

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XIII No. 2

April 2007 (No. 66)

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EDITORIAL

Pilgrims and PAs

Many protected areas across the country, be it the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary in Maharashtra, the Sariska and Ranthambore Tiger Reserves in Rajasthan, Gir in Gujarat, the Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala or the Biligiri Ranga Temple Sanctuary in Karnataka have one thing that binds them.

Deep in the heart of these PAs with rich forests and a diversity of wildlife are important and extremely popular places for worship; sites that are revered and visited by lakhs of pilgrims every year. In many places the traffic of the devout is a steady, regular stream flowing through the year. On special occasions like the recently passed Mahashivratri this stream becomes a flood and lakhs of visitors descend to these areas.

The pressure this creates on the forests, the wildlife and basic amenities like water and sanitation can well be imagined. It can also be argued that changing times and values are destroying the very sanctity that made them sacred in the first place. What is also clear is that we have little understanding or capacity to deal with these situations and particularly so because these are within areas kept aside for wildlife.

Some efforts, however, are being made like we saw on the occasion of Mahashivratri in Maharashtra in February (see stories below). We also know of initiatives from other places like Periyar where there are joint efforts with the local communities to deal with this specific situation of a huge number of pilgrims.

Protected Area Update

Vol. XIII, No. 2, April 2007 (No. 66)

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Production of *PA Update* 66 has been supported by **Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)**, Anand.

For a deeply religious country like India the challenges and questions that this throws to us are, of course, huge and daunting. Can we have a pilgrimage in forest areas that is different from what we see elsewhere? How can the communities, both the local residents and the visiting thousands, be part of the solution? Can we conceptualise and execute systems that make a difference? Can / does the conservation community see this as an opportunity of educating the huge numbers a little more about the animals, the forests and their importance? Can NGOs, the Forest Department and other interested parties come together to send back a pilgrim who is a little more aware of the environment and sensitive to the imperatives of conservation.

A good starting point might be an effort to comprehensively document such situations and also the small and scattered efforts that are indeed being made. There might be lessons to learn and share.

The questions, needless to say, are easy to ask; the solutions, if any, will be extremely tough.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ASSAM

58 rhino deaths in Kaziranga NP in 2006

The Kaziranga National Park lost a total of 58 rhinos in the year 2006. Of these five were killed by poachers and 53 died due to natural causes. The park also lost 14 elephants and four tigers in 2006, while the Forest department arrested 27 poachers with rifles, live cartridges and wires in the same period.

Figures for rhino deaths in Kaziranga for the earlier years are as follows: 43 in 2001, 66 in 2002 and 2003, 104 in 2004 and 80 in 2005.

Source: '58 NPN rhinos die in 2006', *The Sentinel*, 04/01/07.

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga NP, PO Bokakhat, Dist. Golaghat – 785612, Assam. Tel: 03776-268095(O), 268086(R)

Centre agrees to Assam plea for increase in elephant depredation compensation

20 Members of Parliament (MPs) recently submitted a memorandum to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in the matter of the large-scale elephant depredation being experienced in Assam.

The memorandum pointed out that the lump-sum amount of Rs 23 lakh granted to Assam from the Central Government was not commensurate with the extent of damage. As a result it was only possible to make an ex-gratia grant of Rs 40,000 per death and Rs 1000 for a fully damaged house. There was no money, therefore, for crop damage.

It was also pointed out that Assam alone possesses 5,500 out of the 10,000 wild elephants in the North Eastern Region (NER). Every year 50 to 60 lives are lost due to attacks by wild elephants and the state government is unable to provide adequate funds from its resources due to its inherent financial problem. The MPs also requested the Centre to equalize the amount of the ex-gratia grant amounting to minimum Rs 2 lakh granted to the families of persons killed by extremists.

The memorandum further pleaded for enhancing the total area of elephant habitat with the marking of elephant corridors and to make Project Elephant effective and friendly to the people. It also urged for a special permission to the Assam Government for capturing few elephants every year to deal with the problem of elephant-human conflict.

The Centre is reported to have agreed to many of the demands. The minimum ex-gratia payment of Rs. 1 lakh has been approved for the families of those killed by wild elephants. The compensation amount for damage to houses and crops would also be increased subject to the Assam Government submitting a detailed report specifying the extent of such damages.

The Centre has also suggested that the Government of Assam take up the matter of providing houses to the victims of elephant damage under Indira Awas Yojana with the Rural Development Ministry for allocation of additional houses from the quota available at the discretion of Union Minister of Rural Development.

It is not clear whether the changes when implemented will apply to other parts of the

country as well or will be restricted only to the state of Assam.

Source: 'Centre to raise elephant depredation compensation', *Assam Tribune*, 06/01/07.

Rs. One crore for Pobitora WLS

The Tiwa Autonomous Council has announced the allocation of Rs. One Crore for the all round development of the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary. This will include the creation of infrastructure for the large number of tourists that visit here.

Thousands of tourists were visited the sanctuary on New Year's Day. The sanctuary has also earned tourist revenue of Rs. 1.50 lakhs in the last two months of 2006.

Source: 'Rs. 1 cr. for Pobitora', *Assam Tribune*, 06/01/07.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Pobitora WLS, Nagaon Wildlife Division, P.O. & Dist. Nagaon – 782001, Assam. Tel: 03672-223104(O), 222310(R)

Two rhinos released in Manas

The two female rhinos, named Manashi and Roje were released at Basbari in the Manas National Park. The animals had been translocated from Kaziranga National Park as part of an initiative of the Wildlife Trust of India and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

Source: 'Two rhinos released in Manas', *The Assam Tribune*, 30/01/07.

Contact: **Director**, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd. Dist. Barpeta – 781315, Assam. Tel: 03666 – 261413. Fax: 232253 / 260253
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Call to declare the Khabalu-Ghagarmukh stretch of River Subansiri in Lakhimpur as a river dolphin sanctuary

The NGO Green Heritage has suggested that the Khabalu-Ghagarmukh stretch of the River Subansiri in Lakhimpur district be declared a River Dolphin Sanctuary. This followed a two-

day survey in January when 20 dolphins were spotted in this stretch of the river.

The survey that was carried out with the support of the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council (ASTEC) spotted the dolphins in six different places along a 100 kms stretch of the river. The survey counted six adults and three young dolphins at Khabalu, four at Ghagarmukh, two at Jamugurighat and one each at Dhunaguri and Solmarie.

The NGO also conducted an awareness campaign among the riverside dwellers by distributing pamphlets entitled, 'Sishu Sanranshan Karu Ahok - 'Let's conserve river dolphins'.



Source: Sazzad Hussain. 'NGO detects 20 Gangetic dolphins in Subansiri', *The Indian Express*, 12/02/07.

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

Migratory bird deaths in Sukhna; bird flu ruled out

A number of migratory birds were reported to have died of unexplained causes in January in the Sukhna Lake giving rise to concerns over the presence of bird flu. The bodies of the dead birds were sent to Bhopal and the Regional Diagnostic Lab in Jalandhar for testing.

Forest Department officials ruled out bird flu as a cause of death early on and suggested that the mortalities could have occurred due to the sudden drop in temperatures that was experienced in that period. There was also some speculation that the birds might have died after consuming grain that had been treated with chemical pesticides and / or insecticides.

The Chandigarh Animal Husbandry Department also collected samples, including from domestic

poultry for testing. Two sick birds were also kept under constant observation by the Wildlife Department.

The reports sent to the labs were still awaited towards the end of February and there is still no clarity about the cause of the deaths.

Source: Aditi Tandon.

'Bird deaths not due to avian flu, say wildlife experts' *The Tribune*, 23/01/07

Aditi Tandon. 'Water toxicity 'leads to bird mortality' *The Tribune*, 29/01/07.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Town Hall Building, Sector 17-B, Chandigarh. Fax: 0172-2705828



maybe i have the
bird flu!

GOA

New Ceacilian found near Mhadei WLS

A new ceacilian species *Geneophis goansis* has recently been found in the forests adjoining the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary. The exact location of the discovery was Keri Village, Sattari, which is only 20 kms from the site of the Mhadei dam that is being opposed by environmentalists and wildlife groups on the grounds that it will submerge important and unexplored forests.

The discovery was made by a team of researchers that included environmentalist Nirmal Kulkarni; Dr. Gopalkrishna Bhat, Professor of Zoology, MGM College, Udupi; Dinesh K. Zoological Survey of India, Kochi; and Prashanth P of the Agumbe Rainforest Research Station.

