

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

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EDITORIAL

It is shocking that so many of our educated elite fell prey to the fake millenium madness. Fake, because it is not even the new millenium, and madness, because so many ecologically and socially destructive 'parties' were scheduled all over the country. One of the most blatant was held at Katchal Island, a tribal island in the Nicobar chain, where literally tens of lakhs of rupees were spent by the administration in a vain bid to get tourists to come and see what they billed as the first sunrays of the millenium. Many more such destructive events probably took place in protected areas.

Not that our powers-that-be need excuses for destroying wildlife habitats. The Prime Minister of India, ignoring his role as Chairman of the Indian Board for Wildlife, laid the foundation stone of the Parbati Hydel Project in Himachal Pradesh (see Himachal Pradesh, below). According to us, this was an illegal act, as the project has not even been given environmental clearance as yet. But it is also shocking because this Project was the reason for the partial denotification of the Great Himalayan National Park (See PA *Update* 21), one of the last large wildlife habitats left in the state. Sadly, however, there are just not enough NGOs and activists in Himachal to take up the issue (as also the related issue of a rather insensitive process of settling people's rights in that Park).

Mixed signals have emanated from Melghat Tiger Reserve, with important lessons for all those working on people's rights and relocation in the context of PAs. A very good meeting of villagers, forest and administration officials, and NGOs, took place in Bori village, in which several points were agreed to. In November, however, soon after the meeting, settlement notices were issued not only to Bori but also to the villages, Kund and Koha admitting claims only over agricultural land, cattle sheds and houses, ignoring in the process

all other customary rights to the forests like those for grazing, fuelwood, medicinal plants, leaves, fruits, bamboo and other non-timber forest produce. Even the assurances given to women regarding access to the forest resources in the meeting were ignored. An important and positive process could thus get unfortunately derailed (see below, Maharashtra).

Finally, the country seems to be on a major 'national action plan' binge (see NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA). The National Forestry Action Plan was put out in late 1999, the National Wildlife Action Plan is being finalised, and preparation of a National Biodiversity Action Plan is just being initiated. How many will lead to actual action, one will have to wait and see over the next few years.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Threats to Namdapha

Nature's Beckon, an environmental activists group of the North-East has taken initiative for the conservation of the Namdapha National Park under the mission Agenda Namdapha.

It has also reported that the illegal immigrants of the Lisu tribe from Myanmar were posing a threat to the park due to encroachments and poaching. A number of attacks the Lisu tribals on the forest staff have also been reported in the last one year.

The group has also asked that the construction of the road from Miao to Vijoynagar which mostly passes through the national park should be handed over to the management of the park, instead of the Arunachal Pradesh PWD. They have also opposed the construction of a bridge at Deban on the Noadihing river inside the park because of the disturbance that it will cause to the wildlife in the area.

Source: 'Myanmar immigrants posing threat to Namdapha National Park', *The Sentinel*, 13/12/99.

Contact: **Soumyadeep Dutta**, Nature's Beckon, Dattabari Ward No.1, Dhubri – 783301, Assam. Tel: 03662-21067. Fax: 20076

ASSAM

Satellite mapping of elephant areas

The Assam Remote Sensing Application Centre (ARSAC) have mapped four elephant areas

Manas-Buxa-Jaldapara, Dibru-Deomali, Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong- Itanki and Kameng-Sonitpur using satellite imagery and limited ground truthing. The report reveals large scale dwindling of elephant habitat as a result of massive deforestation. Additionally, the report suggests that vital corridors such as that between Buxa in West Bengal and Manas in Assam, both tiger reserves have been snapped and are no longer being used by elephants.

Source: 'Diminishing forest cover', *Tigerlink*, Vol.5, No. 3, December 1999.

Kaziranga gets millennium award

The Kaziranga National Park has been selected for the prestigious Rs. 2 Lakh Millennium award of the WWF- Tiger Conservation Programme for being one of the best managed parks in the country. The award was given to Kaziranga for the total commitment exhibited by the park personnel to save its wildlife from floods, poachers and other such threats.

Source: 'Kaziranga Park selected for Millennium Award', *The Assam Tribune*, 24/11/99.

Contact: **WWF- TCP**, WWF-India, 172-B, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi – 110003. Tel: 011- 4698072 / 4697224 / 4627586 / 4616532. Fax: 4698072. Email: aziz@wwfind.ernet.in

BIHAR

Palamu faces funds crunch

The Palamu Tiger Reserve is facing a serious resource crunch. The state government had received Rs. 1.1 crores for the park, from the Union Government in April but it does not seem to have been used. As a result field staff have been without a salary for over a year now. The damage caused is further compounded by militants and the activities of villagers, graziers and poachers. It is also reported that water holes have dried up, there are frequent fires in the park and smugglers, poachers and traders continue to extract the commercially valuable *khair* (*Acacia catechu*) from inside the park.

Source: 'Palamu tiger project faces fund crunch', *The Times of India*, 15/10/99.

Usha Rai. 'Park at the mercy of militants', *The Hindu*, 21/11/99.

Contact: **Field Director**, Palamu Tiger Reserve, Daltonganj – 822 101, Bihar. Tel: 06562-22650

GUJARAT

Eco-development project in Gir

In a strongly worded memorandum to the State Forest and Environment Minister, Kanjibhai Patel, three organisations representing the *maldharis* in Gir National Park have alleged that they are being 'unilaterally asked to vacate the forest' in clear violation of the norms of the World Bank's (WB) eco-development project.

The vacation notices, copies of which were given to the minister were served between November 2 and 13, 1999. They reportedly asked the *maldharis* to vacate the forest within a fortnight. The organisations which made the representation to the minister are the Maldhari Sangharsh Samiti, Sasan, Saurashtra Paryavaran Sanrakshan Parishad, Junagadh and SETU, Ahmedabad.

According to the groups there has been little or no investment or efforts for people who don't wish to relocate. In Junagadh west division alone, only 45 of a total of 184 families here have been declared permanent occupants. The other 97 have been categorised illegal and the rest 42 as non permanent.

Meanwhile the Forest Department is trying hard for the voluntary resettlement of the *maldharis*. It has admitted in its document titled 'The Gir', that the *maldharis* are very apprehensive about the resettlement programme as some relocated families could not do well in agriculture ...they now work as labourers in other farmer's fields... Deputy Conservator of Forests at Sasan, Mr. BP Pati further admits that the response to the pilot project, under which a couple of families have been shifted has not been encouraging. The response in the 54 settlements across the sanctuary and national park too have not been positive.

Forest officials have also reportedly convinced two hundred families of Sasan, a village in the Gir Sanctuary, to switch from firewood to liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). This means that fewer trees will be felled in the sanctuary. Most houses have been given a gas connection and are being encouraged to use solar cookers and *gobar* gas. The Forest Department hopes to get all 74 villages in the sanctuary to switch to LPG.

As another part of the eco-development project, the Sasan Gir wildlife division has awarded a first-of-its-kind project on inventory and conservation status of major plant taxa in Gir, to the MS University's Dept. of Botany. Sponsored by the WB, the project would develop two sets of Gir forest herbarium, one of which will be handed over to the forest department. In an interesting observation, Prof Senan of the Dept of Botany says that of late, the forest in Gir

has shown signs of transition from being dry deciduous to moist deciduous, caused by protection to the core area.

Source: 'Gir encroachers asked to vacate forest', *The Times of India*, 18/11/99.

Bharat Desai. 'Human invasion in Gir threatens lions', *The Times of India*, 15/11/99.

