

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Protected Area Update

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Wildlife's infrastructure nightmare

More roads that penetrate deeper, railway lines that connect better and faster, dam projects for power and irrigation, coal mining for more electricity, high-tension power lines to evacuate that electricity.... This is one side of India's infrastructure and constantly lauded growth story.

There is another side to that very story which reads something like the following: Roads that cut through rich forests, railways lines that regularly kill elephants, dam projects that drown pristine forests and wildlife habitats, coal mining that rips apart tiger corridors, high tension lines that kill elephants in Orissa and flamingoes in Gujarat...

From the Nallamalla forests of Andhra Pradesh to the valley of the Alaknanda in Uttarakhand; from the elephant forests of Orissa to the Great Rann of Kutch in Gujarat – the story is the same – what is unfolding is nothing short of a nightmare for India's wildlife. The infrastructure for our automobiles, power and lifestyles is leaving nothing of the natural infrastructure that the wild denizens need. As we travel faster, longer, and deeper and as the GDP becomes the only mantra, the elephants, the tigers, the leopards and even the flamingoes are getting hemmed in more and more with every passing day.

The fate of the flamingoes in Gujarat highlights this starkly. Their only option on being disturbed at night by vehicular noise in the Great Rann was to fly into high-tension wires hanging above and get charred instantly. Between the vehicle and the wire, India's beleaguered wildlife is getting sandwiched and slaughtered like never before.

One 'eco' – the economic is soaring as everything ecologic is being torn to shreds. The tragic irony is that the same system sells to us and to the world the prowling tiger, the gamboling elephant, the soaring birds and, yes, the dancing tribal as 'Incredible India'. We at the *PA Update* are part of a small crowd that's watching on with incredulity. And with despair.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Proposed highway through Nallamala threatens tiger population

The Andhra Pradesh Government's decision of going ahead with the proposed highway in the Nallamala Reserve Forest (RF) has raised fears of the impact on the tiger population here. As per the National Highway Authority of India proposal, the 330 km road would pass through Kalvakurthy, Srisailem, Dornala, Atmakuru and Nandyala. Of this a stretch of 200 km falls under the Nallamala RF range.

The Central Government has reportedly given a nod to the first phase of the project.

Source: 'Move to build highway poses threat to tigers', *The New Indian Express*, 14/11/11.

Contact: **Field Director**, Nagarjunasagar - Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Srisailem Dam (East) – 512103, Andhra Pradesh, Tel: 08524-286089 / 286140(R). Fax: 08524-286071

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

New moth species discovered in Tale Valley Wildlife Sanctuary

A new species of moth was sighted recently in the Tale Valley Wildlife Sanctuary. It was photographed by nature enthusiasts during their field trip to the sanctuary in September 2011.

Consultations with the education officer of the Bombay Natural History Society, with moth experts in the British Natural History Museum and experts from Hong Kong confirmed that this was a new species for science.

A few years back, Bhutan Glory, a rare butterfly, was sighted at Ziro in Lower Subansiri district by entomologists and the

new moth species, a day-flying one, possibly mimics Bhutan Glory and thus shares the same habitat.

Source: 'New moth species sighted in Arunachal',
The Shillong Times, 16/11/11.

ASSAM

Vanya Prani Mitra Awards for forest staff

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) -India and the Assam state Forest Department recently presented two inaugural 'Vanya Prani Mitra Awards' to four forest staff of the Assam state Forest Department for their exemplary service towards the protection of Assam's wildlife. The awards were presented by the Mr. Rockybul Hussain, Minister of Forest and Environment, Government of Assam.

One award was given to a patrolling team from the Kaziranga National Park, Assam. The team comprised of Mr. Ganga Bora, Forest Guard; Mr. Rustam Timung, Forest Guard; and Mr. Bhupen Hazarika, Home Guard. They were given the award for showing great courage under fire by bravely engaging with three armed poachers while on a patrol in the park. The resultant encounter resulted in the recovery of arms, ammunition and a rhino horn.

The 2nd award was given to Mr. Salim Ahmed, Range Officer at the Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park for a slew of initiatives he took that resulted in a sharp drop in rhino poaching here.

The two awards carried a citation and a cash prize of Rs. 25,000 each.

Source: Press Release dated 10/01/12.
Contact: **Ameen Ahmed**, WWF-India. Tel: +91
8010 354392. Email:
ameen.ahmed@wwf.panda.org

Tea estate, permanent structures in elephant corridor in Ripu-Chirang Elephant Reserve

An important elephant corridor in the Neoli proposed reserve forest (PRF) has been destroyed by the allotment of 60 hectares of land here to the Brahma Seva Ashram. The forest land in question is part of the Ripu-Chirang Elephant Reserve and also connects the Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary to the Kahlingduwar reserve forest. It is located in the

Udalguri district on the Bhutan border, an area that has seen significant human-elephant conflict in recent times (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6)

The forest was allotted to the ashram in September 2008 and they then converted a large part of it to a tea garden and for cash crop cultivation. Other constructions for commercial activities like a dairy farm and a tourist structure have also come up.

The Dhansiri Forest Division had informed the relevant authorities in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) of the various violations involved in February 2010, but no action has been taken so far.

The FD department has sought restoration of the PRF status to the encroached land.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVII, No. 6; Vol. XV, No. 1; Vol. XIV, No. 4 & 1; Vol. XIII, No. 6, 2 & 1; Vol. XII, No. 4 & 1; and Vol. XI, No. 4)

Source: Sivasish Thakur. 'TE obstructs elephant corridor violating forest laws', *The Assam Tribune*, 26/12/11.

Two rhinos shifted from Pobitora to Manas TR

Two female rhinos from the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary were successfully shifted to the Manas Tiger Reserve recently. The animals that have been fitted with radio collars were released at the Buraburi area in central part of Bansbari range of the reserve.

The next plan is to get 10 more rhinos from Kaziranga National Park making a founder population of 20 which is the first goal of the relocation programme. The translocation is being undertaken under the Rhino Vision 2020 program of the state government of Assam.

Source: 'Rhinos reach Manas', *The Telegraph*, 10/01/12.

14 tigers in transboundary Manas; four photographed on both sides of boundary

A camera trapping exercise conducted over 650 sq kms of the Manas landscape has

reported 14 tigers in the area. Seven were male and six were female while the gender of one could not be identified. Four of the big cats were identified as common, indicating that they were photographed on both sides of the international boundary.

The project is being implemented jointly by the officials of the Manas National Park in India, the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan and NGOs Aaranyak, the Ashoka Trust for Research in Environment and Ecology (ATREE) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – India. The researchers have noted that only three ranges have been surveyed so far and that the entire area could have a larger number of tigers.

Source: Roopak Goswami. '14 cats caught on camera', *The Telegraph*, 28/12/11.

Contact: **Director**, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd. Dist. Barpeta – 781315, Assam. Tel: 03666 – 261413. Fax: 232253 / 260253

Elephants run over by train in Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary

A male wild elephant was killed and another injured when a goods train ran over them in the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in December.

A herd of over 20 elephants was crossing the railway tracks when a goods train towards Tinsukia ran over them killing the male elephant on the spot at about 7 pm.

Source: Elephant run over by train', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 18/12/11

Contact: **DFO**, I/c Gibbon WLS, Jorhat Division, P.O. Jorhat, Dist. Jorhat – 785001, Assam. Tel: 0376-32008(O), 320456(R)

Tigress in Kaziranga NP shot to death by 15 bullets; police, FD hold each other responsible

An adult tigress was killed in December in the Kaziranga National Park by an automatic gun. An autopsy found 15 AK-47 bullets in the animal's body. The tigress was shot when it tried to attack people near the Kohora forest range. Park authorities said the tigress was killed by armed police, while the police say that the animal was killed when forest guards fired to save the lives of the locals. The park authorities and the National Tiger Conservation Authority of India have begun two separate inquiries into the killing.

Assam forest minister Mr Rockybul Hussain also ordered a probe into the killing of the tigress. The latest in the matter is not known.