The team first came across two specimens in 2004. Subsequent molecular studies confirmed that this is a new species. This is an important addition to the existing seven species of the genus *Geniophis* which is endemic to the Western Ghats.

Source: 'New legless amphibian species found', *The Hindu*, 31/01/07.

Contact: **Nirmal Kulkarni**. Tel: 09326107079.
Email: ophidian_nirmal@yahoo.co.in

GUJARAT

Gir lions to be moved to Barda

The Gujarat Forest Department is reported to have taken a decision to move five pairs of lions from Gir to the Barda Wildlife Sanctuary. The shift is expected in the next few months. This was announced recently by the State Forest Minister, Mr. Mangubhai Patel.

A breeding center for antelopes and hare is already in operation here to prepare the area for the big cats. The region already has a healthy population of blue bull and wild boar.

Though the population of lions from Gir has spread outside Sasan (Junagadh) to satellite areas of Mitiyala, Girnar, and Hipavadi, the cats in these regions have always been connected with the main population in Gir. Barda, which is at a distance of 130 km, has no corridors with Gir.

(Also see *PA Updates* 55, 50, 46, 43, 34, 33, 32, 26, 22 & 20)

Source: Gir lions to find new abode at Barda Hills', *The Indian Express*, 01/02/07.

Contact: **ACF**, Barda WLS, Porbandar - 360 575.

Gujarat Government to form 'Gujarat Lion Conservation Society'

In a bid to mobilise additional resources for the conservation of the Asiatic Lion and its associate flora and fauna in the Gir National Park and adjoining areas, the Gujarat Government has decided to set up a separate autonomous body called the "Gujarat Lion Conservation Society" that will be registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act (XXI), 1860.

The main functions of the Society will be to mobilise and provide all necessary inputs for the protection and management of Gir and the adjoining meta-population of Asiatic Lions, and also facilitate the development and maintenance of captive gene pool at selected sites in and around the Gir forests. The file with the proposal has already been cleared by the State Forest and Environment Minister, Mangubhai Patel and a Government Resolution (GR) was expected soon.

There is a provision for individual and institutional membership of the Society, with annual and life membership fees for an individual being fixed at Rs 250 and Rs 5,000 respectively

and Rs 10,000 and Rs 1 lakh for institutional member in that order. Any Indian citizen, institution, corporation, company or organisation constituted under relevant laws and interested in pursuing and promoting the objectives of the Society shall be eligible for its membership.

The Society will have a 16-member executive committee under the chairmanship of a Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, while the Conservator of Forests, Wildlife Circle (Junagadh) will be its member secretary and chief executive officer (CEO). The government will also nominate two NGOs on the committee

Presently the FD gets about Rs 4 crore per year from the State Government, and another Rs 40 lakh from the Centre to maintain for Gir. Over half of the funds goes into the recurring expenditure, including the salaries of about 300 forest staff employed here.

It is hoped that the new Society will help significantly in augmenting the meagre resources presently available for the management of the PA.

Source: Bashir Pathan. 'Another safety net for lions in Gir', *The Indian Express*, 14/02/07.

Efforts to reduce lion mortalities, conflict in Gir

The NGO Vanishing Herds Foundation (VHF) and the Gujarat Forest Department have initiated a number of steps to reduce human-animal conflicts and lion mortalities in and around the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary.

One of the first initiatives has been to construct barricades around open wells in Amreli district that have been the cause of nearly 20 lion deaths in recent years (also see *PA Update* Vol XI, No. 6). An estimated 1000 such un-protected wells exist in Amreli district alone.

12 wells in the district have been barricaded as part of the project that began in 2006. It is hoped that the number will increase to at least a 100 by March 2007. After that the project will focus on barricading 250 wells every 12 months.

The State Forest Department has been helping the VHF to identify the wells. Once that is done the project enters into an agreement with villagers whereby the organization provides the money and monitors the construction that is undertaken by the villagers themselves. The cost of barricading one well is about Rs. 12,000.

VHF is also planning to set up its own 'float fund' of about Rs. Five lakh to quickly compensate the locals whose cattle has been killed by lions. It has been pointed out that there are about 7500 people and 14000 heads of cattle around Gir and one of the prime reasons for retaliatory attacks is that cattle kill compensation is not paid in time. The compensation offered by the government takes about six to seven months to reach the people.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is being worked out with the State Forest Department in this regard. The MoU proposes that as soon as a 'kill' is surveyed by the FD outside the protected area, the VHF will be given a copy of the order. The foundation would then settle claims within two-three days, for which it would be reimbursed by the government.

Source: DP Bhattacharya. 'Gir: Foundation's project to barricade wells in Amreli already on', *The Indian Express, Ahmedabad Newslite*, 16/02/07.

Contact: **Bharat Pathak**, CF (Wildlife) Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/ 630051. Fax: 631211

Contact: **CWLW** - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar-382010, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-230007. Fax: 221097.

HARYANA

Meeting held to discuss Bhindawas WLS

The Rohtak District Administration organized a one-day seminar recently to discuss various issues affecting the Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary. Representatives from a number of NGOs including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) participated.

The problems faced by the protected area that were highlighted by the speakers included overgrazing, presence of water hyacinth, illegal

fishing and a shortage of staff posted here. The need for the involvement of the local communities in the management of the park was also suggested as was the possible negative impacts of increased business activities and infrastructural development.

The function was organised under the aegis of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA).

Source: 'Develop bird sanctuary', *The Tribune*, 10/01/07.

Contact: **Inspector Wildlife**, Bhindawas WLS
C/o Range Forest Officer, Jhajjar, Dist.
Jhajjar, Haryana. Tel: 01262-256268

Chief Wildlife Warden, Haryana, Van
Bhawan Forest Complex-C-18, Sector-6,
Panchkula – 134109, Haryana. Tel:
0172-2561224(O), 2569033(R). Fax:
2564782

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Over 1,00,000 birds in Pong Dam WLS

Over one lakh waterfowl were counted during the annual census that was conducted at the Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary from February 2 to 4. The count included over 24000 Pintails and over 22,000 Bar headed Geese and Coots respectively. The census was carried out by 90 people divided into 14 different parties.

The count for the preceding years is as follows: 85,649 in 2006; 1,33,810 in 2005 and 1,13,798 in 2004.

Contact: **DFO (Wildlife)**, Pong Lake WLS,
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Pradesh, Talland, Shimla – 171001. Tel:
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Vtandy@gmail.com

JHARKHAND

Training for Jharkhand PA staff

A three week crime prevention training and equipping program was conducted for protected area (PA) staff from Jharkhand under the
Protected Area Update Vol XIII, No. 2

Guardians of Wildlife Division (VRP) program of the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI).

The program that was conducted between January 29 and February 21, 2007 was attended by 266 personnel from different PAs in the state: Palamau Tiger Reserve (201 nos), Koderma WLS (11 nos), Gautam Budh WLS (4 nos), Parasnath WLS (3 nos), Topchanchi WLS (2 nos), Palkot WLS (2 nos), Mahaudanr WLS (16 nos), Lawalong WLS (2 nos), Udhuwa WLS (1 no) and Hazaribagh WLS (24 nos).

The training had been organized in three different locations namely Betla, Hazaribagh and Koderma. Funding support for personnel of the Palamau Tiger Reserve was provided by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) while the remaining persons were supported by a grant received from the World Society for Protection of Animals (WSPA).

The training program was created for two groups of forest personnel: the one comprising mainly of Senior Foresters, Range Forest Officers, Assistant Conservators of Forests & Divisional Forests Officers; the other comprised of frontline staff from the rank of Range Officers and below including casual worker.

Different modules were created for the respective groups. Module A that was meant for the first group of officials dealt with issues related to the understanding of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and other aspects to develop a holistic anti-poaching strategy in order to tackle poaching problem and prevent habitat depredation. Module B was focused on the aspects of crime prevention by field craft, patrolling techniques and field investigations. This module also included other subjects like ecology, biodiversity, wildlife laws & legislation and crime investigation procedures.