Sajid Shaikh. 'WB funds varsity project for denser forest cover at Gir

Janyala Srinivas. 'Gir villagers turning eco-friendly, switch to LPG from wood', *Indian Express*, 24/09/99.

Contact: **SB Pati**, DCF, Sasan, Dist. Junagadh – 363125, Gujarat.

SETU, 1, Punyaslok, Near Liberty Bus Stop, University Road, Ahmedabad – 380009, Gujarat. Tel: 0272-6560751

Lion show at Gir

Two prides of lions have been crammed into a fenced 412 hectare 'Gir Interpretation Zone' (GIZ) in Devalia ostensibly to facilitate a 'guaranteed' lion sighting in its natural habitat to restrict tourist pressure on the park. However, ironically, this is proving to be counter-productive by adversely impacting and stressing the animals themselves.

A Gujarat Forest Department brochure however says that the GIZ has been closed down due to its effects on the lions and the staff.

However this appears to be untrue as during the recent Navratri- Diwali vacation, thousands of visitors virtually clogged the road to Devalia. During this period the GIZ was also kept open on the weekly holiday of Wednesday to cater to the holiday rush, earning the facility a substantial sum of revenue.

There are also reports that the heavy rush of visitors has affected the behaviour of the lions and they have become disoriented and irritable.

Source: Sanjay Sharma. 'Tourists prey on, paralyse lions in Gir', *The Times of India*, 23/11/99.

Oil spill affects Marine National Park

An oil spill from the Vadinar-Kandla pipeline of the Indian Oil Company (IOC) has badly affected parts of the Marine National Park in the Gulf of Kutch. The incident happened on the 23rd of November when oil was being pumped from a tanker to the IOC's Single Buoy Mooring (SBM). The IOC has denied the charges, but preliminary investigations by the Forest Department and the Gujarat Pollution Control

Board (GPCB) too have suggested that the company is responsible.

Experts also fear that such regular small and big leaks will eventually lead to irreparable damage to the fragile ecology of the area which fosters many rare species of coral and hundreds of other marine species and mangrove forests. They also point out that crucial mangrove forests are the worst hit and that this will also adversely affect the fishing industry in the area. The State Fisheries minister Babubhai Bokhiria has claimed that the fish catch in the last few years has already gone down by 2 lakh tons along the Saurashtra coast and particularly off the Jamnagar and Veraval coasts. The fishing industry, including direct and ancillary, between Okha and Jakhau is reportedly worth Rs. 700 crore per year at the present.

There has been a move in the recent past to denotify parts of the park for some of the proposed industrial projects in the area (See *PA Updates* 21 and 22). Recently the Sultan of Oman too has brought pressure on the Gujarat Government for the clearance of the Bharat Oman Refinery Ltd. (BORL) which is to carry crude from Oman to Bina in Madhya Pradesh. The Gujarat government is reportedly sitting on the environmental clearance of the project for two reasons. First, the pipeline passes through the Marine National Park and; second, it sees the BORL as a leverage for bargaining hard with Madhya Pradesh on the Narmada project.

Source: 'Gujarat govt. asked not to delay oil pipeline project', *The Times of India*, 14/10/99.

Shyam Parekh. 'Experts foresee a park of doom', *The Times of India*, 29/11/99. Bittu Sahgal on email dated 25/11/99 to nathistory-india@lists.princeton.edu Janyala Srinivas. 'Spills can kill', *Indian Express*, 10/12/99.

Contact: **Harshad Kumari**, INTACH-Gujarat, Pratap Vilas Palace, Palace Road, Jamnagar- 361008, Gujarat. Tel: 0288-558746.

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

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Foundation stone of Parbati project laid

The Prime Minister Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee laid the foundation stone of the Parbati Hydrel Project on the 12th of December, despite protests from environmental groups from across the country. 1060 hectares of the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) had been denotified in

May 1999 to facilitate the coming up of the project. (See *PA Update 21*).

Protest letters to the PM this time also pointed out that the laying of the foundation stone of the project would be an illegal act as the environmental clearance for the project had not been obtained. Additionally he would be ignoring his own role as the Chairperson of the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL), as the denotified area of the GHNP and the areas to the north where dams and tunnels are to be built for the project are vital wildlife habitats.

Source: Shubhabrata Bhattacharya. 'PM announces 400 cr package for HP', *The Tribune*, 13/12/99.

Alok Mukherjee. 'Rs. 400-crore additional aid for Himachal' *The Hindu*, 13/12/99.

Letter from Kalpavriksh to the Prime Minister dated 08/12/99.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden** – HP, Mistchember, Khalini, Shimla – 171002, Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 0177-201660 / 223030.

Pankaj Sekhsaria, at the editorial address below.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Directory of protected areas

As a follow up to the all India surveys on protected areas started by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) New Delhi, work has now begun on a Directory of PAs in J&K. The project is sponsored by the Ministry of Environment and Forests through the WWF-India. It aims to build up baseline information on the legal, socio-economic and biological components of the PAs in the state and highlight key management issues. Readers with relevant information can contact either of the following.

Contact: **Pratibha Pande**, D 112 Rabindra Nagar, New Delhi 110 003. Tel: 011-4692903

Neelu Sharma, 31 B/D, Gandhinagar, Jammu (Tawi) – 180 004, J&K.

HC stops construction inside City NP

The J&K High Court ordered in October the stoppage of construction on the Golf Course inside the City National Park in Srinagar. This order was passed in a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI). In their counter the respondents made an admission that the Government has already approached the Indian Board for Wildlife

(IBWL) for denotification of part of the National Park. (Also see *PA Updates 19 & 21*).

Source: 'HC stops construction of Srinagar Golf Course', *Daily Excelsior*, 03/10/99.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden – J&K**, T.R.C., Srinagar – 190001, J&K. Tel: 0191 – 544575, 0194 – 452469.

Neelu Sharma, as above.

KARNATAKA

Livestock/ Wildlife study in Bhadra

The Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), has undertaken the study, 'a preliminary assessment of livestock –wildlife interactions in tropical deciduous forests' in the Bhadra Tiger reserve. This project funded by the Chicago Zoological Society, 'attempts to evaluate the effect of plant biomass and community composition, which influence wildlife use of the area. The related issue of human – wildlife conflict generated by livestock killing by leopards and tigers is also being studied. It is hoped that the information generated will assist management of the park and resolve such conflicts.

Source: 'Livestock/ wildlife study' *Tigerlink*, Vol.5, No. 3, December 1999.

Contact: **NCF**, 3076/5 IV Cross, Gokulam Park, Mysore – 570002, Karnataka. Tel: 0821-510335. Email: mdm@vsnl.com

Tribal resettlement from Nagarhole

The Minister of State for Planning and Institutional Finance, Ms. Suma Vasant has said that efforts would be made to relocate the tribals living in and around Nagarhole National Park in the Virajpet taluk of the district. She also refuted the charges that some of the tribal people from the park range in Kodagu were forcibly sent to Veeranahosalli in Hunsur taluk as part of the relocation plan of the World Bank sponsored eco-development project. She added that those who were opposed to the idea of shifting from Kodagu would be provided lands in Kodagu in areas such as Majjigehalla, Thithimathi, Sulugodu, Chennangi and Devamachi in Virajpet taluk and the rehabilitation would be done in association with the scheme of the Union Government.