Source: 'Kaziranga tigress took 15 bullets', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 07/12/11.

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga NP, PO Bokakhat, Dist. Golaghat – 785612, Assam. Tel: 03776-268095(O),

Acute funds shortage hits Assam's national parks

Routine maintenance and security in the national parks (NPs) in Assam has almost come to a standstill as the state government has failed to release funds for more than six months. This has led to serious problems in the Manas, Kaziranga, Dibru-Saikhowa, Nameri and Orang NPs in the state .

The Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) NP which is the smallest in the state requires about Rs 10 lakh per month for maintenance. It has about 30 domestic elephants. Apart from funds to feed domestic elephants, it has not received any money for the last seven months. As a result, 26 out of 42 casual workers have left.

At Kaziranga too, forest officials are not able to carry out routine work. Maintenance and security of the park has been hit hard as many homeguards and casual workers have left the park because of non-payment of salaries for several months. They had staged a protest rally in front of Forest Minister Rockybul Hussain on October 28 when the minister had come to inaugurate the park for the tourist season (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6).

The mobile anti-poaching camps, manning the river boundary of the Dibru-Saikhowa NP too have been non-functional for several months. The park authority has no money to buy fuel to run the boats. Since this NP is located in an insurgency-prone area, the FD has been carrying out joint patrolling with police and the army and for that, the district administration is providing fuel to run a few boats.

Source: Pullock Dutta, 'National parks hit by funds shortage', *The Telegraph*, 17/11/11.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden** – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam. Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386

GOA

Goa minister challenges Mhadei WLS notification



Health Minister of Goa, Mr Vishwajit Rane recently moved the Panjim bench of Bombay High Court challenging the notification of the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary. The notification had been issued by the Forest Department in June 1999, whereby an area of 208 sq km in Sattari taluka near Valpoi was declared as a wildlife sanctuary.

The petitioner has asked for the notification to be quashed and set aside as it violates basic fundamental rights of the affected inhabitants. The petition has claimed that the notification was issued without taking into consideration its implications for 50,000 odd inhabitants spread across 25 odd villages.

It also recounts that even after a decade the government has not rehabilitated affected people who are economically backward and have who have not been able to carry out their basic activities since the creation of the sanctuary.

Source: 'Vishwajit Rane challenges 12 year old Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary notification', *Herald*, 02/12/11.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Wildlife Wing, Junta House, Panaji 403001, Goa. Tel: 0832 – 224747 / 223508 / 278891. Fax: 224747

Exclude eco-sensitive zones from mining: WGEEP

The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) has observed in its recent report that

mining activities in Goa have crossed the social and environmental carrying capacity of the state and that all 'ecologically sensitive areas/zones' should be excluded from mining. It has also suggested that no mining should be allowed in the protected areas in the state in the Western Ghats and in regions of high sensitivity as demarcated by the panel.

It also recommended that environmental clearances for mines in these areas should have an additional conditionality requiring 25 per cent reduction in mining every year till 2016, when mining has to be stopped in Ecologically Sensitive Zone (ESZ) 1 and environmental rehabilitation of the mined area post closure. In ESZ 2, current mining may be allowed but no new mining licenses should be granted until the conditions in the mining regions improve.

The panel has, further, called for the permanent cancellation of mining leases in wildlife sanctuaries and the catchment area of dams used for drinking water. It stated specifically that orders passed by the Collector and Revenue Officer excluding any of the mines from the Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary should be cancelled.

The panel also observed that most mining leases in Goa are located in and around wildlife sanctuaries and forest areas - 31 leases were found to be within 2 km of a sanctuary, of which seven are working mines while 13 leases were found within one km of a sanctuary. Evidence of some mines operating illegally within sanctuaries was also found.

Source: KS Sudhi. 'Exclude eco-sensitive areas from mining', www.thehindu.com, 29/12/11.

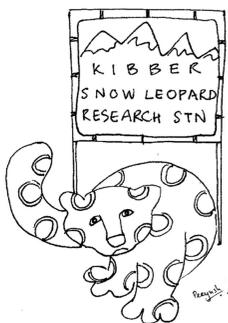
HIMACHAL PRADESH Snow Leopard research centre for Spiti valley

Wildlife managers in collaboration with the Mysore based National Conservation Foundation (NCF) have drawn up plans to set up a Snow leopard research centre in Kibber in the Spiti valley. Rs 30 lakhs is proposed to be spent on the centre in the first year. Money

allocated under 'Project Snow Leopard' by the central government will be used for the setting of the facility.

The research center would help conservationists and officials do a comprehensive long term radio collaring study on snow leopards and their prey and will also encourage research on many other less studied aspects of Spiti's ecosystem and human society. The centre will also be equipped with dedicated power, internet and lab facilities.

Though the number of snow leopards in the Indian Himalayas is estimated at 400 to 700, a 2004 survey suggested that only 35 were to be found in Himachal Pradesh. Of these 24 are in Spiti valley and eight in Pangi-Lahaul valley.



Source: Ravinder Makhaik, 'Snow leopard research center to be set up at Kibber – Spiti', www.hillpost.in, 25/11/11.

Contact: **Dr. Yashveer Bhatnagar**, NCF, 3076/5, IV Cross, Gokulam Park, Mysore - 570002. Tel: 0821-515601. Email: n cf@n cf-india.org. Web: www.n cf-india.org

JHARKHAND

Elephant rescue centre at Dalma WLS

The Jharkhand State Forest Department has initiated a proposal for the establishment of an

elephant rescue centre at Makulakocha in the foothills of Dalma. The centre was originally to be built over an area of 50 acres but has been now trimmed to 30 acres due to a shortage of funds. Rs. 10 lakhs have now been sanctioned for the project.

Before launching the project, a team of forest officials has planned to visit Kerala to see and study an existing elephant rescue centre there.

Source: ASRP Mukesh, 'Jumbo rescue centre plan gets moving', *The Telegraph*, 21/11/11.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Dalma WLS Wildlife Division, Ranchi, Jharkhand. Tel: 0651-301861

KARNATAKA

HC upholds order for night closure of road through Nagarhole NP

The Karnataka High Court recently upheld a July 2008 order by Deputy Commissioner, Mysore, for the closure of the Mysore-Mananthavadi highway (SH 17D) -passing through the Nagarhole National Park- during night. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Vikramajit Sen and Justice B V Nagarathna dismissed a petition by Father Thomas Joseph Therakkam and others from Waynaad to revoke the order, after the government submitted that an alternative road for vehicular movement exists.

In their submission, the petitioners had stated that the Mysore-Mananthavadi road has been in public use for a long time, as it was opened in the days of Tipu Sultan for transportation and communication. They further mentioned that the road had been in neglect for a long time until people protest in 2007 prompted the authorities to act. However, they noted, it had been since stopped by vested interests acting in the name of conservation.

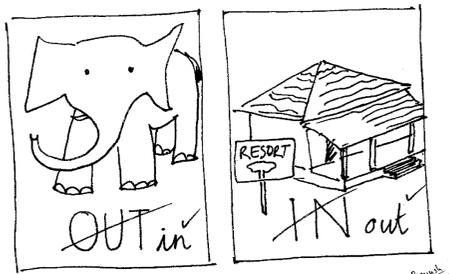
Pointing out that the matter is still pending in the Supreme Court, the petition alluded to the July 11, 2008 order by Mysore Deputy Commissioner closing traffic on the road from 6 pm to 6 am and another Sep 1, 2008 order prohibiting vehicles except two

busses and ambulance to ferry patients and said people have been put to great hardship as a result of the orders and their personal liberty has been affected. The petitioners also alleged that a powerful lobby comprising of land owners adjacent to the forest are working to ensure that the people are deprived of enjoying wildlife along this stretch and the vehicles ply close to their lands. They also said the alternative route would be a detour to Mysore and people have to travel at about 80 kms and pay more.