Contact: **Pranab Patar**, WTI, A-220, New Friends
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KARNATAKA

New Tiger Reserve to include Dandeli WLS, Anshi NP and Mahaveer WLS in Goa

The Dandeli Tiger Reserve is to be created shortly, making it the fourth such reserve in

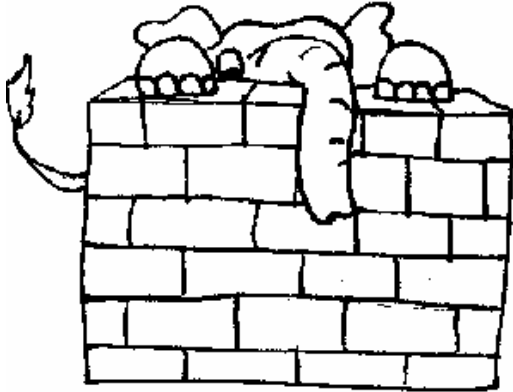
Karnataka. The reserve that will cover an area of over 2000 sq. kms will comprise the forests of the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary and Anshi National Park (both in Karnataka) and also the Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary (Goa).

The Karnataka part of the new tiger reserve is said to have a population of at least 40 tigers. Inclusion under Project Tiger will ensure enhanced funding for infrastructure, improvements to the habitat and adequate availability of water within the forest areas. The Dandeli WLS and Anshi NP, were together getting Rs. 30 lakhs annually. This amount would now rise to nearly Rs. 15 crore.

Source: 'State gets one more Project Tiger', *The Hindu*, 17/01/07.

Contact: DCF, Dandeli Wildlife Division,
Dandeli – 581325, Uttara Kannada,
Karnataka. Tel: 08284-231585(O),
230114(R). Fax: 230300 (Post Office)

Walls to deal with human-elephant conflict



The Karnataka State Government has agreed to spend Rs. 120 crores for construction of walls in a number of districts including Mysore and Chikmagalur to deal with the increasing human-elephant conflict. The decision was made in response to the demand by a number of legislators for the walls to protect sugarcane and other crops from marauding elephants.

Walls six feet high and two feet thick will be constructed over a distance of 320 kms in different stretches as part of the project.

The FD has also taken up the task of erecting 120 kms long barbed wire fencing in the forests of the state adjoining Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to prevent

entry of people, who indulged in smuggling of forest produce such as sandalwood.

Source: 'Government to build walls to keep away elephants', *The Hindu*, 04/01/07.

Marine national park proposed for Netrani Island

A marine national park is being proposed to protect the corals reefs and islets in the waters off Netrani Island, located 18 kms from Murdeshwar on the Karnataka coast. The sea is home to a rich diversity of coral species and also plays host to a number of aquatic birds.

The suggestion for the national park comes following a recent visit to the area by a team of the Karnataka State Biodiversity Board (KSBB). This included the member secretary, Mr. ND Tiwari, Mr. Gangadhar Madikeri and marine biologists, S Bhat and Mr. Nayak.

The KSBB has also urged the government to stop war exercises by the Indian Navy on and around the island.

Source: 'Marine park at Netrani planned', *The Times of India*, 22/02/07.

Fire threat to Bandipur, Nagarhole NPs

With the setting in the dry season the Forest Department (FD) has expressed serious concern over the threats from fire to the forests of the Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks.

The forests in the region are now said to be extremely dry due to the fact that this region received only half its normal rainfall this season. Bandipur that had received nearly 60 inches on rain in 2005, saw only 30 inches in 2006.

A dozen minor conflagrations have already been reported this year. They were however brought under control and damage was contained to within a couple of acres.

The problem is also compounded by the fact that weeds like the exotic lantana and eupatorium have proliferated here. Lantana, for instance, is not edible and is also highly combustible, abetting the fire when it starts.

The FD says it has drawn 1000 kms of fire lines to prevent the spread of fire and 250 firewatchers have also been temporarily recruited. About 100 walkie-talkies have also been provided

to staff in Bandipur to help ensure better communication and speedy action. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XIII, No. 1 and No. 55)

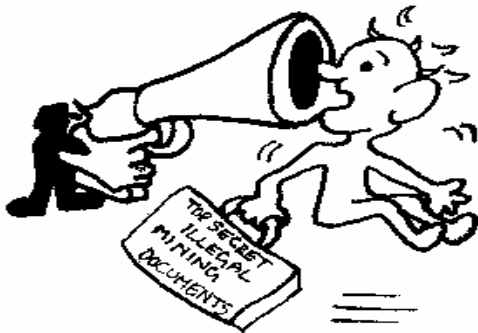
Source: R Krishna Kumar. 'Threat of fire looms large over Bandipur, Nagarhole National Parks', *The Hindu*, 18/02/07

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

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MADHYA PRADESH

FD seeks power to shoot illegal miners



The Madhya Pradesh FD has sought special powers to shoot illegal miners and for weapons to deal with the powerful mafia mining stone and sand in the Gwalior-Chambal division. A proposal for the same has been sent to senior officials in Bhopal.

The FD has said that it is inadequately equipped to deal with the mafia that is conducting its activities with impunity in the region. Attacks on forest officials by illegal miners are also said to have become commonplace here.

This is also the area where the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary is facing a serious threat from continued sand mining. The Gwalior bench of Madhya Pradesh High Court has recently issued an order to stop sand mining in sanctuary in response to a Public Interest Litigation filed in the matter.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol XII, Nos. 6 and 4.)

Source: 'Forest officials for power to shoot illegal miners', *Hindustan Times*, 05/01/07.

Contact: **DFO**, National Chambal WLS, Morena Division, Morena, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07532-226742. Fax: 07532-227367/234188

Scheme approved for forest villages outside protected areas

The Union government is reported to have sanctioned a Rs 125.63 crore special development scheme for 822 forest villages in Madhya Pradesh. All of these are located outside protected areas in the state. Of the total 925 listed forest villages in the state, 98 are either inside national parks and sanctuaries or are uninhabited.

The State Government had submitted proposals for all the remaining 827 forest villages. Of these, schemes for 822 have been approved. The status of the remaining five as well as those of villages inside PAs is not clear.

The plans for these villages include the creation of basic infrastructure and facilities like those for water, health centres, community and aanganwadi centres, roads and energy.

Rs. 175 lakh has been allocated for the 14 forest villages in Bhopal district. The Forest committee of each village has been given Rs 3 lakh in the first installment for carrying out development works.

Source: 'Centre okays dev scheme for 822 forest villages', *Central Chronicle*, 14/01/07.

WII study indicates 9 tigers in 185 sq. kms of Panna NP

The preliminary findings of a 'camera trap' based assessment carried out by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) suggests the presence of nine tigers in an area of 185 sq. kms of the Panna National Park. The area covers the Panna, Hinauta and Madla Ranges of the PA.

The Panna National Park is spread over an area of 543 sq kms and the last census conducted here in 2004-05 using the old methodology had put the number of tigers at 34. The WII has also provided a minimum and maximum range of eight to 15 tigers and a confidence limit of 95%, for the area under study.

The Panna National Park had been in the news recently after conservationists had

challenged tiger census figures provided by the Forest Department (see *PA Update* Vol. XII, No. 6 (Readers Write))

It is expected that the preliminary report will help the authorities file an affidavit in connection with a case pending in the Supreme Court.

Source: Rahul Noronha. 'WII study indicates a good density of tigers in Panna', *The Pioneer*, 08/02/07.

Contact: **Field Director**, Panna National Park, Panna – 488001, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07732-252135. Fax: 07732-252120
CWLW, MP, Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0755-2557371/ 2550391.

MAHARASHTRA

Village relocation starts from Tadoba Andhari TR

The process of relocation of the six villages from the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) has started. The first of the six villages is Botezari where the process of shifting was started in the month of March. The relocation work started with shifting of cow shed belonging to the Shri Shankar Patil, who is also police *patil* of the village. The relocation site is known as Tolewahi or Kesalaghat site and is located on the Chandrapur Mul state highway.

In the wake of paucity of funds provided by the central government for the relocation, efforts have been made to pool in funds from various governmental development programs to provide facilities like roads, electricity, drinking water, *panchayat* building, school, and an *anganwadi*.

The function was attended by the Collector, CCF (Thane), Chief Executive Officer of the *Zilla Parishad*, Field Director and Assistance Conservator of Forests of TATR; Dy. Conservator of Forest and Range Forest Officer of Chandrapur; and the Superintendent of Police.

Source: Email by Rucha Ghate
Contact: **Rucha Ghate**, SHODH: The Institute for Development and Research, Nagpur. Email: shodhngp@dataone.in

Vigil in Sanjay Gandhi NP and Tungareshwar WLS for Mahashivratri

A number of NGOs including the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Here On Project Environment (HOPE), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG), Conservation Action Trust (CAT) and concerned individuals' kept a vigil in collaboration with the Forest Department at the Sanjay Gandhi NP & the Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary during Mahashivratri.