On another occasion in December, the State Social Welfare Minister, Mr. Kagodu Thimmappa said that the tribals inside the park should move out and accept the rehabilitation provided to them by the government. He was speaking after an inspection of the Veeranahosalli rehabilitation camp in Hunsur taluk where 50 tribal families from the

Nagarhole National Park (from Kodagu) were reportedly rehabilitated recently. (For the controversy related to this please see 'Controversies in Nagarhole NP, PA Update 22)

Source: 'No forcible eviction of tribal people', *The Hindu*, 07/11/99.
'Nagarhole tribals should accept package', *The Hindu*, 13/12/99.
Contact: **CORD**, 119 / 1, 4th Block, Kushalnagar – 571234, Karnataka. Tel: 08276-74487/73287. Fax: 74091. Email: david@gasbl01.vsnl.net.in
LIFT, Kabbinaigade Girijana Colony, Rangasamudra Village & PO via Kushalnagar – 571234, Karnataka. Email: lift_nhole@hotmail.com
DCF (WL) Hunsur, Wildlife Preservation Division, Hunsur – 571105, Dist.Mysore, Karnataka.

Projects threaten Anshi/Dandeli

The Kalyani Coke and Cogeneration plant and the revival of the Mahadei Diversion Project in the Khanapur taluka of Belgaum district are seriously threatening forests of Anshi National Park, Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary and the proposed Bhimgad Sanctuary

800 acres of land is to be acquired at Ramnagar in the midst of the Dandeli Sanctuary-Supa Dam-Londe-Nagargali-Khanapur-Castle Rock Reserved Forests for the 300MW power project of the Kalyanis at Ramnagar.

The Mahadei project is expected to submerge another 5000 acres of the prime, evergreen forests in the area.

These projects will make a mockery of the Karnataka Forest Department's public announcement of the formation of the ecologically sensitive zone comprising these areas of the Western Ghats.

Source: Report from Nature Lover's Club Belgaum on email from Bittu Sahgal dated 01/12/99 to nathistory-india@lists.princeton.edu

Contact: **Nature Lover's Club – Belgaum**, Environment Protection Cell, Biology Dept. GSS College, Belgaum, Karnataka .

No commercial filming inside Bandipur

Wildlife conservation groups have lauded the move of the state forest minister Mr. HK Ranganath to cancel the permit issued by the Forest Department for the shooting of a commercial film inside the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. In a joint statement, the Nature Conservation Guild, Green Watchers, Wildlife First and Wilpeg, urged the State Government to

issue orders to the Forest Department that they should not entertain any proposal in the future for commercial film shooting inside any national park, wildlife sanctuary or reserve forest.

Source: 'Wildlife groups hail forest minister's move', *Deccan Herald*, 08/12/99.
Contact: **Wildlife First!** 248, 4th Main Road, Chanarajapet, Bangalore – 560018, Karnataka. Email: pbsolus@blr.vnl.net.in

Aid withdrawal to Project Elephant affects Bandipur

The Union Government's decision to withdraw financial support for 'Project Elephant' areas coming under 'Project Tiger' regions has created a resource crunch for the Bandipur National Park.

Conservationists have pointed out that the decision of the government to divert money to retrieve lost tracts of habitats where wildlife is on the verge of extinction, rather than focussing on the conservation of the existing forest tracts in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve encompassing Mudumalai, Bandipur, Wynad and Nagarhole, defies logic.

Bandipur National Park had been pooling the Rs. 50 lakhs each it received under Project Tiger and Project Elephant for its management. Now with half the funds not available various activities like the digging of 'Elephant Proof Trenches' and erecting solar powered fences had been slowed down.

Source: R Krishna Kumar. 'Aid withdrawal to Project Elephant unwise', *The Hindu*, 20/12/99.

Contact: **Asian Elephant Conservation Centre (AECC)**, C/o Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore – 560012, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3092786. Fax:3311280. Email:aecc@ces.iisc.ernet.in
Field Director, Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Aranya Bhavan, Ashokapuram, Wood Yard, Mysore – 570008, Karnataka.

NEERI studying impact of mining operations in Kudremukh

The Nagpur-based National Environmental Engineering Institute (NEERI) is studying the impact of iron ore mining on the ecology and environment at Kudremukh, Chikmagalur district in the Western Ghats. This study has been proposed by the State and Central governments in light of the fact that the temporary mining lease of Kudremukh Iron Ore Company

Ltd.(KIOCL) will come up for renewal again in July 2000.

Both the State and Central Governments are in favour of extending the lease because of the economic and technological value of the operations. However, environmental groups in the area are opposed to further mining citing the damaging effects it could have on the Western Ghats. (See *PA Updates* 21 and 22). A large number of farmers cultivating land inside the park have also appealed to the government not to allow the company to extend its mining to fresh areas within the park. They have claimed that mining has already harmed the soil, water resources and wildlife of the area.

Meanwhile, the State Forest Department has issued a notification for the declaration of the entire area from Sasme to Kollur as a National Park and the process of settling the objections, rights and claims of the residents has commenced. Along with some people living in and around the national park, the KIOCL has submitted a statement of objection to the Assistant Commissioner (AC), appealing for the exclusion of the Nellibeedu and Gangrikal areas from the purview of the park.

According to another related report, KIOCL which was the first core sector company to be started with part international funding, is now looking for international partners such as the Chinese and the Japanese. It is said that the KIOCL will become a joint venture after the proposed two phase disinvestment of the stocks.

Source: 'Farmers plead against land extension', *Asian Age*, 11/10/99.

R Mohan. 'NEERI studying impact of KIOCI Operations', *Business Line*, 25/10/99.

Vinay Madhav. 'Kudremukh Co may face rough weather', *Indian Express*, 09/11/99.

M Raghuram. 'Joint venture partner sought for equity participation', *The Hindu*, 30/11/99.

Contact: **CF – WL**, North Circle, Shimoga – 577201, Karnataka.

Chief Wildlife Warden – Karnataka, Aranya Bhavan, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993. Fax: 3346389.

KERALA

Railway inside Periyar

A project proposing to connect the famous religious site of Sabrimala to the national railway network has been approved by the Central government. The line that will pass through

parts of the Periyar Tiger Reserve is being opposed by environmental groups who have come together under the auspices of the Society for Environmental Concern (SEC) at Kochi. The group has however decided to exercise caution as any opposition to the project could generate a religious backlash. To start with, the SEC will launch a mass awareness programme about the environmental impact of the project and also try to elicit the support of the people who will be affected by this project. Committees are also to be set up which will study the cost-benefit ratio of the project, conduct an environmental impact assessment and explore possible alternatives.

Source: D Jose and Santhosh Perumal.

'Environmentalists tick Sabrimala rail link', *Rediff on the net*, 05/11/99.

Eco-development project in Periyar

The International Development Authority (IDA) project of eco-development in the Periyar Tiger Reserve is a success according to Forest officials here. 252 families in Mannakudy and 119 families in Paliyakudi tribal settlements have been organised into four eco-development committees (EDCs). These have been helping the tribals here to make a living out of farming, without being overly dependant on forest resources. Under the EDC scheme, each tribal family is given an interest free loan of Rs. 5000.

The success of the of the scheme is evident from the increase in the savings bank accounts in the nearby Kumily town. where 204 families from the tribal settlements have opened accounts in the Idukki District Co-Op Bank.

Source: Joe A Scaria. 'Periyar tribals welcome eco-development plan', *Economic Times*, 25/09/99.

Contact: **Field Director – Periyar TR**, Aranya Bhavan, Forest Complex, SH Mount, PO Kottayam – 686006, Kerala. Tel / Fax: 0481-565940. Email: root@trperiy.ren.nic.in
Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-322217 / 204896. Fax: 325804.

MADHYA PRADESH

Eupatorium overruns Kanger Ghati

There are reports that the weed known as Eupatorium *Cromolina odorata* is spreading widely in the Kanger Ghati National Park in Bastar district. The problem is reported to have started about two years ago and is reaching serious proportions.