The road had been ordered shut for traffic at night in July 2008 taking into account the road kills due to traffic and also fearing fragmentation of the wildlife habitat and other impacts on the wild animals. The order was issued based on a proposal by wildlife expert and member of State Board for Wildlife Sanjay Gubbi and in consultation with government officials, transporters and other stakeholders.

Source: Subhash Chandra N S. 'Victory for conservationists who are against reopening', *Deccan Herald*, 07/01/12.

High Court says no to translocation of elephants to Cauvery WLS



The Karnataka High Court (HC) has refused to grant permission for the proposed translocation of 25 elephants from the Alur forest range to the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.

Hearing a suo-moto petition in the matter a division bench of the HC comprising Chief Justice Vikramjit Sen and Justice A S Bopanna said permission for translocation cannot be granted unless expert opinion was obtained in the matter. The court directed the Union Government to seek the advice of conservation experts from Africa or any other country.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Chief Wildlife Warden pointed to

island fencing of coffee estates in Kodagu, loss of forest area and indiscriminate eco-tourism as principal reasons for the human-animal conflict in the state. Additionally, it was noted that exotic weeds like parthenium, eupatorium and lantana were growing in abundance in protected areas resulting in food scarcity for the pachyderms. Referring to resorts and farms which have mushroomed in the Kaniyanpura Elephant Corridor, the official sought directions to remove fences around the large private farms to ensure uninterrupted movement of elephants. Thus, the PCCF claimed there was no other way except to translocate elephants.

The Chief Justice was, however, not convinced and asked that if a resort had come up at Bandipur in the elephant corridors, why was the PCCF not recommending for removal of the resort and asking instead for the translocation of the elephants.

Source: 'HC refuses to allow translocation of jumbos', *Deccan Herald*, 17/11/11.

Contact: **DCF**, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary Kanakapura, Dist. Bangalore, Karnataka. Tel: 08117-22536(O), 22537(R)

Field Director, Bandipur Project Tiger Reserve, Aranya Bhawan, Ashokapuram, Mysore – 570008, Karnataka. Tel: 0821-2480901(O), 2484980 (R).

Minister seeks reconsideration of plan for extension of Pushpagiri WLS

The Union Minister for Corporate Affairs, Dr M Veerappa Moily, has written a letter seeking reconsideration of the plan for the extension of the Pushpagiri Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The letter dated October 7, 2011, sent to the Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Ms Jayanthi Natarajan, has asked for the reconsideration of the inclusion of 455.96 sq km of land in Shiradi, Uppinangady and Subramanya into the sanctuary.

The Pushpagiri WLS was notified in 1987 and the proposal of the Forest Department (FD) is to now add another 536.37 sq km. The forests proposed to be

included in the sanctuary are rich in diverse wildlife and would also link up to the newly declared Kudremukh Tiger Reserve.

Citing a letter from D Veerandra Heggade from Dharmastala, Mr Moily's letter states that inhabitants of the area fear that extension of the boundaries of the sanctuary would result in them losing their agricultural lands.

The FD has however said that the proposed extension only covers Reserve Forest areas that were so declared in the 1900s and that no rights of the locals will be affected. Wildlife experts have been surprised by the Minister's move and suspect the role of timber and mini hydel project mafia as at least a dozen hydel projects exist in this region that are either awaiting clearance or are in operation.

Source: Subhash Chandra N S, 'Moily's letter to delay extension of Pushpagiri Wildlife Sanctuary', *Deccan Herald*, 08/11/11.

Contact: **ACF – Wildlife Subdivision**, I/c Pushpagiri WLS, Medikeri – 571201. Dist. Kodagu, Karnataka. Tel: 08272-228019(O), Fax: 08272-28439

KERALA

Reduction in funds puts protected areas at risk

A drastic reduction in the Central allocation and the failure of the Kerala government to compensate for the loss has resulted in the downsizing of protection staff and even fire control operations for several protected areas in the state. A large number of tribal people engaged as watchers on daily wages basis have also not been given salaries.

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) had recently reduced the annual allocation for protected areas to Rs 2.88 crore against the Rs 4.4 crore in 2010.

The Munnar Wildlife Division, which covers four national parks and two sanctuaries, is one of the worst affected areas in the State. The Eravikulam, Pampadum Shola, Mathikettan and Anamudi Shola National Parks and Chinnar and Kurinjimala sanctuaries come under the division. Senior officials apprehend that the financial crisis may affect the activities of Neyyar, Wayanad and Idukki Wildlife Sanctuaries and Silent Valley National Park too.

The Chinnar WLS engages 73 members of the Hill Pulaya tribal community, the Eravikulam NP engages 23 Muthuvans and 30 Hill Pulayar tribe members work at Pampadum Shola, Mathikettan and Anamudi national parks and Kurinjimala sanctuary. The salary of at least half of the tribal watchers engaged in the division remains unpaid. On an average, a tribal watcher is engaged for 26 days a month and paid around Rs.400 a day. The park managers are toying with the idea of either reducing the number of tribal watchers or the days of engaging them to tide over the financial crisis.

Source: K. S. Sudhi, 'Fund crunch affects conservation activities at national parks', *The Hindu*, 17/11/11.

Model to predict human-elephant conflict zones

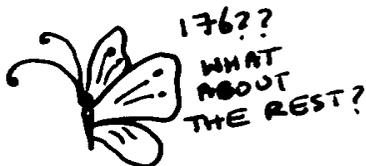
Scientists from the Zoology and Geology Departments of Kerala University as well as those from the Centre for Geo-information Science and Technology have developed a model that they claim can predict Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) zones and thus help the authorities in prevention of such conflicts. The factors that have been identified as important in HEC cases include availability of water, slope of the area, canopy density, distance to the forest, distance to the rivers and distance to tribal settlements.

The team found, for instance, that more the canopy density, the less was the chance of attack by elephants. Avoiding cultivation of banana, sugarcane and pineapple in certain terrains and near hamlets can keep the elephants away. Certain terrains, where the slope is steep, are ideally suited for cultivation of such crops as elephants fear to come down the gradient.

Tribal settlements near the forest, the model notes, are a sure target with elephants coming in for food crops, cooked salted food and even liquor. During the breeding season, the elephants need more protein and minerals. While female elephants enter only those hamlets near the forest, male elephants travel a lot.

Source: Reema Narendran, 'Model on human-elephant conflict zones developed', *The New Indian Express*, 22/11/11.

Survey records 176 species of butterflies in Shendurney WLS



A three-day survey in the Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary has recorded 176 species of butterflies here. The survey was conducted jointly by the Travancore Natural History Society (TNHS) and the Kerala Forest Department. The 30-member survey team included experts V.C. Balakrishnan, Ashok Sengupta, Balakrishnan Vaalappil, K. Baiju, C.G. Arun, TNHS public relations officer S. Kalesh, and coordinator H. Charan.

The survey covered the entire sanctuary by setting up six base camps at Kattalapara, Kallar, Pandimotta, Umayar, Rockwood, and Rosemala. The highest number of butterflies was recorded at Umayar (105 species) while the Kallar area had the second highest number with 96 species. Nymphalids, the brush-footed butterflies, topped the family list with 58 species followed by Skippers (40) and Lycaenids or the Blues (37).

The TNHS had earlier made a checklist of 257 species of butterflies in the sanctuary through a decade-long observation in different seasons. There are 334 species of butterflies recorded in the whole of the Western Ghats and the present survey takes the total number of butterfly species observed in the sanctuary to 263 species including 25 that are endemic to the Western Ghats.

The survey noted that large-scale use of herbicides in the plantations within the sanctuary was taking a heavy toll on the butterflies and other forms of life.

Source: Ignatius Pereira. 'Mesmerising butterfly diversity found in Shendurney sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 16/11/11.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Shendurney Wildlife Division, P.O. Thenmala, Dist. Thiruvananthapuram. Tel: 0475-344600

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MAHARASHTRA

Coal mining destroying tiger habitat around Tadoba-Andhari TR: Greenpeace report

A recent report by a Greenpeace India fact-finding team has suggested that coal mining poses a serious threat to tigers around the forests of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). The fact finding team was made up of Praveen Bhargav of Wildlife First, Biswajit Mohanty of the Wildlife Society of Orissa and Rahul Chaudhary, a lawyer with the New Delhi based Legal Initiative for Forests and Environment. The work on the report was executed in September 2011.