A vigil was kept at different entry points in and around the two PAs. People were allowed to follow predefined routes to reach the temple and were prevented from venturing into the restricted areas of the forest.

Hawkers were allowed only at main entry points and this reduced garbage inside the forest. A number of prohibited items like plastic bags, matchboxes, cigarette packs, chillums and alcohol were confiscated from a number of visitors. A few forest fire incidents were observed that were immediately put off by the volunteers & forest guards.

Contact: **Tejal Dhulla Vishweshvar**. Email: tejal.roots@gmail.com
Dy. Conservator of Forests, SGNP, Borivili (East), Mumbai – 400066, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-28860362, 28860389(O), 8862780(R) Email: sgnpb@rediffmail.com

Eco-festival in Bhimashankar WLS on occasion of Mahashivratri

Keeping in view the serious pressures exerted on the forests of the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary on the occasion of Mahashivratri, the Bhimashankar Eco-Festival was organized from February 15 to 17, 2007 by the Forest Department in association with voluntary organizations like Kalpavriksh, the Tekdi Group, Ghodegaon Nisarg Group and the Khed Nisarg Seva Group.

The activities conducted as part of the initiative included: Cleaning of the plastic garbage from around the Bhimashankar temple, Bhimashankar Sacred Grove and the source of River Bhima that originates in these forests; a wildlife photography exhibition by eminent photographers; film shows, street plays and

puppet shows; patrolling of the sensitive pockets in the sanctuary; and an awareness drive about wildlife conservation & the hazards of plastic.

Contact: **Saili Palande**, C/o Kalpavriksh,
Editorial address. Tel: 09881009826.
Email: sailaroo@gmail.com
CF Wildlife, Salunke Vihar, Vanawdi
Pune. Tel: 020-25124182.

Contact: **PCCF (Wildlife)**. Dr. Ambedkar
Bhawan, MECL Bldg. Seminary Hills &
Campus, Nagpur – 440001, Maharashtra.
Tel: 0712-2526758 / 2530126. Fax –
2510671. Email: cfwl@nagpur.dot.net.in

MIZORAM

Indo-Bangladesh border patrol road to pass through Dampa TR

The Aizawl based Centre For Environment Protection (CEP) has expressed serious concern over the construction of the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing and patrol road, more than half of which will pass through the Dampa Tiger Reserve. Of the 147 km long road, nearly 80 kms between Andermanik (BP No.2306) and Silsuri (BP No.2313) falls within the TR. A link road from Phuldungsei to Keisalam II BOP for about a length of 20 km is also within the boundaries of the reserve.

Not only will the construction activities have an impact on the wildlife and the forests, all wildlife movement corridors will also be blocked once the work is completed.

CEP has suggested alternatives that will deal with the problem and also ensure that the tiger reserve and the forests are not as badly affected. It has suggested that 20 patrolling posts inside Dampa will do the job of the 80 kms of proposed road.

Source: AC Zonunmawai. Email dated 07/02/07.

Contact: **A.C. Zonunmawia**, CEP, B-27/1,
Tuikual South, Aizawl – 796001,
Mizoram. Tel: 0389-2319116 Email:
cep_earth@yahoo.com,
cep_mizo@lycos.com

ORISSA

FD objection to power lines inside Lakheri Valley WLS

The Orissa Forest Department (FD) has accused the State's Department of Energy for illegally erecting transmission towers and laying power lines inside the Lakheri Valley Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Parlakhemundi Divisional Forest Officer, has in a letter to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and the Chief Wildlife Warden, pointed out the violation and also alleged that this was being done under political influence, which also allowed the contractors to humiliate wildlife officials.

Source: 'Energy dept. accused of violating wildlife laws', *The Pioneer*, 01/01/07.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer-cum-Wildlife Warden** Parlakhemundi, Lakheri WLS, At / P.O. Parlakhemund, Dist. Gajapati, Orissa. Tel: 06824-222214(O), 222204(R).

Seven sites for 'Conservation and Management of Wetlands and Mangroves' Scheme

Of the 38 sites identified in the country for mangrove plantation and conservation under the Central Government's 'Conservation and Management of Wetlands and Mangroves' scheme, seven have been identified in Orissa. These include deltas of the mouths of Rivers Mahanadi, Devi and Brahmani and Baitarni Rivers (Bhitarkanika). The other areas are Subernarekha, Dhamra, Mangrove Genetic Resources Centre and Chilka.

The last four are to be taken up as new sites for mangrove plantation that will be implemented with 100% Central assistance.

Source: 'Four new sites identified for mangrove plantation', *The Pioneer*, 02/01/07.

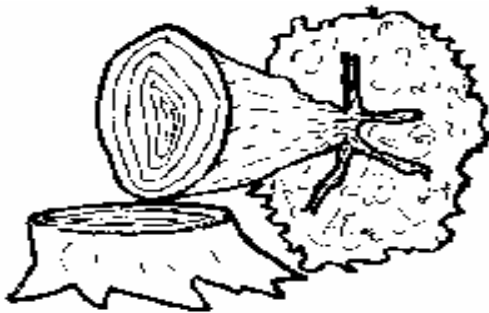
Kin of elephant attack victims get compensation

Relatives of the two children and a tribal woman who were recently killed by wild elephants were given the compensation of Rs. One lakh each in the month of January.

The incidents had occurred in the Dasamantpur region of the Koraput district when elephants moving from the Karlapat WLS to the Lakheri Valley WLS via the Kotagarh WLS strayed from their traditional migratory route.

Source: 'Kin of elephants' attack victims to get aid today', *The Hindu*, 23/01/07.

HC probe into Badrama Wildlife Division tree-felling



The Orissa High Court has directed the authorities of the Badrama Wildlife Division to make a detailed inquiry in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by local tribals seeking to check the continued illegal felling of trees in the area, including inside the Badrama Wildlife Sanctuary. The Court has asked the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) to treat the writ petition as a representation and submit his report to the Bargarh district authorities.

The Court further ordered the District Collector and Superintendent of Police to take strong action within six weeks of submission of the inquiry report by the DFO of the Badrama Wildlife Division.

In their petition, the villagers alleged that Lohra and Debrigarh Reserve Forests have been depleting fast due to illegal felling of trees by the timber mafia, and that the forest officials were not taking any preventive action.

Source: 'HC orders probe into felling of trees in Badrama forest', *The Pioneer*, 02/02/07.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer-cum-Wildlife Warden**, Badrama WLS, Bamra Division, At/P.O. Bamra, Dist. Sambalpur, Orissa .Tel: 06621-260011(O), 260004(R).

Sea turtle nesting sites for tourism development

The Tourism Department in Orissa has chalked out plans to attract more foreign tourists to the state by developing infrastructure like proper road communications, small huts and tents at Devi and Rusikulya river mouth areas, the two major nesting grounds of Olive Ridley turtles.

The specific initiatives being considered include the creation of an aquarium of sea turtles at the Regional Museum of Natural History in Bhubaneswar; the use of artificial turtle hatcheries, built by the forest officials on the nesting ground to protect the eggs of the turtles from the predators like dogs, jackals and other animals; to attract tourists; and using the opportunity for tourists to release the turtle hatchlings into the sea.

Source: Rajesh Behera. 'Sea turtles to be used to allure foreign tourists', *The Pioneer*, 08/02/07.

Hydrophones to study Chilika dolphins

Hydrophones are being used for the first time to study the behaviour and movement of the dolphins in Chilika Lake as part of a joint project of the University of Japan, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, the Chilika Development Authority (CDA) and the Orissa Forest Department (FD).

An underwater hydrophone was placed at Magarmukh and the collected data was transmitted through microwave to its land station at the CDA visitors' Centre at Satapada. Data on dolphin numbers, behavioural pattern and their movement in the lake was also recorded.

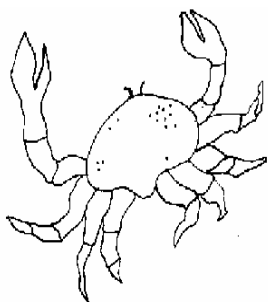
It is hoped that this project will reveal a range of interesting and useful information about the dolphins including their methods of communication that is a complex set of whistles, screeches and clicks.

Presently two hydrophones are being used for this study and three more are likely to be brought in the near future.

(Also see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 2)

Source: 'Tracking the Chilika dolphin', *The Hindu*, 05/02/07.