Kanger Ghati has seen a lot of tree felling in the last few years, and this has aided the rapid spread of the weed. Incidentally the tribals here do not yet have a local name for this plant. The Forest Department too is trying hard to eradicate this weed and special financial allocations too have been made for the purpose.

Source: '*Kanger ghati ko nigal raha hai videshi paudha*', *Deshbandhu*, 04/10/99.

New society in MP

A group of businessmen and agriculturists based in and around Katni in Madhya Pradesh have formed a new society called Vunraksha for the preservation and conservation of forests and wildlife. Their main area of work is the districts of Katni, Shadol, Satna, the adjoining areas of Jabalpur, and Bandavgarh National Park.

Source: 'New Society formed', *Tigerlink*, Vol.5, No. 3, December 1999.

Contact: **Aqeel Farooqi**, Hon. Sec., Vunraksha, PO Box 65, Mission Chowk, Katni – 483501, Madhya Pradesh. Fax: 07622-54772. Email: vunraksha@hotmail.com; aqeelfarooqi@hotmail.com

Eco-tourism promotion by limited hunting?

The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Digvijay Singh has recently suggested plans to promote eco-tourism to national parks and sanctuaries by offering tourists the options of controlled hunting and mahaseer fishing in the Ken river. He also announced that a task force to be headed by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state, would be created to suggest steps to link tourists visiting Khajuraho and the Panna National Park.

Wildlife experts however expressed concern at this move of the state government and were extremely critical of the plans to allow fishing in the Ken river. They have also pointed out that the concept of the African Safari cannot be emulated in Madhya Pradesh since the character of the forests is different in these two different parts of the world, the forests here being of the tropical kind whereas the vegetation there is largely of the savanah type.

Source: Bittu Sahgal on email dated 26/11/99 to nathistory-india@lists.princeton.edu

Contact: **Bittu Sahgal**, Sanctuary, 602, Maker Chambers V, Nariman Point, Mumbai – 400021. Ph: 022-2830061 / 81. Fax: 2874380. Email: bittusahgal@vsnl.com
Lalit Shastri, CREW, E 3/8, Arera Colony, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

Threats to Panna

The Panna National Park located in the Panna and Chhatarpur districts of Madhya Pradesh is reported to be threatened by excessive grazing, illicit felling, tendu leaf collection and forest fires. The State government has recently allowed the collection of tendu leaf in the PA and this has further compounded the problem by increasing man animal conflicts and threats of forest fires.

Source: 'Excessive grazing poses problem to Panna National Park', *The Hindu*, 16/12/99

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden – MP**, Van Bhavan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal – 462003, MP. Tel: 0755-57371 / 550942. Fax: 573762.

MAHARASHTRA

Ecological assessment of Nawegaon

People's apathy, a failure of the administration, poaching and illegal tree felling have ruined the Nawegaon National Park. This has been reported by the Nagpur-based Vidarbha Nature Conservation Society (VNCS) which has just completed an ecological assessment of the park. The Society has also launched an environmental education programme for the youth staying in and around three major protected areas of Vidarbha: Nawegaon National Park, Pench Tiger Reserve, and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

Source: Letter from VNCS to *PA Update* dated 28/10/99.

Contact: **Dilip Gode**, VNCS, Tidke Ashram, Ganeshpeth, Nagpur – 440018, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-728942 / 722748 / 727363. Fax: 722748. Email: vncs@nagpur.dot.net.in

Call to cancel denotification of Melghat

Conservationists have urged the Maharashtra and the Union government to cancel the 1994 denotification of 500 sq. kms of Melghat Tiger Reserve. In 1994, the government denotified these 500 sq. kms., supposedly to allow the tribals continued access to their livelihood rights and to avoid displacement. A large amount of money has also been spent for the construction of roads in the area for the benefit of the tribals. These have however reportedly damaged the hydrology of the area and have instead provided easy access to the timber mafia and poachers.

Source: 'Call to cancel denotification order on Melghat tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 02/11/99.

Meet on Settlement of Rights in Melghat

A joint meeting of Government officials, NGOs and villagers was organised at Bori village in the Chikaldhara block of the Melghat Tiger Reserve to discuss the issue of the settlement of rights of the 22 villages presently located inside this protected area. Some of the major points that were agreed upon were that none of the villages would be forcibly displaced and a resettlement and rehabilitation plan for the village of Bori would be given to the village in writing. It was also decided that the *gramsabha* of Bori would discuss the plan and only after they give their final assent to it will a time bound programme be agreed upon.

In the first phase only Bori would be considered for rehabilitation, while the villages of Koha and Kund would be considered only after the rehabilitation of Bori is successful and the other two villages are convinced about it. A joint committee comprising the government, NGOs and the villagers themselves will be set up to discuss and monitor this process in Bori.

In November, however, settlement notices were issued to three villages, Kund, Koha and Bori, admitting claims only over agricultural land, cattle sheds and houses. Kalpavriksh has sent a letter to the concerned authorities pointing to the decisions taken in the meeting in Bori and the fact all other customary rights to the forests like those for grazing, fuelwood, medicinal plants, leaves, fruits, bamboo and other non-timber forest produce etc. were being ignored.

In another meeting held at Chikaldhara in December, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Vilasrao Deshmukh discussed a number of developmental schemes for the Melghat region. These included the widening of roads, desilting of 150 ponds and lakes in Melghat, the establishment of a power generating station at Chikaldhara and, reportedly, the rehabilitation of six villages from the Tiger reserve area.

Source: 'Resettlement of Melghat evacuees discussed', *Indian Express*, 06/11/99. 'Melghatatil rikamya hatana rojgar', *Lokmat*, 19/12/99.

Letter from Kalpavriksh to the Chief Secretary, Maharashtra dated 11/12/99.
Contact: **Purnima Upadhyay**, KHOJ, C/o Sri PM Khandelwal, Near Govind Lodge, Gujari Bazar, Paratwada – 444805, Maharashtra
Datta Patil, YUVA, Kamgar Bhavan, 2nd Floor, Baidnath Square, Rambag, Nagpur – 440009, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 – 740024 / 231169.
Neeraj Vaghlikar at the editorial address below

Plastic clean up drive in Bhimashankar

Nisargavedh, a Pune based NGO has launched a plastic clean up and awareness drive in the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary. The campaign which was started in June 1998 has also been regularly followed up by the group. Recently a 17 member team of the organisation collected more than 15 gunny bags, containing a total of 150 kgs of plastic and other non-biodegradables from the area of the stream near the main temple in the sanctuary.

Nisargavedh has also prepared a plan for the promotion of jute bags and their volunteers have been trying to convince the local shopkeepers of the benefits of these bags over those of plastic and have even distributed about two dozen of these among the locals. They are presently looking for funds to extend this project of theirs.

Source: Aishwarya Mavinkurve. 'Diary of an environmentalist', *Indian Express*, 11/11/99.

Aishwarya Mavinkurve. 'Follow-up at Bhimashankar', *Indian Express*, 16/12/99.

Contact: **Kiran Purandare**, Nisargavedh, 62-A, Prashant, Erandwane Gaothan, Pune-411004, Maharashtra. Tel: 020-5437344.

SC stay on demolitions in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park

The Forest Department (FD) had to stall the demolition of the 500 encroachments at the Thane end of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, following an order of the SC in a petition which claimed that the land under survey No. 520 on which they were located is classified as the collector's land and does not fall under the FD.

The encroachers occupy five acres on a plot at the foot of the Yeoor hills. Apart from 100 odd commercial establishments, there are three illegal four-storey buildings and 340 pucca hutments.