The key recommendations of the report are the following:

- a) that no new mines should be given forest clearance in the region and further expansion of operational mines in tiger habitat should be stopped.
- b) that TATR risks being completely cut off from surrounding forests by mines and dams, and that the ecological impact will be irreversible and cannot be compensated by afforestation. A fundamental shift in policy towards a scientific landscape approach that is focused on minimizing fragmentation of large blocks of contiguous forests instead of the present emphasis on forest density and measuring area lost is therefore the way forward.

In its 2010 report, the National Tiger Conservation Authority had estimated that the larger Chandrapur region holds 66 to 74 tigers spread over 3,241 sq. km. Coal mining is threatening connectivity between forest patches that are important for the long term survival of this tiger population.

In 2010, the MoEF had denied clearance to Adani's coal mining plans in the Lohara block on these grounds (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. [1](#) and Vol. XV, Nos. [3](#) & [1](#)). However, the report says, there are several

other mines also proposed in critical areas that serve as connecting corridors between Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve and other forests. These include among others, the Chinchpalli mining block to the south and the Bander mining block to the north of TATR.

With over 2,558 hectares of forest land already diverted for coal mining in Chandrapur district since 2000, any other mining, it is feared, will damage corridors to the north, south and southeast of the reserve. These corridors are used by tigers to move from TATR to other forests in the landscape, including the Chaprala WLS, the Indravati Tiger Reserve, Bor WLS and the Navegaon-Nagzira belt.

The entire report can be downloaded from <http://www.greenpeace.org/india/Global/india/report/2011/Report-Undermining-Tadoba%27s-Tigers.pdf>

Source: 'Coal mining destroying critical tiger habitat around Tadoba tiger reserve, says fact finding team', Greenpeace India Press Release, 22/11/11.

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RFOs finally appointed in Mansingdeo WLS

More than a year after the Mansingdeo Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) was notified (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. [1](#) and Vol. XIV, No. [2](#)), the state government has finally posted three range forest officers (RFOs) here. It has been noted that though the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra was carrying out some protection work, the forests and the wildlife were suffering from continued neglect.



The appointments were made in November 2011 as part of a number of other steps by the state. The government has promoted 127 foresters as

RFOs and has claimed to have filled almost all the vacancies of RFOs in wildlife and territorial ranges.

The Pench Tiger Reserve, adjoining the Mansingdeo WLS, has earmarked a fund of Rs 50 lakh for various wildlife management works in Mansingdeo. The state government has also directed the officials concerned to ensure immediate relieving of promoted foresters and their joining in the newly assigned duty stations. Promoted officials not joining in 15 days would be denied promotion and also face disciplinary action.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Mansingdeo wildlife sanctuary gets three range forest officers', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 17/11/11.

ORISSA

Orissa proposes to use CAMPA funds to fix electrical lines causing elephant deaths

The Orissa government has proposed to use funds under the Compensatory Afforestation and Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) to fix electrical lines because private power companies have said they cannot afford it. The state has therefore decided to urge the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to clear Rs 20 crore from the state CAMPA fund.

Orissa, which has almost 80 per cent of all elephants in eastern India, has seen 110 of them killed by electrocution in the last 11 years (*PA Updates* Vol. XVI, Nos. [5](#) & [3](#); Vol. XIV, No. [3](#) and Vol. XII, Nos. [6](#) & [1](#)). The Wildlife Society of Orissa surveyed low-hanging lines in Dhenkanal district, where a large number of elephants live, and found these sagging at 147 locations. A list was handed over to the government in October 2011. Orissa's four power distribution companies (WESCO, SOUTHCO, NESCO and CESU) have been citing lack of funds to repair the lines.

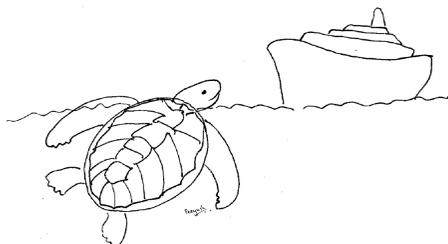
MoEF officials and members of the National Board of Wildlife have questioned the request for allocation of funds from

CAMPA. Though the ministry would soon take a decision on the proposal, it has been noted that using CAMPA funds for works of private power distribution companies would send out a wrong signal.

CAMPA funds comprise collections from industries and government organisations for diversion of forest areas to non-forest purposes. The core principle is that CAMPA funds would be given back to state governments for undertaking measures to conserve the forests and wildlife and to mitigate the impact of such diversions. Orissa got Rs 270 crore in 2009 and 2010 and is expected to get another Rs 250 crore this year.

Source: Debabrata Mohanty, 'Company wires kill elephants, Orissa wants Central funds to fix them', *Indian Express*, 01/12/11.

Controversial Dhamra port located in the vicinity of Bhitarkanika, Gahirmatha finally commissioned



The Dhamra port located at the mouth of River Dhamra in the Bhadrak district of Orissa was recently commissioned. The controversial port had been opposed intensely over the last decade by wildlife and environmental groups on various grounds. This included among others the legal status of the land used for the construction, proximity of the port to the boundaries of the Bhitarkanika National Park and the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary and the impact the various activities like dredging, construction and lighting would have on the nesting of the olive ridley turtles here (*PA Updates* Vol. XVI, No. 4; Vol. XV, Nos. 6 & 4).

The Rs 3,500 crore project is a 50:50 joint venture of Larsen & Toubro and Tata Steel. It has a draught of 18 meters, which can accommodate super cape-size vessels of up to 1,80,000 dead weight tonnage (DWT). The port is slated to have 13 berths when the second and final phase of

construction gets over in 2014. It handled its first vessel that offloaded around 22,000 tonnes of imported coking coal for Tata Steel in September last year.

Once the port achieves its full berth capacity, it would be able to handle more than 100 MT of cargo. It would have a separate container terminal, the first in eastern India and an oil terminal as well. Dhamra Port Company Limited (DPCL) officials said the 62 km-long single rail track from Dhamra to Bhadrak on the Howrah-Chennai line is one of the longest private electrified rail lines.

Source: Debabrata Mohanty. 'Finally, Dhamra port commissioned', *The Indian Express*, 19/12/11.

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TAMIL NADU

Tiger population in Sathyamangalam WLS at least 25

A recent study by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) using the camera trap method has confirmed the presence of at least 25 tigers in the Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary. A DNA finger print-based project initiated by the state forest department (FD) had collected 150 samples from the forests here and 69 among them were found positive at the tests conducted at Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad. The lab findings indicate that the region is home to tigers, ranging from 18 to 30 in number.

Forest officials have said the Sathyamangalam forests deserve the tiger reserve status. Sathyamangalam is linked with Mudumalai, Bandipur and BR Hills sanctuaries and provides a large contiguous stretch of protected forests. The forests are, additionally, home to one fourth of the elephants in the state with an estimated

population of 1,250. Sathyamangalam is also a migratory path for over 6,000 Asiatic elephants which move from the Nilgiris to Bandipur in Karnataka. A large number of black bucks and hyenas are also to be found here.

It was only in August 2011 that Sathyamangalam got wildlife sanctuary status. Recently, the sanctuary was expanded with the inclusion of forest reserves like Guthiyalathur, Akurjakkarai, Thalamalai, Berabetta, Ullepalayam and the eastern slopes of the Nilgiris, under it (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6.)

Source: 'WWF study confirms at least 25 tigers in Sathyamangalam forests', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/11249004.cms>

Over 10,000 kgs of sea cucumber seized in Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve in year 2011

A total of 40 seizures amounting to more than 10,000 kgs of sea cucumber have been made in the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve region between January and December 2011 in the operations led by the forest department (FD) here. The latest seizures of 450 and 200 kgs each made in the first half of December. A total of eight young men were arrested in these two operations. While one Maruti Omni van was seized in the first operation, five boats including a speedboat were seized in the second one.