Crab culture project in Chilika area



As a measure to meet the livelihood issues of residents of some villages in the outer channel area of Chilika Lake, a project of crab fattening and crab culture has been initiated by

the Chilika Development Authority (CDA) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program.

Mirzapur and Mahisa villages have been included in the project on a pilot basis. Necessary technical training is imparted to the villagers and local women Self Help Groups with the assistance of the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai.

Village ponds that have become unsuitable for prawn culture are being used for the project and specially designed bamboo cages are used for the purpose. The crabs are kept for a minimum period of 20 days to improve upon their weight and size.

The two species of crabs that are used for the project are *Scylla serrata* and *Scylla tranquebarica*. The CDA has plans to extend the project to more villages in the area during its second phase.

Source: 'Crab culture undertaken to help Chilika fishermen', *The Pioneer*, 17/02/07.

Contact: **CDA**, BJ-45, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 – 434485.

Concerns over tourism plans in Chilika

Environmental groups have raised concerns over the proposed tourism development plans at Chilika Lake. The Orissa Tourism Development Corporation (OTDC) plans to make the lake a major tourist destination with a grant of Rs. 556 lakh for the same from the Government of India.

The OTDC plans include the purchase of fan-driven airboats for dolphin watching tours. The Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO) has suggested that this should be only allowed

in country boats without any power, which can be pole, oar or sail-driven. There are only about 120 Irrawady dolphins in the lake and every year, eight to 10 dolphins are killed due to propeller injuries and fishing nets (see *PA Updates* 60, 56, 54, 52, 49, 41, 36 & 29). Their breeding rate has also been affected due to uncontrolled tourism. At present, more than 500 tourist boats chase the dolphins in the Satpada area.

Similarly powerful speedboats that the OTDC proposes to procure for water skiing and para-sailing at Rambha will have a negative impact on the dolphins and the large number of migratory birds as will the idea to light up the Satpada area with powerful sodium vapour lamps.

Concerns have also been expressed over the proposal to construct jetties, shopping kiosks, camping sites and nature trails for tourists on the remote islands within the lake.

Source: 'New tourism plan may endanger Chilika's flora and fauna', *The Pioneer*, 08/02/07.

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

Villagers volunteer land for mangrove regeneration near Bhitarkanika

Residents of the Satabhaya Gram Panchayat located on the fringes of Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary have volunteered to hand over their ancestral land to the State Forest Department's mangrove regeneration programme. The lands belong to people who have left the area and moved to settle elsewhere.

Spread over an area of nearly 500 hectares, the lands in question are presently being used for commercial shrimp farming. Diminishing commercial dividends have resulted in the villagers wanting to hand over this land to the FD.

The Rajnagar Mangrove Forest Division has also created a proposal to financially compensate the landowners. This has been sent to the State Government and the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and approval is awaited to start the acquisition proceedings.

It has been suggested that more people are likely to transfer land to the FD as the entire region has been severely affected by sea erosion.

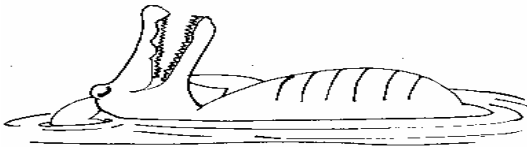
In the Satabhaya Gram Panchayat, for instance, the sea is said to have moved in by nearly five kms during the past 15 years.

It is hoped that the creation of the mangrove belt will act as a natural barrier.

Source: 'Orissa villagers volunteer to give land for mangrove regeneration', *Kalinga Times*, 15/02/07.

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

1482 crocodiles counted in Bhitarkanika



The annual crocodile census conducted from January 5 to 15 in the creeks, rivulets, and water bodies of the Bhitarkanika River system has counted 1482 crocodiles here, including 503 were hatchlings and 366 yearlings. The forest officials also came across five giant crocodiles, which were more than 20-feet-long. The Petchella and Baunsagadi rivulets were found to be the best habitat for the crocodiles with the largest numbers being found here.

54 nests were also spotted during the census. 135 eggs from two nests were collected for hatching in the crocodile breeding and research center.

The figures from earlier census conducted here are as follows: 1,454 in 2006; 1,449 in 2005; 1,358 in 2004; 1,308 in 2003; 1,330 in 2002; 1,192 in 2001; and 914 in 2000.

Source: Rajesh Behera. 'Crocodile census: 1,482 sighted in Bhitarkanika sanctuary', *The Pioneer*, 25/01/07.

'Crocodile growth puts experts in a quandary', *The Statesman*, 24/01/07.

Contact: **DFO Bhitarkanika**, see above

Dogs sterilized to save Orissa turtles

In a move to protect Olive Ridley turtles from dog attacks, an initiative has been undertaken to sterilize dogs along the Orissa coast.

A small number of dogs were sterilized in January by the Hyderabad based Blue Cross in collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and Animal Resources Development and other NGOs like the Orissa Turtle Trust.

At least 2,500 dogs are to be sterilized as part of the project in the next six months. Training is also to be provided to 15 veterinary doctors to carry out the task.

Until five years ago, the sea surrounded Nasi-1 and Nasi-2, two tiny islands within the Gahirmatha beach, where turtles come for mass nesting. As a result, no animal could reach the islands to destroy the eggs. Since 2002, however, the islands have become accessible from the neighbouring Wheeler Island, compounding the problem of dog attacks significantly.

Source: 'In Orissa, dogs sterilized to save endangered turtles', *The Sentinel*, 31/01/07.

Contact: **DFO Bhitarkanika**, see above.

Fisherman shot dead; forest guard arrested; colleagues boycott protection duty at Gahirmatha

Turtle protection duty at Gahirmatha faced serious problems over the last few months. The sequence of events began on December 14, 2006, when a fisherman, allegedly fishing in prohibited waters was shot dead by forest staff. This had resulted in a series of retaliatory attacks on forest staff by armed trawler owners. A turtle camp at Bhitarkanika was burnt down (see *PA Update* Vol. XIII, No.1, Feb 2007) and a Coast Guard Vessel too was attacked.

A forest guard was subsequently arrested on murder charges in the connection. In response the All Orissa Forest Guards' Union issued a cease-work call and all 28 forest guards on the permanent pay-roll of the government went on strike, skipping onshore and offshore protection duties from December 19. The Union termed the arrest as arbitrary and alleged that an innocent guard on duty was being made a sacrificial lamb even though he had indeed fired the shots.

The Kendrapara District administration responded to the situation by dispatching seven platoons of the APR and the OSAP to aid in protection and patrolling. Forest staff finally went back to duty more than a month later.

In a later operation conducted in January, forest officials, led by a magistrate, arrested more than 20 fishermen and seized nine mechanised fishing vessels along with fishing nets and some fish from within the prohibited zone of the Gahirmatha Sanctuary.

Source: 'Forest men skip turtle protection to protest colleague's arrest', *The Statesman*, 19/01/07.
'Forest staff seize 9 boats, arrest 20 fishermen in Gahirmatha sanctuary', *The Pioneer*, 31/01/07.

Contact: **DFO Bhitarkanika**, see above
CWLW- Orissa, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa.
Tel: 0674- 2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840. Fax: 512502

RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan to set up a Tiger Cell

The Rajasthan Government has proposed the creation of a special Tiger Cell to deal with the problem of tiger poaching in the state. The State Forest Minister said that the Cell would be run jointly by the police and the FD

The Cell is likely to be created on the lines of the one that already exists in the neighbouring state of Madhya Pradesh.

Source: 'Rajasthan to set up cell to save tigers', *Hindustan Times*, 14/01/07.

Contact: **CWLW** Government of Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, JAIPUR - 302 005. Tel: 0141-2380832 / 2540531. Fax: 2380496/ 2380832

TAMIL NADU

Wildlife sanctuary proposed at Sujilkuttai near Bhavanisagar

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department has proposed the creation of a wildlife sanctuary at Sujilkuttai in the Bhavanisagar forest range of the Sathyamangalam Forest Division for the protection of blackbuck that are found here in large numbers.

An estimated 500 blackbuck can be found in the Sujilkuttai to Thengumarahada

forest stretch. The forests in the region, like at Thalamalai and Arepalayam are also known to harbour large numbers of other endangered wildlife, including elephants.

Source: R Sundaram. 'Forest department likely to establish blackbuck sanctuary near Bhavanisagar', *The Hindu*, 03/02/07.

Augmenting tourist facilities in Indira Gandhi WLS

The Forest Department (FD) has taken up a number of initiatives at Top Slip in the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary to attract tourists and to augment the facilities here.