The High Court order allowing the Forest Dept to demolish the encroachments had been passed on July 11, 1999 following a petition filed by the Bombay Environmental Action Group in 1995 (See *PA Update* 22).

Source: Kishore Rathod. 'SC stays demolition of Thane encroachments', *Indian Express*, 22/11/99.

Contact: **Debi Goenka**, BEAG, Kalbadevi Municipal School, No. 54, 2nd Floor, Mumbai - 400002, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2423126. Fax: 2426385. Email: debi.beag@softhome.net

Satpura Foundation set up.

The Nature Conservation Society, Amravati (NCSA), has set up the Satpura Foundation in an attempt to protect the biodiversity and tigers in the Satpuras. The first training programme of the foundation was held in the Katepurna Wildlife Sanctuary from December 24 –26, 1999.

Source: Kishore Rithe on email dated 28/12/99.
Contact: **Kishore Rithe**, NCSA, Pratishta, Bharat Nagar, Akoli Road, Near Sainagar, Amravati- 444605, Maharashtra. Tel: 0721-670308. Fax: 672359. Email: ncsa@bom3.vsnl.net.in

ORISSA

Cyclone devastates Chandka but mangroves save Bhitarkanika

The 189 sq. kms Chandka Wildlife Sanctuary near Bhubaneswar has been devastated by the cyclone that recently hit Orissa. A large number of trees and bamboo groves have been destroyed. The trenches, water holes, culverts and check dams constructed inside the sanctuary too have been badly damaged. As a result elephants in the forest here too have been badly affected and are now roaming the fringes of the city in search of food. According to Mr. SK Patnaik, the Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), there is the likelihood of increased man-wildlife conflict in the days to come.

While there was widescale destruction along the coast, the area around Dangmal in Bhitarkanika sanctuary was one of the few areas to have survived the fury of the Orissa cyclone. The reason is that it was protected by the extensive mangrove forests of the area.

It is also being suggested that mangrove re-forestation should be taken up along the coastal belt and the state government is reported drawing up a plan for the same.

Meanwhile the sea turtle conservation program, Operation Kachhapa has been assisting in carrying out emergency relief work in the cyclone devastated areas.

Source: 'With homes devastated, elephants abandon forest', *The Indian Express*, 13/11/99.
Belinda Wright on email dated 11/11/99
Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack- 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671-611513 / 610980

Floating restaurant in Chilka?

The Orissa Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) has proposed to build a floating

restaurant on the waters of the Chilka lake at an estimated cost of Rs. one crore. It has also been proposed to create heritage hotels and island resorts inside the lake. The Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO), which has opposed this move fears that the effluents discharged from the restaurant and the noise generated would adversely affect the environment. Since the restaurant falls under the CRZ, permission will first have to be taken from the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The WSO is also ready to go to the court in the eventuality that the project gets clearance from the Ministry.

Source: Bibhuti Mishra. 'Proposed restaurant threatens Chilka lake's bio-diversity', *Rediff on the Net News*, 03/12/99.
SN Agragami. 'Float hotel, sink Chilka: Greens', *Indian Express*, 25/10/99.
Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, as above

Siltation poses threat to Chilka

A survey, conducted by the Central Inland Capture Fisheries Research Institute, has reported that about thirteen million tons of silt gets drained into Chilka lake every year.

Regulated inflow of fresh water through rivers and nallahs and reduced ingress of sea-water from the Bay of Bengal have been changing the character of the lake. Salinity, the main factor facilitating growth in the productivity of fish and prawn, has reduced in the lagoon due to the restricted flow of sea water even during high tide.

The study revealed that the lagoon is under severe physical, chemical and biological strain due to natural and human interventions. The indiscriminate tampering of river courses has markedly reduced the monsoon discharge into the lake, and deposition of silt has increased. Accumulation of silt has elevated the bed of the lagoon by 22% in the past six years, thus reducing the water-holding capacity.

Source: 'Siltation poses threat to Chilka: study', *Statesman*, 13/07/99.

Attacks on forest officials in Satkosia

Attacks on forest officials by the timber mafia are on the rise in the Satkosia Wildlife Sanctuary. A mobile forest ranger – Mr. Subrat Patra was recently abducted in the Tuluka Reserve Forest. A few forest officials, including Mr. Patra, had rushed to the area, when they learnt that hundreds of smugglers had entered the forest. Mr. Patra has been allegedly abducted after a night long chase and the subsequent seizure of timber.

In April, a forest guard, Bhagaban Majhi, was killed by the mafia members in the same forest when he refused to release seized timber and buffaloes. Another forest guard had been killed in Nayagarh this year.

Lack of fire arms and vehicles and shortage of staff has crippled the forest administration thereby encouraging smugglers to enter the forest and smuggle out timber worth crores of rupees.

Source: 'Attacks on forest officials increasing', *Statesman*, 16/10/99.

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

RAJASTHAN

Tiger Reserves to be extended

As part of a move to extend tiger reserves in Rajasthan, it is proposed to increase the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve from 1,334.6 sq. kms. to 2,438.05 sq. kms by including the Ramgarh Vishhari Sanctuary, the reserve forest of Bundi and Tonk divisions to the south west as well as connecting areas of the Dholpur and Karauli divisions in the north east.

Similarly the Sariska Tiger Reserve is to be extended from 866.13 sq. kms to 1,298.94 sq. kms by including the Jamwa Ramgarh Sanctuary of Jaipur west division and some areas from the Alwar division.

Source: 'Tiger Reserve extensions' *Tigerlink*, Vol.5, No. 3, December 1999.

Contact: **Field Director**, Ranthambhore TR, Sawai Madhopur – 322001, Rajasthan. Tel: 07462- 21142.
Field Director, Sariska TR, Dist. Alwar, Rajasthan.

Mining in Jamwa Ramgarh

Marble mining has seriously affected large parts of the Jamwa Ramgarh Sanctuary. In report submitted by Valmik Thapar, member of the committee examining the rationalisation of PA boundaries, he says that, 'large areas of the sanctuary are completely devastated by mining. At least 12 sq. kms is wiped out and another 10 sq. kms seriously affected. At least Rs. 500 crores worth of minerals are plundered and sold each year. In the Andhi mining area, 675 hectares are being mined and further up around the Rayanwala water body mining has pillaged the beauty of this area. Mining has been done even inside the water body and soapstone leases

have blocked vital migratory routes of wildlife....'

The lease inside the sanctuary expired on the 18th of December 1999, and it is hoped that it will not be renewed further. Indeed the Addl. IGF (Wildlife), Mr. SC Sharma has already written to the Secretary (Forests), Rajasthan confirming that all mining must cease on the expiry of the lease.

A public hearing on the issue of mining here had also been organised in December 1998 by the Tarun Bharat Sangh. (See 'Public Hearing at Jamwa Ramgarh Sanctuary and Sariska Tiger Reserve', *JPAM Update* 19)

Source: 'Shocking violations of a sanctuary', *Tigerlink*, Vol.5, No. 3, December 1999.

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

SIKKIM

Biodiversity workshop in Sikkim

Centre for Environment Education (CEE) North East in collaboration with the 'Kanchendzonga Conservation Committee (KCC) organised a one day workshop on December 9, 1999 at Yuksam in West Sikkim. The workshop was attended by 53 porters local businessmen, hotel owners, town committee members, office bearers of the KCC and representatives from Field Studies Council (FSC), UK and CEE. The workshop was organised under the Darwin initiative project of CEE and FSC.