The initial interrogation has revealed that the contraband, valued at several hundreds of thousands of rupees in the lucrative international markets, mainly the east Asian countries, was slated to be taken to Sri Lanka by the sea route.

Sri Lanka where the species is freely tradable, is used as a conduit country, mainly for transiting the contrabands to the Far East. Forest officials have noted that those involved in the smuggling enjoy considerable political support.

Source: Shekhar Kumar Niraj, Emails dated 09/12/11 and 12/12/11.

Contact: **Shekhar Kumar Niraj**, Director of Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve, Virudhunagar Circle, Collectorate Campus, Virudhunagar – 626002, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 04562-252158 / 9445468459. Email: shekhar.niraj@gmail.com

UTTARAKHAND

Over 100 leopard deaths in Uttarakhand in 2011

Information put together by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) indicates that 106 leopards were killed in Uttarakhand in the year 2011 (upto December 10). The break-up for the cause of deaths is as follows - 57 leopards were killed by poachers, 19 died of old age or sickness, seven were killed in accidents, six were killed by the forest department after being declared man eaters, six died during rescue operations, six died in territorial fights, three were killed by other animals and the carcass of two cubs were found.

While numbers for 2010 are not available, 85 leopard deaths were reported in the state in 2009 while the figure for 2008 was 53.

Source: Jagdish Bhatt. 'Over 100 leopards killed in Uttarakhand in 2011', www.hillpost.in, 14/12/11.

Contact: **CWLW**, 5, Chandrabani, Mohobewala, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0135- 2644691

Twice rejected by FAC, hydro-project in buffer zone of Nanda Devi BR gets MoEF approval

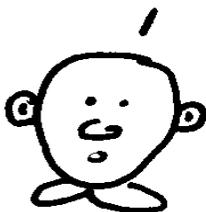
A proposed hydro-project on the Alakananda River in Uttarakhand has been cleared by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests' (MoEF) after it was rejected twice by the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC). The project of GMR Energy Limited planned in Chamoli district had been rejected by the FAC on the ground that any development in the area will lead to 'irreversible' damage to the ecology and to wildlife.

In May 2011, the FAC had observed that the project is located in the buffer zone of Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, which houses the Nanda Devi National Park and the Valley of Flowers National Park. Fear had been expressed of the ecological impact and on movement of species such as the snow leopard and the brown bear. In October 2011

the proposal was again brought for the consideration of the FAC but approval was denied because no facts had been brought forward by the State government that necessitated revision of the May order.

On November 8, 2011, however, the MoEF gave in-principle approval to the project without mentioning reasons for overruling the FAC's decision. The approval letter has stipulated 25 conditions, only one of which is related to wildlife – it says that the project proponent shall ensure that no damage is caused to the wildlife. All the other conditions are related to compliance of various government rules and regulations.

DON'T ASK HOW WE
KNOW BUT THE PROJECT
WONT HARM WILDLIFE...



Source: Chetan Chauhan, 'Rejected by panel, hydro project gets ministry nod', www.hindustantimes.com, 04/12/11.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer** Nanda Devi
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NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Sanctuary Asia Wildlife Awards -2011

The 12th Sanctuary Asia Wildlife Awards were recently awarded in a ceremony held in Mumbai. The winners are as follows:

Lifetime Achievement Award: Dr. George Schaller
Wildlife Service Awards: Dr. SD Biju, amphibian biologist and researcher; Shekar Dattatri, award-winning wildlife filmmaker and conservationist; Gerard Martin, herpetologist; Daulat Singh Shaktawat, forest officer, Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve; and P Suresha, Namma Sangha, Karnataka

Young Naturalists Awards: Tengbat Sangma
Ramnath Chandrashekar, Aishwarya
Shridhar,

The Wind Under the Wings Award was given to the Maharashtra Government for enabling and encouraging the work of Praveen Pardeshi, IAS, presently Forest Secretary, Government of Maharashtra.

Source: 'Winning Battles',
www.sanctuaryasia.com

Contact: **Bittu Sahgal**, Editor, Sanctuary Asia.
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Solar power driven systems installed in 15 TRs

Solar power driven systems have been installed in 15 tigers reserves (TRs) across the country. The integrated system can be used to light up protection posts inside forests, can charge a walkie-talkie in just half an hour, has three sets of LED lights equivalent to a 9 W CFL bulb and is designed to function under sub-optimum conditions. A key highlight of the system is that it charges both its internal battery and equipment simultaneously ensuring that staff is never without electricity.

The systems have been designed by the New Mumbai based Solar Energy Spectrum Systems and were donated mainly by the Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT). Some of these have also been donated by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – India.

The TRs where these systems have been installed are Bandavgarh, Kanha, Pench, Panna (Madhya Pradesh), Nagarhole Bandipur (Karnataka), Periyar (Kerala), Sariska and Ranthambhore (Rajasthan), Dudhwa (Uttar Pradesh), Mudumalai (Tamil Nadu), Tadoba-Andhari, Nagzira, Melghat (Maharashtra), and Pakke (Arunachal Pradesh).

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Any citizen entitled to move Green panel: NGT



The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has held that any citizen can approach it for protection of the environment, regardless of whether the person is directly affected by a

developmental project or whether s/he is a resident of the affected area. The tribunal has said that it may not be proper to reject an application on the ground that the applicant is not a resident of the area or not directly affected.

The NGT ruling came in response to a plea by three environmentalists challenging the environment clearance given for deforestation of 80.5 hectares of government forest land for construction of a hydro-electric dam across river Alaknanda in the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand.

Dismissing the government's plea that petitioners were not directly affected by the project, the bench said the persons living in the vicinity of the proposed project may not know about its intrinsic scientific details and effects or any disaster it may cause. Therefore, the bench noted, the concept of 'person aggrieved' should be liberal in environment related cases. The NGT also rejected the government's contention that they have cleared the project after a proper scientific study.

The NGT, which was established by the NGT Act of 2010, is dedicated to adjudicating environmental issues.

Source: 'Anyone entitled to move Green panel on environmental issues: NGT', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>

Elephant population on the rise in the country

The elephant population in the country has increased by 2,000 in the past 15 years. The number is about 28,000 as per the latest data of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). The information was provided in response to a query under the Right to Information (RTI) Act in the matter.

According to the 2007 census, there were 27,669 to 27,715 elephants in the country whereas the 1993 number was 25,604. A majority of 14,005 elephants are found in the southern region of the country followed by between 9,305 and 9,355 animals in the northeastern (NE) region. In the NE Assam has the highest number of 5,281 pachyderms.

There are 2,633 elephants in the eastern states of Jharkhand, Orissa and Chhattisgarh. Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh are reported to have a population of 1,726 elephants.

Source: 'Elephant population on the rise', *The Tribune*, 21/11/11.

MoEF seeks hike in funds for two wildlife schemes

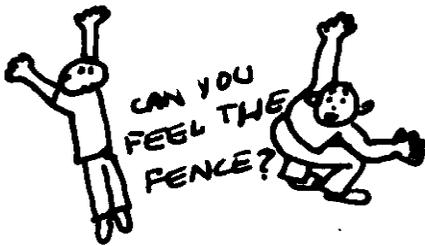
In its correspondence and recent meetings with the Planning Commission on the 12th Plan, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has sought around Rs 3,600 crore in the Plan period for two of its three wildlife schemes.

Rs. 3000 crores have been sought for the scheme for the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH). In the ongoing plan period, the IDWH had received only 45.25 per cent of its approved outlay of Rs 800 crore. Project Elephant, similarly received only an amount of Rs. 20 crore per year in the current plan period. The proposed amount now is Rs 600 crore.

No additional demand has, however, been made for Project Tiger.

Source: Avishek G Dastidar, 'MoEF seeks 4-fold hike in wildlife fund', *Indian Express*, 17/11/11.