Elephant rides that had been stopped in November 2005 were re-started in January. Ten of the 22 elephants at the FD's Varagaliyar Camp were to be used for the rides.

The district administration has allocated Rs. Eight lakhs to improve facilities for tourists at Top Slip. A dining hall with 12 seats and a mini-conference hall is to be constructed in Tree Top, the most sought after rest house. One more Tree Top guesthouse using masonry pillars is also to be constructed at a cost of Rs.4 lakh.

Source: 'Elephant ride to resume at Top Slip', *The Hindu*, 15/01/07.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden, Indira Gandhi WLS**, 178, Fisheries Dept. Road, Govt. Timber Depot, Pollachi 642 001, Tamil Nadu.
Tel: 04259 - 225356

Wildlife census in Indira Gandhi WLS

Census operations to count different animals in the Indira Gandhi (Anaimalai) WLS were proposed in the months of January and February.

The Lion-tailed Macaque count was to be held on January 25 and one for the Nilgiri Tahr on January 29. The carnivores were to be counted between February 2 and 9, whereas the elephant census was planned for the 3rd week of February.

Teams of 10 persons comprising forest department field staff, tribal people and wildlife enthusiasts were constituted for the count across all the 34 beats in the six ranges of sanctuary. The results of the census are not yet known.

Source: 'Wildlife census from tomorrow', *The Hindu*, 24/01/07.

Deer census in Guindy NP in May

The Forest Department (FD) has said that high-tech methods will be used for the annual deer census in the Guindy National Park to be held in May later this year. This will include use of navigational and mapping tools such as the Global Positioning System (GPS).

Permanent transit lines have already been put in place using GPS to be used as coordinates in mapping the 270-hectare national park in the heart of Chennai city. The census, which will be done by a 100-strong team over a period of three days, will also cover the adjoining Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras campus.

Source: Vani Doraisamy. 'GPS to track deer at Guindy National Park', *The Hindu*, 17/02/07.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Guindy NP, 259 Anna Salai, DMS Compound, Chennai – 600006, Tamil Nadu, Tel: 044-24321471

Wildlife census in Tamil Nadu PAs from March 12

A census of wild animals in the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park was to be held from March 12. Wildlife officials said a new method of sampling would be adopted for the census this year.

A synchronised census of elephants will be held at Mudumalai and adjoining wildlife sanctuaries at Bandipur in Karnataka and Wynad in Kerala towards the end of April or in early May.

A Nilgiri Tahr census would be conducted at the Mukurthi National Park between March 9 and 11.

Source: 'Mudumalai wildlife census from March 12', *The Hindu*, 23/02/07.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Mudumalai WLS, Mt. Stewart Hill, Udhamandalam - 643001 Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0423-244098.

Elephant rides resumed at Mudumalai too

Elephant rides for tourists at Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park were re-started in January. The rides that were very popular with visitors had been closed in April 2004 on account of rampant malpractices and increasing strain on the pachyderms, leading to health problems.

The rides have been re-started following a detailed study of the shortcomings in the functioning of the activity. The FD says it now has a system in place that was not likely to run into trouble again.

Ten elephants would be used for the rides, which would last about 30 minutes each. They would be organized between 7 a.m. and 8.30 a.m. and 4 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. daily. The fee for each person would be Rs. 100 and only four persons would be allowed on a ride.

Source: 'Elephant rides resume at Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 13/01/07.

ATREE newsletter on KMTR

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) has initiated a new newsletter based on their work in the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve.

Titled Agasthya it can be accessed at the following weblink:

http://atree.org/Agasthya_1-1.pdf

Contact: **R Vivek**, ATREE. Email: vivekr@atree.org

UTTARAKHAND

CEC approves road through Askote WLS

The Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has given its clearance to the construction of the 75.54 km-long Ghatiabagar-Lipulekh road through Askote Musk Deer Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttarakhand along India's borders with Nepal and China.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice KG Balakrishnan has asked the Uttarakhand Government to respond within two weeks to the CEC's recommendations on the construction of the strategically important road through the wildlife sanctuary.

According to the recommendations of the CEC, if 155-acre forestland, presently used as an ammunition dump in Raiwala Cantonment near Rajaji National Park, is handed over to the State Forest Department, the net present value (NPV) too will be waived off.

The Army and the State Govt are reported to have mutually agreed to this suggestion.

Source: Satya Prakash. 'SC clears road project on Indo-Nepal border', *The Hindustan Times*, 05/03/07.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Askot & Binsar WLS, Dist. Almora, Uttarakhand. Tel: 05964-225234/225390. Fax: 285376

State to purchase 50 elephants for patrolling, tourism

The Uttarakhand Forest Department (FD) proposes to buy 50 trained elephants to help in the task of forest patrolling and for tourism. The states of Karnataka, West Bengal and Tripura have been short-listed for the purpose and a financial provision of Rs 3.6 crore has been made for the same.



Source: 'Uttarakhand seeks Karnataka, other states' help', *Deccan Herald*, 03/01/07.

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

WEST BENGAL

Luxury cruise to Sunderbans from Kolkata

The Kolkata based Vivada Inland Waterways Limited (VIWL), in collaboration with the West Bengal Forest Development Corporation (WBFDC) has launched a three-day-two-night luxury cruise to explore the Sunderbans delta.

The vessel to be used for the cruise will be a three-deck cruiser, Paramahansa, which has 32 air-conditioned rooms. It will have facilities like a multi-cuisine restaurant,

open-air gym, an art gallery, conference room and Internet and mobile connectivity.

The VIWL has committed to give 5% of profit from the initiative to the WBFDC for the development of Sunderbans and its people.

Source: 'Luxury cruise to Sunderbans from Jan.-end', *Asian Age*, 07/01/07.

Survey finds no river terrapin in Sunderbans

A year-long survey carried out by the West Bengal Forest Department (FD) and the Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS) in the southern Sunderbans failed to find a single specimen of the endangered Sunderbans River Terrapin *Batagur baska*.

The flesh of the terrapin is in high demand, both, as meat for food and for its supposed medicinal qualities. Destruction of large areas of the animal's habitat, particularly at the mouth of rivers under the tidal influence, is also considered one of the major causes for its decline.

A survey carried out in the Bangladeshi portion of the Sunderbans in 2005 by Dr H M Ali Reza of the Jehangirnagar University revealed that *Batagur baska* was rarely seen on that side of the border too.

Source: 'Sunderbans river terrapin on red data list', *The Statesman*, 26/01/07.

Contact: **Director**, Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve, Bikash Bhavan, 3rd Floor, North Block, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3211750. Fax: 3211529

Steps to check illegal felling in Buxa TR, North Bengal region

A meeting was held recently in Siliguri between West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and forest and administrative officials to discuss the rise in illegal felling of timber, its smuggling, and the mushrooming of illicit saw mills in the region.

The FD has said that it has taken steps to deal with the problem. These include the maintaining of an information network comprising forest villagers and members of protection committees; granting primary and, later, secondary licences to saw mills as per government norms; setting up monsoon camps in remote areas of the Buxa Tiger Reserve and other reserve forests; keeping a close watch on highways and maintaining a coordination with tea estate managements.

Incidents of tree felling have been reported from Moraghat and Apalchand and forests on the Bhutan border. The felled logs are then routed to Sivamandir near Siliguri and Kishanganj in Bihar.

(Also see following story).

Source: Avijit Sinha. 'Green cover plan', *The Telegraph*, 05/01/07.

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

Elephants kill two timber smugglers in Buxa

Two of a group of 10 timber smugglers were killed by wild elephants in the East Nimati Beat area of the Buxa Tiger Reserve in January.

Serious concerns have been raised because the incident took place within 200 m of the beat office, which, contrary to forest norms was without an officer at that moment. Questions have also been raised because the beat office did not inform the range officer concerned or any official of the division about the deaths and the timber felling.

The incident is a major embarrassment for forest officials who had recently claimed that illegal felling had been controlled to a large extent in the region, which is known otherwise as a hotbed of timber smuggling.

Several raids by officers of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri forest divisions on passenger trains has exposed the presence of huge quantities of illegal timber. Interrogations of arrested persons revealed that all the timber had been loaded from Kalchini and Garopara area, which falls under BTR (west).

Source: 'Wild raid kills two', *The Telegraph*, 15/01/07.