KCC has implemented a successful small-scale biodiversity conservation project with financial support from Darwin initiative and facilitation from CEE and FSC. The project was to promote community based ecotourism in the Kanchendzonga National Park (KNP) and one of the main target groups of the project were the porters who are critical for the tourism industry here. A booklet for the porters containing information about the park and various do's and don'ts has also been produced. The draft booklet was released at the workshop and is to be field tested. It is also going to be sent to all important organisations in India and Nepal for comments.

Source: 'Biodiversity workshop conducted by CEE NE, KCC', *Sentinel*, 20/12/99.

Contact: **Pema Bhutia**, KCC, PO Yuksam, West Sikkim – 737113, Sikkim.
CEE – NE, Chenikuthi, KK Bhatta Road, Guwahati – 781003, Assam. Tel: 0361-516382 / 515722. Fax: 514914.
Email: ceene@gw1.vsnl.net.in

TAMIL NADU

Forest Policy for Tamil Nadu

A draft of a State Forest Policy for Tamil Nadu is being circulated, the acceptance of which could make TN the first to have its own full-fledged policy on forests. The draft policy is fashioned within the overall framework of the National Forest Policy (1998) and is expected to be placed before the state cabinet soon.

The main objectives of the proposed policy are ensuring environmental stability, preserving natural forests, conserving genetic resources, ensuring better water harnessing, promoting agro-forestry and meeting the basic needs of local people on a sustainable basis. The draft declares that 'forests should not be looked upon as a source of revenue' and that no forest land should be used for the production of industrial raw material.

It is proposed that all encroachers inside the forests will be evicted and that no encroachments will be regularised. It also calls for the establishment of a separate directorate with a specific mandate to determine forest settlement claims with a period of five years.

The policy also calls for bringing in ecologically sensitive areas of the Eastern Ghats under the Protected Areas System of Management and for detailed investigation and inventorisation of the flora and fauna in catchment areas such as the Nilgiris Biosphere region, the Theni – Meghamalai region (catchment area of the Valpai) and the Agasthiyamalai region.

Source: 'Forest policy for state on the anvil', *The Hindu*, 02/12/99.

Threat to Pulicat Lake eco-system

The North Chennai Thermal Power Station, the Ennore Satellite Port project and the proposed Petro-Chemical Park could threaten the eco-system of Pulicat Lake and its neighbourhood.

The port project results in sand erosion along fishing villages, posing a danger to the livelihood of the people in the area. The expert committee of Coastal Action Network (CAN) found the difference in temperature of water at the outlets of the thermal unit exceeded by five degrees. Further, adjacent to the port, effluent water was directly let into the sea.

The committee contended that the site of the Ennore port fell within CRZ I classification and that the Pulicat lake had been designated a no development zone. The sand dunes between the sea and the lake were slowly getting eroded and the water flow of the Ennore Creek had been 'restricted' due to the port.

The team also said that the proposed Petro Park would require over 45 million litres of water a day and that the coastal aquifers that yielded potable water and the wetland in Kattupalli and nearby areas, would become saline once the park was established. Soluble material from fly ash could seep into the ground and affect the water table and dust particles could affect the ambient air quality. The fly ash settling on leaves of plants and trees would affect photosynthesis.

Source: 'Threat to Pulicat lake eco-system:report', *The Hindu*, 19/08/99.

Speeding cars kill animals in Point Calimere

A number of cases of animals like spotted deer and jackal being killed by speeding cars have been reported from the Point Calimere Sanctuary. The Forest Department (FD) is planning to enforce the provisions of Section 33 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1992 to check the hit-and-run cases. A speed limit not exceeding 20 km is to be imposed within the sanctuary. Besides this, speed breakers would also be created.

In another development within the sanctuary, a check dam has been constructed near the Adivasi Colony. Two more such structures will be created primarily to stop sea water intrusion into the sanctuary and salt infiltration into the potable water sources. A memorandum signed by more than 100 people was submitted to the government for the eviction of the nearby salt chemical factory. The effluents from the factory have caused considerable damage to the animal habitat in the sanctuary. The memorandum also urged the government to check all attempts to encroach upon the vast stretches of the Great Vedaranyam Swamp for setting up salt and chemical industries.

The FD has also prepared an ambitious plan to artificially regenerate mangrove forests in some of these areas, subject to approval of the revenue department and their cooperation in the eviction of encroachments. There is also a plan for a survey and demarcation of the entire Great Vedaranyam Swamp, once considered as one of the best bird habitats in the area.

Source: Gladwin Immanuel. 'Speeding cars kill endangered animals in park', *Indian Express*, 26/07/99.

Threats to Mudumalai

The exponential growth in the population of both people and cattle in the eastern fringes of the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary has begun to pose a serious biotic threat to this protected area.

The population influx is most visible in Masanagudi. Wildlife officials and environmentalists are also worried about the impact of the development along the two routes east of the sanctuary – between Moyar and Singara and beyond Masanagudi and Mavanallah on the road towards Ooty and the impacts of this on the critical Moyar-Singara elephant corridor.

The Singara Power Project and the Pykara Ultimate Stage Hydro Electric Project have also resulted in a lot of disturbance here.

The Forest Department has identified some areas on the eastern part of the sanctuary for transfer to the sanctuary, but the state government is known to be considering the establishment of a 'Samathuvapuram' (casteless village) near Mavanallah.

Source: Mukund Padmanabhan. 'The threats to Mudumalai Sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 12/11/99.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden-TN**, 6D, Panagal Building, Jeenu Road, Saidapet, Chennai –600022, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044 – 4321738.

UTTAR PRADESH

3 forest staff killed in Dehradun

3 forest staff, Aftab Hussain, Asghar Ali and Udai Singh Pawar were found murdered in the Mohand area near the Delhi Dehradun Highway in the first week of November last year. It is alleged that they were done to death by an active forest mafia that is engaged in the clandestine felling of trees and the smuggling of animal parts from the Rajaji National Park. The local staff were in a state of agitation and had struck work protesting that not enough support and protection was being given to them. A memorandum was also submitted to the state government in the matter. The latest situation is not known.

On several occasions in the past, forest officials and the field staff have raised the problem of their being 'totally helpless', against the well armed and established mafia. A number of cases of brutal attacks on forest staff have been reported in the last few years from the Dehradun and the Hardwar regions.

Source: 'Forest staff intensify agitation over 'killing' of guards', *The Times of India*, 15/11/99.

Nirmal Ghosh on email dated 15/11/99 to nathistory-india@lists.princeton.edu

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji National Park, Shivalik House, Dehradun- 248001, Uttar Pradesh.

Nirmal Ghosh. Email: tigerfire@yahoo.com

Green bridge for Rajaji elephants

A Ghaziabad-based Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) with the State Irrigation Department, Mr. Ajay Pal Singh, has designed a 'green bridge' to save elephants of Rajaji National Park from the killer railway track (See *PA Updates* 20 and 21). According to him, one way to save the Rajaji elephants, is to build a bridge over the critical section of the railway track. The bridge would have to be wide and camouflaged with trees and shrubs to facilitate risk-free movement of elephants from the forest to the Ganga River along the Motichur-Chilla corridor. In his proposal submitted to the Railway Minister, Mr. Singh, said that it should be mandatory for train drivers in the Haridwar-Dehradun sector not to accelerate beyond 20 kmph at night. He also sought a ban on honking by the locomotive and vehicle drivers within this critical stretch and that the locomotives should be fitted with two powerful headlamps.

Source: Rahul Karmarkar, 'Green bridge to save Rajaji Park elephants', *Hindustan Times*, 06/09/99.