Virtual fencing to protect forests, wildlife



Scientists from the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Allahabad, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun and the Ohio and Cornell Universities in the United States of America are working on a technology that would be able to detect sound, motion and temperature changes in the area of activity and help in reducing cases of human-animal conflicts, forest fires and deal with other challenges in wildlife habitat management and protection.

The technology could trigger an alert when poaching takes place and also detect unwarranted cutting of trees in forests. Experts explained that the Virtual Fence (VF) technology is a system where an animal veering out of the forest is “driven back” into its habitat. Taking hint from how villagers generally beat drums and light torches to drive a wayward animal back into the forests, the scientists suggest that VF will be able to generate such sounds and light so that the animal does not cross over into human habitations. It could also prevent animals from reaching roads and railway tracks where accidents occur very regularly.

The other two major components of the project are trail surveillance and forest-patch monitoring aimed at developing a holistic forest protection system. The former will help in tracking the movement of animals, while the forest-patch monitoring aspect will help in identifying those areas in the forest where some unwarranted activity is going on.

The efficacy of the technology was recently put to test and discussed in a five day workshop organized at the Panna Tiger Reserve.

Source: ‘Habitats with virtual fencing to ‘destress’ wildlife’, *The Pioneer*, 06/12/11.

51 tigers died in 2011

Information put together by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) indicate that 51 tigers died in different parts of the country between January and December 5, 2011. 14 tigers perished in Uttarakhand, the highest in a single state. Karnataka takes the second place with six deaths while Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh accounted for five deaths each.

Poaching, road accidents, infighting and fights with other animals are some of the reasons for the deaths. Some tigers died of natural causes and diseases too. A few were killed by villagers, police and the forest department.

Skins, bones, skulls and claws of the big cat have also been seized in Manipur, Orissa, Maharashtra and Uttarakhand this year.

Source: Avijit Ghosh & Vijay Pinjarkar. ‘51 tigers died in 2011 – Report’, *The Times of India*, 07/12/11.

Nation-wide bear survey



A nation-wide survey was kicked off in the month of November to collate information on distribution, threats and conservation measures from all 26 bear-ranging states to prepare the National Bear Conservation Action Plan. The survey is an initiative of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, and is being conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). Information on bears will be collected for the last five years from the records of the state forest departments. State-wise action plans will be compiled, which will eventually be used to produce the national plan.

Eight species of bears are found in the world of which four – the Asiatic black bear, Himalayan brown bear, Malayan sun bear and the Sloth bear occur in India and are distributed across the country.

The National Plan, itself, is slated for release at the International Bear Association (IBA) Conference to be held in India in November 2012. The conference which is considered to be the largest international bear congregation focusing on conservation of all eight bear species is organised every 18 months on a rotational basis between the Americas and Eurasia. Members from over 50 countries are expected to participate in this five-day long conference that is being jointly organised by the MoEF, WII and WTI in collaboration with the International Association for Bear Research and Management.

Source: 'Nation-wide bear survey kicks off in anticipation of the IBA conference 2012', www.wti.org, 10/11/11.

SOUTH ASIA

SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka allocates Rs 1,120 million for elephants for 2012

The Sri Lankan government has allocated around Rs 1,120 million for the protection of wild elephants in the budget for 2012. The Agrarian Services and Wildlife Minister Mr S M Chandrasena said that his ministry has drawn up a plan to launch a sustained programme for the same with immediate effect.

The budget has allocated Rs 400 million to develop the Vilpattu National park. Four protection centers for elephants will also be built in Maduru Oya, Galgamuwa, Weheragala and Horowpatana. Rs 400 million has been allocated to build the Maduru Oya and Galgamuwa Elephant Protection Centers while Rs 520 million will be allocated to build the Weheragala and Horowpatana Elephant Protection Centers. Another Rs 100 million will be allocated to introduce the new insurance scheme for farmers who are under threat from elephants.

Source: Priyanka Kurugala, 'Budgetary allocations to protect elephants', *Daily News*, 05/12/11.

INTERNATIONAL

Joint raid in four countries against wildlife trade

Joint action against wildlife trade was carried out by enforcement agencies in four countries – India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand – in the first two weeks of December 2011. The action that was coordinated and supported by Operation Stocktake, Interpol's Environmental Crime Programme, saw enforcement agencies inspecting markets, restaurants and shops to identify those selling and trading endangered wildlife alongside legal products. They also were on the lookout for the sale of wildlife meat, or bushmeat, for human consumption.

India's Wildlife Crime Control Bureau carried out searches in 37 shops and arrested 10 suspects, who now face criminal proceedings for trading items such as ivory and leopard claws.

Officers from the Specialized Crime Department of Indonesia National Police coordinated the operation from Jakarta. East Kalimantan Regional Police arrested four suspects believed to be responsible for the killing of orangutans. They recovered firearms and what are believed to be orangutan bones.

In Malaysia, officers from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks inspected 21 shops and restaurants. As a result, four persons are now facing charges for possession of protected species. One restaurant was caught selling porcupine, civet and wild boar meat.

Officers from the Thailand Police Natural Resources and Environmental Crime Division focused their efforts on Bangkok's Chatuchak Market, the largest market in Thailand and a known hub for illegal wildlife trafficking.

In other Interpol activity, 50 representatives from customs, police, prosecution and specialized agencies from 18 countries across Africa and Asia attended the first international workshop to establish a

network of controlled delivery units for forest and wildlife law enforcement. Controlled deliveries have been a tool for investigating drug and tobacco smuggling, but their use in wildlife smuggling is more recent.

The workshop was held from December 7-9 and was organized by the World Customs Organization (WCO) under the auspices of the newly-formed International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime. It was hosted by China

Customs at the Shanghai Customs College, a designated WCO regional training center.

Source: 'Police Raid Asian Wildlife Markets in New Enforcement Push', <http://www.ens-newswire.com>, 23/12/11.

IN THE SUPREME COURT

PA related matters in the Supreme Court (SC) the Central Empowered Committee and the National Green Tribunal in October and November 2011

- Master Plan for the Mt. Abu Ecosensitive Area, Rajasthan
- Diversion of land for highway construction in the Hazaribagh WLS, Jharkhand
- Diversion of 42.74 hectares of land from the Ramnagar and Nandini WLSs, Jammu & Kashmir, for highway construction

'In the Supreme Court' is based on the Forest Case Update, which is a web-based initiative to provide information and updates on developments related to forests and wildlife in the Supreme Court of India.

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Member Secretary, Central Empowered Committee, II Floor, Chanakya Bhawan, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110021 Tel: 011-26884921 /23 /26, Fax: 24101925



Seeking Support for the PA Update

The Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust and the Foundation for Ecological Security have continued their support to the *PA Update* more than a decade of continued support and we are extremely grateful for their trust and belief in this newsletter. While a good part of the requirement will get covered we still need to raise substantial funds to keep the newsletter going. Any contribution, however small is welcome and this is an appeal for support.

There are various ways in which you can contribute - donations, individual subscriptions, gift subscriptions and bulk subscriptions for organisations that want to help reach out the *PA Update* to others as well. If you want more information on how to contribute, or have some questions or suggestions, please do write to the editor at psekhsaria@gmail.com

Important Bird Areas Update

ANDHRA PRADESH

Five year management plan for Pulicat

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has prepared a five-year management plan (2012-17) to maintain the brackish water eco-system in the Pulicat lake, enhance livelihood for fishermen dependent on the water body, restore the mangrove forests, improve marine productivity and promote eco-tourism in and around the lake. A study will also be conducted on the sources of fresh water flowing into the lake from Swarnamukhi and Kalangi rivers and other catchment areas and the inflow of salt water into the lake from the Bay of Bengal. All these activities are to be taken up under the 'Pulicat Wetland Development Project'.

Measures are also being discussed for the opening up sea- mouths to the lake at Rayadurg village (located on Sriharikota island) and at Konduruvaripalem village (in Vakadu mandal) in Nellore district in the next two years (2012 and 2013). The government has also decided to deepen the sea mouth at Pazhaverukadu village in Tamil Nadu. A team of officials from Oceanography, Environment, Forest (Wild Life), Fisheries, Weather and other departments will take up a survey on the impact of opening of sea mouths and submit the report by February 2012.