Contact: **Field Director**, Buxa Tiger Reserve, P.O. Alipurduar, Dist. Jalpaiguri - 736 122. West Bengal. Tel: 03564-256333 / 255979. Fax: 03564-255577

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

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Workshop held for National Policy for Human-Leopard Conflict

A two-day workshop aimed at discussing a National Policy for Human-Leopard Conflict Management was held in January in New Delhi. It was jointly organized by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF), the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and attended by eminent scientists and

Chief Wildlife Wardens of six states – Jammu and Kashmir, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Assam

An estimated 50% of leopard's total population in the country lives outside the Protected Areas (PA). Habitat destruction, retaliatory killing by villagers, poaching, etc. is responsible for their population decline.

Source: 'Experts meet to discuss human-leopard conflict',

http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2007/070124_workshop.html

Contact: **Wildlife Trust of India**, see above

New technology for tracking small animals

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and Technology (DA-IICT) have launched a joint one-year project to do away with the need for satellite tracking of smaller animals.

Titled 'Wildcense', the project will develop a prototype for keeping track of small animals through a grid of transmitting stations, instead of the more expensive Global Positioning

System (GPS). The new system will involve the setting up of base stations in the area where the animal moves. The animals will be collared with battery run chips that will transmit signals to the stations and in turn to the main monitoring system.

As a pilot, nine base stations are to be set up at the WII for a test system with tortoises on the campus. As part of the same project, the DA-IICT will also develop sensor cameras, which are triggered off when they break the sensor beams.

Source: Vivek Vijaypalan. 'To keep track of wildlife, WII 'tags' DA-IICT', *The Indian Express*, 24/12/06.

Contact: **Prof. Prabhat Ranjan**, DA-IICT, Near Indroda Circle, Gandhinagar – 382009, Gujarat, India. Tel: 079–30510543 / 55121110

Definition of Forest

The MoEF has awarded a consultancy to the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE) for 'Defining Forest in an Indian Context'. The objectives include:

- 1) To evolve the definition(s) of forest in the Indian context keeping international commitments and different orders of the Apex Court into consideration
- 2) To develop ecologically sound and a socially desirable definition of 'forest'

Views and relevant material can be sent to
ATREE, 659, 5A Main, Hebbal,
Bangalore 560024, Karnataka. Fax: 080-
23530070. Email info@atree.org

Rs. 65 crore for National Tiger Conservation Authority

The Government is expected to allot an amount of Rs. 65 crore for the next financial year for the working of the National Tiger Conservation Authority. The amount is substantially lower than the Rs. 104 crore the Authority had sought (see *PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 1).

It has been suggested that more than half the amount (Rs. 35 crore) may be earmarked for relocation of people from tiger reserves.

Source: Nitin Sethi. 'Only Rs. 65 cr. for tiger conservation in budget?', *The Times of India*, 17/02/07.

Contact: **Dr. Rajesh Gopal**, Director, Project Tiger Annexe No.5, Bikaner House, Shah Jahan Road, New Delhi 110 001.
Email: dirpt-r@hub.nic.in

Members of the NTCA appointed

Following is the list of the members that now constitute the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). The appointments were made in the first week of November 2006.

The Minister for Environment & Forests is the Chairperson of the Authority, and the Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment & Forests is its Vice-Chair. The other members include: three Members of Parliament; Chairperson, National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes; Chairperson, National Commission for the Scheduled Castes; Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Forests; DGF & Special Secretary; Director-Wildlife Preservation; six Chief Wildlife Wardens from Tiger Reserves in rotation for three years; Joint Secretary and Legislative Counsel from the Ministry of Law and Justice; Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs; Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The Inspector General of Forests In-charge of Project Tiger is the Member Secretary of the Authority.

The eight non-official experts include Professor Madhav Gadgil, Prof. Gopal. Kadekodi (Director, Institute for Social and Economic Change), Shri HS Panwar (Retd. Director Wildlife Institute of India), Prof. Ram Dayal Munda (former VC, Ranchi University and Member, Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal people), Prof. Anil Gore (Dept. of Statistics, Univ of Pune), Prof. R Sukumar (Indian Institute of Science), Dr. Jamal Ahmad Khan (Department of Wildlife Sciences, Aligarh Muslim University) and Dr. Archana Prasad (Reader - Environmental History / Biodiversity / Tribal Livelihoods, Centre for Jawaharlal Nehru Studies, Jamia Millia University).

Source:
http://pib.nic.in/release/rel_print_page.asp?relid=21736

Training Programme on Wildlife Crime Management in Guwahati

A collaborative training programme on "Wildlife Crime Management" was organized in Guwahati by the British Council, the British High Commission, Aaranyak, the Assam Forest Department, CAZS Natural Resources, and University of Wales in the month of March

About 30 participants from the forest, police and customs departments from north eastern states and West Bengal participated. Those addressing the workshop included Justice Iqbal Ahmed Ansari of Gauhati High Court, Mr. B.S. Bonal, CCF (Monitoring)-Assam, Mr Samir Sinha, Director of TRAFFIC India, Dr. K.K. Sharma, College of Veterinary Science, Dr P C Bhattacharjee, Professor of Zoology, Gauhati University, Dr S P Goyal Wildlife Institute of India, Mr. B.B. Dhar, CCF (HRD and Vigilence)-Assam and Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Aaranyak.

The programme included an overview of the illegal wildlife trade in the international context, case studies from India, environmental law in India, practical sessions on evidence gathering, development of wildlife forensic science in India for controlling illegal trade, partnerships between enforcement agencies, an overview of the work of the Metropolitan Police Wildlife Crime Unit in the UK and the UK Partnership against wildlife crime.

Contact: **Bibhab Talukdar, Aaranyak**, 50 Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO: Beltola, Guwahati 781 028, Assam, India. Tel: 0361-2228418/2230250 (Off). Fax: 2228418. Web: www.aaranyak.org

SOUTH ASIA

MYANMAR

Gold mining being allowed in Hukuang Valley Tiger Reserve

The Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG), a coalition of NGOs has accused the Government of Myanmar of allowing gold

mining in the area of the Hukuang Valley Tiger Reserve and also promoting development activities that were destroying the ethnic Kachin communities here.

The Hukaung Valley is home to the world's largest tiger reserve and has about 150 tigers. This is about a third of the country's entire population of wild tigers. The area also has one of the largest wetlands in Asia and is home to variety of other animals including Asian elephants, Clouded leopards and the Red panda.

The Government set up the reserve in 2001 and tripled its size in 2004 to 21,890 sq kilometres (8452 sq miles). The management rules of the reserve allow tens of thousands of people - including the Kachin, Naga and Lisu ethnic groups - to live and work within its boundaries.

While the Government has been credited with reducing poaching in the reserve, the KDNG says authorities have allowed gold mining to prosper by selling off individual concessions to select businessmen who operate large-scale, mechanised operations.



Source: Durgesh Nandan Jha. 'Junta allows gold mining, hits tiger park in Myanmar', *The Pioneer*, 11/01/07.

NEPAL

Locals in Chitwan buffer zone demand action against warden

Members of "Save the Rhino Pressure Group", which was formed in the buffer zone area of Chitwan National Park (CNP) recently, has demanded a probe into the irregularities at the Royal Chitwan National Park. The group recently gheraoed the District Administration Office and also presented a nine-point memorandum to the Chief District Officer in the matter. The group has been agitating against the warden of the park for

what they believe was lenient action on his behalf against rhino poachers.

The group has also warned that they would spearhead a movement against Nepali Army deployed in the CNP area until the latter announced that they would work for the interest of the commoners.

Source: Dipendra Baduwal. 'Locals in buffer zone for action against CNP warden', *Kathmandu Post*, 05/02/07.

Army initiatives in Nepal for wildlife protection

The Nepal Army will be launching new initiatives ensured as wildlife protection in the country. This will include the creation of a squad of four sniffer dogs aimed at controlling rhino poaching.

The Army has also decided to re-establish 19 other security check posts in the core centers of Nature and Wildlife Conservation Areas. These had been reduced to nine during the conflict period.

Source: 'Nepal Army to deploy 4 sniffer dogs to nab rhino poachers', *Kantipur Online*, 28/01/07.

SRI LANKA

1850 elephants killed in Sri Lanka in 15 years

The Sri Lanka Wild Life Conservation Department has revealed that over the last 15 years, 1,850 elephants, 1,192 of them, male, have been killed.

It has reported that about 150 elephants and between 50-70 human die because of man-elephant conflict every year. Data available points towards an increasing trend of such incidents.

In 2005, 70 humans and around 200 elephants were killed in the conflict.