Illegal grass cutting affecting Hastinapur

The time bound scheme of the Forest Department (FD) to issue permits to villagers for the cutting of typha grass for their domestic use in the Hastinapur Sanctuary has failed to halt the activities of the mafia here. The mafia continues, in connivance with the field staff of the FD to cut the grass and supply it to the nearby paper mills. The grass grows on swampy land which is the most suitable habitat for the endangered swamp deer. The Divisional Forest Office has recently suspended one forest guard for his alleged involvement in these illegal activities. The role of the FD has become difficult because the sanctuary is spread over the three districts of Muzzafarnagar, Ghaziabad and Meerut. The mafia reportedly has some politicians and bureaucrats supporting them besides the paper mills who benefit from their activities.

Source: 'Mafia role in cutting of typha grass hits sanctuary's fauna', *Hindustan Times*, 01/12/99.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden-UP**, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow --226001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-283864. Fax: 283868.

NATIONAL NEWS

National Wildlife Action Plan

The National Wildlife Action Plan (see *PA Update 19*), being drafted by a Union Ministry of Environment and Forests committee chaired by Shri B.G. Deshmukh, has nearly finalised its draft. Shri H.S. Panwar, former Director of Wildlife Institute of India, was commissioned to consolidate and edit the draft plan, and it is expected to be finalised in January 2000.

Contact: **S.C. Sharma**, Addl. IGF (WL), See Mining in Jamwa Ramgarh, above

National Forestry Action Plan

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has come out with a National Forestry Action Plan (NFAP), the preparation of which was funded by the UNDP and other agencies. The NFAP envisages reaching the much-coveted figure of 33% forest cover in India, by a mix of strategies, and seeks a whopping \$32 billion for this. MoEF hopes to get external funding for its implementation. However, NGOs have already raised concerns about how participatory the process of making the NFAP was, and whether indeed money is the critical missing element in saving India's forests.

Contact: **Inspector General of Forests**, MoEF (address as above); Tel: 91-11-4361509; Fax: 4363957.

National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, GOI, has initiated the preparation of a comprehensive National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). Funded by UNDP, the two-year process is to be coordinated by the National Project Director at the MoEF, a Steering Committee comprising of various relevant ministries and NGO representatives, and a Technical and Policy Core Group (TPCG) headed by Kalpavriksh. The TPCG hopes to reverse the usual process of making the action plan, by starting with local/regional and state level action plans, prepared through a series of public hearings, workshops, and commissioned reviews. This process will attempt to involve all sectors of society that have a concern for, or are affected by, the use and conservation of biodiversity (both wild and agricultural).

Contact: **R.H. Khwaja**, Jt. Sec., MoEF (address as above). Tel: 91-11-4362551; Fax: 4360678.

Ashish Kothari, Kalpavriksh (at editorial address)

Saving Wild Tigers

A new volunteer effort, 'Saving Wild Tigers (SWT)', affiliated with the Sierra Club, has been set up in America by three non-resident Indians who aim to fund projects 'by a user friendly mechanism which can provide a quick solution to problems...' SWT's primary goal is to work with local governmental and non-governmental organisations in India to save the tiger. They would like to be contacted by appropriate on-site organisations involved in tiger conservation that are able to accept foreign exchange.

Source: 'New funding organisation', *Tigerlink*, Vol.5, No. 3, December 1999.

Contact: **Nina Rao, Sunil Somalwar, Sumati Prabhu**, SWT, 10 Waterside Plaza, No. 4K, New York, NY 10010-2610, USA. Tel: 1-212-6867411. Fax: 6862366. Email: tiger@wildindia.com Website: <http://sierraactivist.org.tigers/>

Wildlife Trust of India.

Another new organisation, the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) has been set up with its express purpose being rapid aid to wildlife in time of crisis. WTI works through its network of conservation groups and individuals. Currently WTI has three main projects: Wild Aid: Rapid Action for Indian Wildlife Wild Rescue: Rehabilitation and reintroduction programme for confiscated and stray wildlife. Wild Lands: Acquiring private lands for purposes of wildlife conservation.

Contact: **Programme Coordinator**, Wild Aid, Wildlife Trust of India, PO Box: 3150. New Delhi – 110003. Tel / Fax: 011-6451397. Email: indianwildlife@vsnl.com

Course in Wildlife Management conducted

The Smithsonian Institution, USA and the Aaranyak Nature Club, Assam, jointly organised an International Conservation Biology and Wildlife Management (CBWM) course in Assam from Nov. 24 to Dec. 22, 1999. The programme was held under the Wildlife Conservation and Management Training Programme of the Smithsonian Institution and was attended by 19 participants from nine countries. Field exercises

were conducted in Kaziranga National Park, Nameri National Park and Pobitara Sanctuary.

Contact: **Rudy Rudran**, Dept. of Zoological Research, National Zoological Park, Washington DC 20008, USA. Email: rrudran@crc.si.edu

Bibhab Talukdar, Aaranyak Nature Club, Samonway Path, Survey Beltola, Guwahati – 781028, Assam, India. Tel: / Fax: 0361-566087. Email: bibhab@gwl.vsnl.net.in

SOUTH ASIA

South Asia joint Initiative to save the tiger

An international seminar, 'Royal Bengal Tiger in the 21st Century' was recently organised in Calcutta. The seminar which was attended by over 200 participants from India, Nepal and Bangladesh was jointly organised by the West Bengal Forest Department and an NGO, the Nature, Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS). The seminar suggested that India, Nepal and Bangladesh should co-operate to ensure a secure future for the tiger in the next century.

Source: 'Plan to conserve Royal Bengal Tiger', *Indian Express*, 21/11/99.

SRI LANKA

Poachers, stray cattle threaten national parks:

Uda Walawe, Yala and Lunugamvehera National Parks are severely affected by illegal activities. The Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC) is now formulating laws and regulations to control unauthorised activities such as extensive burning, poaching and entry of livestock in the national park.

Poachers have burned down almost two thirds of the grasslands of the 30,821 hectares Uda Walawe National Park, which has created a scarcity of food for the elephant population here. This devastation, if unabated, would lead to the migration of elephants into the villages in search of food and further the problems of man-elephant conflicts. The Director of the park also expressed a need for at least another 50 wildlife staff members.

Source: 'Poachers, stray cattle pose major threat to national parks', *Sunday Observer, Sri Lanka*. 01/08/99

UPCOMING

Forest and wildlife legal workshop

Legal Action for Wildlife and Environment (LAW-E) along with the Ranthambhore Foundation is organising a legal workshop in New Delhi on 15-16, January 2000. Subjects to be covered during the workshop include the Wildlife (Protection) Act – 1972, the Environment Protection Act 1986, the National Wildlife Action Plan, the National Forest Policy, the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, the impact of the World Bank sponsored India Eco-development programme; centre-state conflicts and the problems encountered in the enforcement of forest and wildlife laws.

Source: 'Forest and wildlife legal workshop', *Tigerlink*, Vol.5, No. 3, December 1999.

Contact: **LAW-E**, 409, Lawyers Chambers, Supreme Court of India, Bhagwan Dass Road, New Delhi – 110001. Email: lawe@bol.net.in

4th National Consultation on Wildlife Conservation and People's Livelihood Rights, April 15-17, 2000.

A series of national consultations on wildlife conservation and people's livelihood rights (called Building Bridges) was started in 1997. The 4th consultation is being organised from April 15-17, 2000 and will be hosted by the Vivekananda Girijana Kalyan Kendra (VGKK) in the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Sanctuary, BR Hills, Karnataka. The proposed agenda for the meeting includes reports from specific PAs, settlements of rights in and displacement of people from PAs, commercial threats to PAs in particular, mining), changes in laws and policies, and ecodevelopment, the National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP), the National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP). The meeting is being jointly organised by Kalpavriksh, VGKK, and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, Bangalore (ATREE).