Recently, a team headed by Divisional Forest Officer (Wildlife Division, Sulluripet), visited the Chilika lake in Orissa, where the sea mouths had been opened in 2002 (*PA Updates* Nos. [46](#), [40](#), [38](#), [34](#), [30](#) & [26](#)).

Source: Rajulapudi Srinivas. 'Wetland Development Project to be taken up in Pulicat lake', *The Hindu*, 18/11/11.

Contact: Contact: **DFO Wildlife**, Pulicat Lake WLS, Sullurpet, Dist. Nellore, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08623-262158

Fear over impact on Kolleru WLS of drilling in the K-G basin

The Godavari Delta Parirakshana Samithi (GDPS) has expressed concern over the impact on the

Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary and Ramsar Site on account of the oil and natural gas drilling operations being carried out in the Krishna-Godavari (K-G) basin by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC). In a memorandum submitted to the local collector, the Samithi has said that the drilling was 'unregulated' and had caused subsidence of land in certain places. This, it notes, has allowed sea water to enter the lake during the spring tide in summer and this would have an adverse bearing on flora and fauna of the lake.

Canals and drains in some areas had also experienced sinking and the farmers in the area have noted that sea water was entering fields, drinking water sources and prawn and fish ponds. The samithi leaders have appealed to the government to withhold permission for drilling in new locations till the ONGC had cleared all apprehensions.

Source: 'Peasants express concern over drilling in K-G basin', *The Hindu*, 28/12/11.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, I/c Kolleru WLS, Eluru. West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08812-232356

GUJARAT

Greater Flamingoes being electrocuted by high tension power lines in Kutch and Bhavnagar

A large number of Greater flamingoes are reported to have died of electrocution in the Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary in November 2011. While initial Forest Department (FD) estimates put the figure at 139 birds, local people and ornithologists have said that the number is much higher and could be about 400 birds. It has been suggested that the flamingos, which were resting on the open space near the high tension cables on the road side might have got disturbed in the night due to some vehicular sound or other noise and hit the high tension cables while trying to fly away. Following the incident, reflectors and

flags have been placed and guards deployed near the towers carrying high tension cables.

This is the second instance of mass electrocution of the birds in Gujarat in 2011. In June, a large number of flamingoes were similarly killed in Bhavnagar. The Khadir region where the incident took place then is located about 50 km from the India-Pakistan border. The FD has asked the Gujarat Energy Transmission Company (Getco), to either insulate the high tension cables or put them underground where they run close to the breeding grounds of the birds in the Khadir region. Getco will have to complete the work by September 2012, before a new batch of flamingos arrives. Till the cables are put underground, Getco will cover them with reflector tape which will shine at night and hopefully keep away the birds.

The high voltage power lines which killed 400 flamingos at Khadir in Kutch had become operational in March 2011. Earlier the power lines were 11 KV lines. This is the first flamingo season after the power lines were commissioned. Getco officials have claimed that there are no incidents of birds colliding with power lines in the day time. Most of the incidents take place in the night when visibility is poor.

This year an estimated 4 lakh greater flamingos arrived here as against the usual 40,000-50,000. Even the locals and regular bird watchers are reported to have claimed that they had not seen such a huge number of the bird in the last 20 years or so.

In their recently published study titled 'Flamingo mortality due to collision with high tension electric wires in Gujarat', ornithologists Anika Tere and B M Parasharya mapped seven sites in Kutch, Bhavnagar and Jamnagar where high tension cables run close to flamingo sites.

Source: '400 flamingos die in Gujarat', *The Times of India*, 01/12/11, Himanshu Kaushik, '139 greater flamingos electrocuted', *The Hindu*, 02/12/11

Real estate development, industrialization threaten Nal Sarovar

Rapid real estate development and industrialization in the vicinity of the Nal Sarovar is threatening the ecology of the water body and the avifauna found here. These are the findings of research done over the years by a number of

organizations that includes CEPT, National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad and the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA).

It has been reported that many of the industries being set up in Sanand are letting their chemical and solid waste flow into the open, which is then carried by the rain water into the lake. Large scale and unplanned real estate and industrial development is also taking place around the lake. Researchers have proposed that the government should undertake a zoning exercise around the lake to deal with the situation.

Source: Kuldeep Tiwari. 'Development at Nal keeps birds away', www.ahmedabadmirror.com, 15/12/11.
Contact: ACF, Nal Sarovar WLS, At & P.O. Vekaria Tehsil Viramgam, Dist. Ahmadabad. Gujarat. Tel: 079-2122430. Fax: 2122430

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Satellite-collared Ruddy Shelduck returns to Pong Lake WLS from China

A Ruddy Shelduck that was fitted with a satellite-telemetry collar at the Pong Lake Wildlife Sanctuary just before its journey in May 2011 returned to the lake in December 2011. The bird was one of six collared as part of a project initiated by the Himachal Pradesh Wildlife Department. The bird returned to Pong Lake after traversing a distance of 2200 km from its summer destination of Yixiao Dui and Kareqi Lan ai Rike wetlands in North-West China.

Three other birds, all Bar-Headed Geese, that had also been collared in Pong Lake were also reported to be on their way back when the shelduck return was reported.

The Wildlife Department now plans to put similar collars on 18 other birds before their migration to their summer homes begins in April-May 2012.

Source: Pratibha Chauhan. 'Radio-collared bird returns to Pong from China', *The Tribune*, 20/12/11.

Contact: **DFO (Wildlife)**, Pong Lake WLS,
Chamba Division, Chamba - 176310,
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KERALA

Hornbill nesting sites to be monitored with help of tribal community

The Western Ghats Hornbill Foundation (WGHF) and the Kerala Forest Department are launching a program for the monitoring of hornbill nesting sites with the help of the local tribal communities. The monitoring will be done from December 2011 to May 2012 in the forests of Vazhachal-Chalakudy Edamalayar, Nelliampathy, and Parambikulam. A similar program involving 20 individuals from the Kadar tribe has been ongoing in the Vazhachal area and is being extended for the first time. The tribesmen had identified 57 nesting trees in the survey last year in the Vazhachal forest. Now Malaya tribesmen will also be involved in the monitoring in the Parambikulam forests.

During the observation programme, the team members will look for leftover food, faecal matter and other visible signs of presence of the birds in and around the trees. The sites will be observed at least once in a week and monitoring will last till the hatching of the eggs. The tribesmen will also simultaneously look for the presence of some important wildlife species like tiger and Lion-tailed macaque.

While Vazhachal, Nelliampathy and Parambikulam are Important Bird Areas, only Parambikulam is an officially protected area under the Wildlife Protection Act.

Source: KS Sudhi. 'Kerala tribesmen will fan out to watch nesting sites', *The Hindu*, 29/11/11.

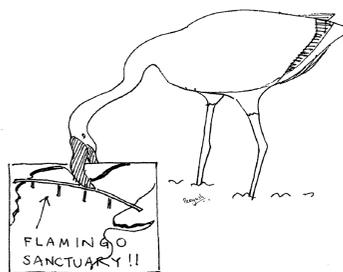
MAHARASHTRA

Flamingo sanctuary proposed along Thane creek in Mumbai

A Mumbai based NGO, Vanashakti, has approached the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) with a proposal to declare a flamingo sanctuary along the Thane creek area of Mumbai. A large number of birds including migratory

species can be found here and the area is threatened with habitat destruction, land reclamation for the Mulund - Thane Special Economic Zone (SEZ), aquaculture and pollution among others. The NGO has noted that the number of birds observed here have reduced drastically in the last decade or so.

A delegation from the NGO had recently also met the Principal Secretary, Forests, Maharashtra Mr. Praveensingh Pardeshi in this regard. The FD has reportedly agreed to the proposal and a notification declaring a sanctuary here is expected to be issued soon.



