times*, 08/06/02.

Contact: **S Murari**, Chairman, KIOCL, 2nd Block, Koramangala, Sarjapur Road, Bangalore-560034, Karnataka. Tel: 080-5531322 Fax: 5521584

New National Committee on Ecotourism and Mountains formed

A new National Committee on Ecotourism and Mountains that is chaired by the Central Minister for Tourism has been recently formed. There are 42 members in this committee which had its first meeting in May, earlier this year. There are 12 special invitees to this official dominated committee that also has representatives of industry, the Indian Mountaineering Federation and the Himalayan Environment Trust.

The first meeting of the Committee was attended by Chief Secretaries of Uttaranchal, Goa, Sikkim and the Andaman and Nicobar islands. One of the main tasks of this committee is to create a five year rolling plan for ecotourism and conducting a periodical action audit and review.

Source: 'Ecotourism funds linked to action', *The Times of India*, 11/05/02.

UPCOMING

XII World Forestry Congress

The XII World Forestry Congress, organised under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organisation is to be held in Quebec, Canada from September 21-28, 2003. The program for the Congress covers three broad areas: a) Forests for people; b) Forests for the planet and c) People and forests in harmony.

Contact: Secretariat, 2003 World Forestry Congress, 800 Place d'Youville, 18th Floor, Quebec, Canada G1R3P4. Tel: (418) 6942424. Fax: (418) 6949922. Email: sec-gen@wfc2003.org. Website: www.wfc2003.org

International Conference on Sustainable Development of the Himalayas

The German Development Corporation (gtz), the Himachal Pradesh Eco-Development Society and CSK - Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vidyalaya are jointly organising an 'International Conference on Challenges and Options for sustainable Development of the Himalayas - Beyond 2002', in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh from October 1-4, 2002.

Contact: **Dr. Rajan Kotru**, Indo-German Changar Eco-Development Project, Post Box 25, Palampur, Dist. Kangra - 170061, Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 01894-30567. Fax: 30695. Email: info.cedp@gtzindia.com; rkotru@gtzindia.com
AK Gulati, CCF (Projects), HP Forest Department, Talland, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 0177-225036. Email: ccfhqrs@sancharnet.in

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