Contact: **Dr. H Sudarshan**, VGKK, BR Hills, Chamrajnagar – 571441, Karnataka. Ph: 08226-44018. Fax: 44025. Email: vgkk@vsnl.com

Neeraj Vaghligar / Tejaswani Apte / Pankaj Sekhsaria, at the editorial address below

WHAT'S AVAILABLE

- *Narmada Rashmi*

A fortnightly publication in Hindi from Jabalpur which is dedicated to the environment and wildlife. Four pages full of news from across the country.

Contact: **Navneet Maheshwari**, Narmada Rashmi, Vallabhdas Mahal, Hanuman Taal, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0761-340174 / 340095 / 341774. Email: ppmt@bom4.vsnl.net.in

- *Twilight*

A new journal of the Calcutta based Pugmarks Nature Resorts Pvt. Ltd. Issue The latest issue dated August 1999 has stories on the Wolf, the Chilka Lagoon, Phawanpui National Park in Mizoram, Dudhwa National Park and the Serow. The journal is edited, printed and published by Smaran Ghosal.

Contact: **Smaran Ghosal**, 10 Meherali Road, Calcutta – 700 017. Ph: 033-2808917. Fax: 2407737. Email: pugmarks@vsnl.com Website: www.pugmarks.org

- Kothari, A., Pathak, N., and Vania F. *Where Communities Care: Community Based Wildlife and Ecosystem Management in South Asia*. IIED and Kalpavriksh; Evaluating Eden Series No. 3. In press. Indian edition Rs. 100.

This book is an outcome of a South Asian Regional Review of Community Involvement in Wildlife Management, which was a part of a global series of regional reviews under the project 'Evaluating Eden: Assessing the Impacts of Community Wildlife Management', coordinated by the International Institute of Environment and Development. The South Asian review was carried out by a group of individuals affiliated to Kalpavriksh.

Contact: **Ashish Kothari**, at the editorial address below.

- Eds. Seidensticker, J., Jackson, P., and Christie, S. *Riding the Tiger: Tiger Conservation in Human Dominated Landscapes*. Cambridge University Press (1999).

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The book is a compilation of proceedings of meeting on tiger science and conservation that was held in January at the Zoological Society of London.in 1997

Contact: **K. Ullas Karanth**, WCS-India Program 403, Seebo Apartments, 26-2, Aga Abbas Ali Road, > Bangalore – 560042, Karnataka. Tel: 080-559 1747. Fax: 559 1990 .Email: ukaranth@vsnl.com
Cambridge University Press, C-22, Jayanagar, Bangalore-560 082, Karnataka. Tel: 080-6644817/6552764.

- Singh LAK. *Tracking Tigers*.. WWF – Tiger Conservation Programme,(TCP) New Delhi, 1999

There are two booklets *A pocket book for forest guards* and *Guidelines for estimating wild tiger populations using the Pugmark Technique*. Will be very useful in the field.

Contact: **WWF- TCP**, 172 B Lodi Estate, New Delhi – 110003. Tel: 011- 4698072 / 4697224 / 4627586 / 4616532 / 4693744. Fax: 4698072.Email: mkr@wwfind.ernet.in

- *Tiger Conservation Programme; Three Years and Beyond*. WWF – Tiger Conservation Programme, New Delhi, 1999.

An interesting collection of essays on various aspects of tiger and wildlife conservation by experts from across the country. Published on the occasion of the completion of three years of the WWF – TCP.

Contact: **WWF-TCP**, see above

- Rathore F.S., Thapar, V. *Wild Tigers of Ranthambhore*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

Another excellent book on the tigers of Ranthambhore from two of the country's best known tiger men.

Contact: **Valmik Thapar**, Ranthambhore Foundation, 19 Kautilya Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi – 110021. Tel: 011- 3016261. Fax: 3019457. Email: tiger@vsnl.com

- *The Rhino Foundation For Nature in NE India*

A regular newsletter of the Foundation that has articles and reports on various issues of wildlife from the North East.

Contact: **Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhary**, C/o The Assam Co.Ltd., G Bordoloi Path, Bamunimaidan, Guwahati – 781021, Assa. Tel: 0361-550257 / 543339. Fax: 550902. Email: badru@gw1.vsnl.net.in

- *Buceros. Envis Newsletter: Avian Ecology and Inland Wetlands*

Buceros is an ENVIS (Environmental Information System) newsletter published thrice yearly by the ENVIS Centre at the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), sponsored by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). The Centre collects, collates, stores and disseminates information on Avian Ecology and Inland Wetlands.

Contact: **ENVIS Centre**, BNHS, Salim Ali Chowk, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai – 400023. Tel: 022-2821811. Fax: 2837615. Email: bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in

CORRESPONDENCE

With reference to the news item 'Water shortage in Gir NP' in PA Update 22, we have to understand that Gir falls in the semi- arid tract and will face fluctuations in the availability of water. The system is tuned to deal with not just

annual variations but also seasonal variation in water availability. The problem with most management decisions is that we tend to view it largely from a human perspective. People form strong opinions which are stated repeatedly and eventually this becomes a fact.

I am of the opinion that large scale, widespread and indiscriminate provisioning of water will actually have negative effects in the long run. Management actions are symptom driven. Animals are observed outside the PA boundaries, possibly drinking water from agricultural fields and this is taken as evidence for shortage of water within the PA. If water and nutritious forage are available adjoining to the PA, animals are bound to come out irrespective of water availability within the PA. Only if there is a consistent and drastic decrease then we can claim that the management action was needed and it has succeeded.

Disease and vaccination should be a routine and continuous management practice. All efforts should be made to reduce the contact between domestic and wild animals and this should not be done only during the drought.

Contact: **Ravi Chellam**, Wildlife Institute of India, PO Box 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun - 248001, Uttar Pradesh. Email: ravic@wii.gov.in

RESEARCH OPPURTUNITIES

Gir National Park

- a) Field Researcher for a study on 'Human Wildlife conflict in and around Gir National Park and Sanctuary'. The person would have to work independantly and should have a background of Life Sciences or Environmental Sciences.

Contact: **Dr. S.P.Sinha**, C/o Bitapi Sinha, Wildlife Institute of India, P.O. Box 18 Chandrabani, Dehradun – 248001, Uttar Pradesh. Email: spsinha@hotmail.com; spsinha@yahoo.com

- b) For another project in Wildlife / Biological Research in Gir

Contact: **BS Mehra**, Ecologist (Gir PA), Gir National Park, Sasan Gir, Dist. Junagadh, Gujarat

Kuno Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary

Applications have been invited for Field personnel for a community organisation effort on the periphery of Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary, District Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh. The selected applicants would be working in conjunction with various government agencies, particularly the Forest Department, to act as a bridge between the villagers and the administration in the process of resettlement and rehabilitation of villages from the sanctuary.

Contact **Asmita Kabra**, C-II/1, IIPA Campus, Indraprastha Estate, Ring Road, New Delhi – 110002. Tel: 011- 3715385 / 3351648 / 3715382 /3352690. Fax: 3355674. Email: asmitak@vsnl.com

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PA Update 23 was prepared by Pankaj Sekhsaria Anuprita Patel and Ashish Kothari. Several news items were accessed from Centre for Science and Environment's Green File, but have been credited to their original sources.

Ideas, comments, news and information may please be sent to the editorial address:

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