Source: 'Mumbai to have a flamingo sanctuary', <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/mumbai-have-flamingo-sanctuary>

Mumbai Trans Harbour Link to impact Sewri Mudflats; NGO seeks re-alignment of route

Fears have been expressed that the 22 km Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) that will connect Sewri to Nhava Sheva in New Mumbai will adversely impact the Sewri Mudflats which are an Important Bird Area (IBA). The project promoted by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) is expected to cost Rs. 8,800 crore.

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has supported a proposed re-alignment of the link in an effort to save the wetlands and the thousands of birds, including flamingoes, that are found here. The alternate design that has been created by the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has proposed the shifting of the alignment 700 m south of the present one. The MMRDA has however said that it will be difficult to change the alignment

but they were willing to discuss the issues involved.

Presently, the 3rd environment impact assessment (EIA) of the project is being carried out by a consortium comprising Arup Consulting and KPMG. The earlier EIAs had been conducted in 1996 and 2005 respectively.

Source: 'Greens want trans-harbour link realigned to save birds', *Hindustan Times*, 15/12/11.

Contact: **Dr. Asad Rahmani**, BNHS

PUDUCHERRY

Film shoot threat to birdlife of Kaliveli wetlands

The Important Bird Area (IBA) of the Kaliveli wetland, near the Puducherry-Tamil Nadu border had to bear the brunt of a film shoot in the month of December, raising concerns of the impact on its ecology and the birdlife here.

During shooting of a Tamil movie 'Vadhamalar', the crew was seen bursting water bombs, generating lot of sound and smoke in the process. Cranes and other equipment was also being used for the shoot in the wetland causing serious concern to birders and members of the Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN), particularly since this is the migratory season. When the IBCN raised concerns, they were asked to leave by the film crew which stated that they had all the necessary permissions.

Details of the permission are not known (were they authorized to use explosives, for eg.) and the District Forest Officer was not reachable when some media persons tried to get more information.

Source: 'Film shoot endangers Kaliveli wetlands', Express News Service, 12/12/11.

RAJASTHAN

Shonkalia grassland near Ajmer to be developed keeping GIB and Lesser florican in mind

The Ajmer district administration is drawing up a plan for the development of the Shonkalia grassland keeping in mind the needs of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) and the Less Florican that

are found here. The plan will also keep in mind the graziers whose cattle graze in this grassland. The plan is to provide structured grazing facility to the cattle for roughly six months a year. The initiative is a follow up to a meeting organized in Delhi recently to draw up a rescue plan for the GIBs. Shonkalia was identified in the meeting as one of the 10 most potential grassland regions in the country. The GIB is resident to the Shonkalia region and the Lesser Florican is found here during the breeding season in the monsoons.

The work will be taken up under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme through the State Government's Forest and Environment Department. An awareness program will be undertaken in the nearby villages. The area would be treated as a "no grazing habitat" from May till October, when the birds use it for their breeding activities. Rotational grazing would be allowed from October to May.

Source: 'Unique grassland habitat for protecting rare bird species to come up in Shonkalia', *The Hindu*, 03/12/11.

NATIONAL NEWS

Recovery plan for GIB and Lesser Florican

A draft national recovery plan for the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (GIB) and the endangered Lesser Florican has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) by a task force constituted for the purpose. The MoEF had constituted a 'Task Force on Conservation of Bustard species in India' to address issues in the conservation of Bustard and Florican species and to prepare an action plan for their recovery. The guidelines for recovery, prepared by Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-India, Wildlife Institute of India and ministry officials in consultation with various field scientists and state forest departments, has been submitted to the ministry recently.

They have prepared a three-tier recovery plan for both the GIB and the Lesser Florican. First is a national level plan, the

second is at the state level and the third is a site-specific plan for different local sites in the state where the birds are found. The recovery plan concentrates on both habitat recovery as well as species recovery. The plan applies to Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka where these birds are found. State Forest Departments, BNHS, WWF-India, WII, and local NGOs will be involved in the implementation of the plan.

The species recovery plan has a two pronged approach: study of population ecology and management intervention. The population study will include identifying lesser known and non-breeding areas through distribution surveys and satellite telemetry programs. The management intervention will include awareness programmes through workshops and protection of birds through setting up of local monitoring networks and minimising infrastructure such as electric poles which is unsuitable to the birds. The intervention plan for GIB will also include captive breeding. Some of the threats to both birds are poaching, habitat loss due to encroachment, mining and overgrazing and use of pesticides.

Habitat level recovery for both birds will include protection of core breeding areas through fences and appointing forest guards to exclude disturbances and other nest threats, such as dogs in the case of GIB. The locals will also be involved in conservation by linking their livelihoods to it and the state government would try to acquire other conservation partners.

Source: Aakriti Vasudeva, 'Plan to protect endangered birds submitted to MoEF', www.indianexpress.com, 07/12/11.

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

The Important Bird Areas Update is a new section that is being brought out in collaboration with and support from the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), the Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

A DECADE AGO
From the Archives
[Protected Area Update 34](#)
[February 2002](#)

Kerala not to increase Mullaperiyar dam height

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

A recent all party meeting in Kerala resolved that the dam height would not be increased and measures were suggested to deal with the demand from Tamil Nadu. These include the formation of a dam safety authority and invoking of various laws on forest protection.

A study on the 'Impact of raising of water level in the Mullaperiyar reservoir of the Periyar Tiger Reserve' was carried out a few months ago at the instance of the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state. The team included scientists from the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), the Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI), Centre for Water Resource Development and Management (CWRDM) and the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON). The report has suggested that all kind of wild fauna including wild boar, gaur, sambar, otters, elephants and birds that nest in the reservoir will be adversely affected if the dam height is raised

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

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

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

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

PERSPECTIVE

To dart or not to dart?

The first wild leopard immobilization I undertook was in 2003. A female leopard had been trapped in a foothold snare outside Otur near Junnar in Pune district and she had to be rescued. By the time I reached from Pune, she had been trapped for more than 12 hours, was exhausted, dehydrated, and in a critical condition. The immobilization was uneventful: within a few minutes the animal was rescued from the trap and shifted to the nearby Forest Department (FD) nursery.

I had invited Vidya Athreya, a wildlife biologist, to come along with me. Any other person would have been impressed with my expertise, but she only had questions: Why did they have to wait for you? Why couldn't a local veterinarian handle this? She was struck by the hopelessness of the situation, especially because so little was required to rectify it.

As a consequence we proposed and got support in 2004 from the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation for a project to provide chemical immobilization training to Maharashtra FD personnel and veterinarians. This work was further extended to five other states in 2005.

Chemical restraint, a.k.a. immobilization, is used worldwide for most direct interventions of free-ranging as well as captive wild animals, particularly when a potentially dangerous animal like a leopard or tiger is found in or around human habitations – the kind of encounters that are on clearly on the rise in India.

I have immobilized more than 50 wild leopards since the Otur leopard, and there have been no deaths or complications because of this. Yet, leopard rescues and other such interventions

are often undertaken without chemical immobilization across India. There are several reasons for this: non-availability of drugs for immobilisation (xylazine and ketamine), non-availability of remote drug delivery systems (blowpipe, dart gun, dart rifle, etc.), lack of training and experience, and most commonly, due to the wrongly perceived risk of chemical immobilization. The fear of the animal dying during or immediately after darting and the ensuing blame game is strong.

It is important to understand that no procedure involving anesthesia is risk-free. These include factors like remoteness, difficult working conditions, lack of knowledge of the health and physical condition of the animal and the fact that the animal is severely stressed. Despite all these, chemical immobilization is strongly recommended while dealing with wild animal emergencies.

To cut a long story short, 'to dart or not to dart' is a question never to be asked in wild animal emergencies. What is needed is sensitization of the officials and field personnel to relevant issues, demystification of the process of chemical immobilization, and training field personnel in formulating doses and in the use of remote drug delivery systems. These are critical steps to ensure a rapid and humane response to wild animal emergencies.

- **Dr. Aniruddha Belsare**

is a wildlife veterinarian currently doing his PhD in wildlife disease ecology

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