Source: Email from Nalin M dated 12/03/07

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India signs IOSEA Marine Turtle MoU

India's Ambassador to Thailand Ms Vijaya Latha Reddy signed the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU on behalf of the country on 20th February. This brings to 27 the number of Signatory States to the MoU.

It is hoped that India will be able to contribute substantially in terms of its wealth of knowledge and expertise in sea turtle conservation. At the same time, its domestic legislation will be complemented and underpinned by the detailed framework provided by the MoU's Conservation and Management Plan (CMP) which serves as a yardstick against which to measure real progress in their collective efforts to conserve sea turtles.

Source: 'India joins the IOSEA Marine Turtle MOU', http://www.ioseaturtles.org/feature_detail.php?id=190 20/02/07

UPCOMING

Call for entries: Vatavaran Environment Film Festival 2007

The CMS Vatavaran 2007 - 4th Competitive Environment and Wildlife Film Festival will be held at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi from 12 - 16 September 2007. Entries for the festival can be sent till April 30, 2007.

Contact: **Alka Tomar**, Festival Director, Centre for Media Studies (CMS), CMS Research House, Saket Community Centre, New Delhi 110 017. Tel: 011-24992597 / 26522244/55. Fax: 26968282. Email: vatavaran@cmsindia.org; info@cmsvatavaran.org Web: www.cmsvatavaran.org

Call for papers on failed proposals for protected areas

The American Anthropological Association meetings in Washington DC, USA to be held in November 2007 has a panel on 'unsuccessful attempts at establishing protected areas.

Papers have been invited for the same by the organizer of the panel.

Suggestions for the issues that the papers might address include: The extent to which park proposal failures can be attributed to resistance on the part of residents/users of the proposed protected area; do the representations deployed in park proposal failures challenge or reproduce problematic notions of wilderness, community, noble savagery, the nature/culture divide; assessments of proposal failures in relation to issues like commoditization, class conflict, and political economy; lessons for anthropologists, NGOs and communities from failures of park creation proposals

While papers on un-enforced "paper parks" are welcome, those particularly sought are studies of park proposals that didn't /currently haven't made it even to the "paper" stage.

Contact: **Dr. Derick Fay**, Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Union College, Schenectady, NY 12308, USA. Email: acadlists@dfay.fastmail.fm

WHAT'S AVAILABLE

- **Andrews, HV., RSC Jayaraj and S Mundoli (Eds) (2006).** *State of Environment 2005 – Andaman and Nicobar Islands*, Andaman and Nicobar Environmental Team (ANET) and Dept. of Environment and Forests, A&N Islands, Port Blair. Rs. 300.

The report looks at a cross section of information and issues about the Andaman and Nicobar Islands that includes Population and Demography, Agriculture, Biological

Diversity, Land and Water Resources. Industries and Disaster Management

Contact: **Payal Narain**, Madras Crocodile Bank Trust Post Bag 4, Mamallapuram 603 104 Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044-27472447. Fax: 27472958. Email: mcbtindia@vsnl.net

- **Athreya, V. & A Belsare (2006).** *'Carnivore Conflict': Support provided to leopards in Conflict related cases in Maharashtra.* Wildlife Trust of India. New Delhi.

The report is based on two Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) Rapid Action Projects supported by the International Fund for Animal Welfare and the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and conducted by the Kaati Trust

This report documents the technical and veterinary support provided to the Maharashtra Forest Department during the capture and translocation of leopards from conflict areas. It recommends science-based action keeping in mind the ecology of the species.

The report can be downloaded from http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/reports/Carnivore_Conflict.pdf

Contact: **WTI.** Email: info@wti.org.in

- **Rangarajan, Mahesh (Ed.) (2007).** *Environmental Issues in India – A Reader.* Pearson Education India, Delhi. Rs. 199.

Edited by one of India's best and well-known environmental historian's, this book brings together 33 essays by noted environmental scholars, thinkers and practitioners from within India and abroad. These include among others contributions by Bina Agarwal, Darryl D'Monte, Madhav Gadgil, Ramachandra Guha, M Krishnan, Vasant Sabherwal, Madhu Sarin, Mukul Sharma and Romila Thapar.

The essays cover a range of issues that have been divided into five distinct sections: Pre-Colonial India; Colonial India; Independent India's Environment; Movements and Alternatives; and Global Issues.

Contact: **Mahesh Rangarajan** C/o Pearson Education, 482 FIE Patparganj, Delhi – 110092. Tel: 011-22146067. Fax: 22146071. Email: rangarajan.mahesh@gmail.com

- **Dattatri, Shekar** (2006). *Riddle of the Ridley*. Tulika Publishers, Chennai. Rs. 125.

Riddle of the Ridley is a richly illustrated (with photographs) and information packed little book on the Olive Ridley Turtle for children above the age of eight. It draws heavily on the author's expertise and long standing involvement with issues of turtle conservation in the country.

Contact: **Shekar Dattatri**, C/o Tulika, 13, Prithvi Avenue, Abhirampuram, Chennai – 600018, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044-24981639 / 24671113. Email: tulikabooks@vsnl.com Web: www.tulikabooks.com

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities with GEER in Gujarat

The Gujarat Ecological Education and Research Foundation (GEER) is looking for research fellows for the following projects:

1) Biodiversity study of Shoolpaneshwar wildlife sanctuary and Northern Tapi forests (specific studies on mammals and birds); 2) Vulture monitoring in the state ; 3) Dugong survey on Indian Coast; 4) Survey of Heronries in Gujarat

Contact: **Director**, GEER Foundation Indroda Nature Park, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Email: dir-geer@gujarat.gov.in

Position available in project on epiphytes

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) is initiating a

project on epiphytes as part of its program on Canopy Science in India.

The project is seeking a candidate with an M.Sc in Ecology/Forestry/Wildlife Biology to apply for the project where the first phase will involve understanding distribution / colonization / patterns of epiphytes in terms of host plants/micro site preferences and to determine their level of resilience to varying degrees of disturbance. The second phase would explore the role of epiphytes in augmenting faunal biodiversity in the forest.

This is a Department of Science funded project for three years. A large part of project work will be carried out in the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve. The selected candidate will be under probation for 3 months and also has the scope, subsequently, to enroll in the Ph.D programme of ATREE.

Contact: **Dr. M. Soubadra Devy**, ATREE, # 659, 5th A main, Hebbal, Bangalore - 560024, Karnataka, India. Tel: 080-23530069/23533942/3638771. Fax: 23530070. Email: soubadra@atree.org. Web: www.atree.org

Volunteers needed for survey of *Bugun Liocichla* around Eaglenest WLS

The Eaglenest Biodiversity Project is seeking volunteers to undertake a survey of the newly discovered bird *Bugun liocichla* (see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 5) in areas around the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.

The project is being supported by the RSPB/Bird Fair and will be carried out for a month starting April 15. Following are some of the main requirements for the volunteers:

1. The volunteers must be experienced birders and willing to handle tough field conditions and planning a stay of at least 10 days.
2. The project will cover some of the expenses (camp staff, field vehicle, etc).
3. The volunteers must be equipped with a pair of binoculars; a playback unit will be highly desirable.

Contact: **Shashank Dalvi** Email:

shashank.da@gmail.com

Ramana Athreya.

Email: rathreya@ncra.tifr.res.in;
ramana.athreya@gmail.com

Curatorial Technical Education staff needed for new nature facility in South India

A new natural history facility is coming up in South India and people are needed to work in areas of biodiversity related education, research and captive propagation of flora and fauna indigenous to the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

The project is presently hiring people only from India and those who can speak South Indian languages will be preferred.

Contact: **Sally Walker**. Email: sallywalker@aol.com

Samrakshan Trust needs Conservation Awareness Officer

Samrakshan Trust that has field sites in Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram, is looking for a Conservation Awareness Officer to be based in Delhi. The job profile for this position includes the following tasks:

- a) Assisting Samrakshan field teams in MP, Meghalaya and Mizoram to develop conservation awareness strategies and action plans conducive to local conditions;
- b) Capacity enhancement of Samrakshan field teams for executing such action plans
- c) Monitoring the impact of such conservation awareness activities and making necessary corrections;
- d) Helping the organisation communicate its work to a larger audience.

This position will require extensive travel to Samrakshan field offices and a stay of several months at a stretch at these locations.

Contact: **Ms. Vijaylakshmi**, Samrakshan Trust, B-403, Anandlok, Mayur Vihar Phase 1, Delhi-110091. Email: info@samrakshan.org Web: www.samrakshan.org

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908 Deccan Gymkhana
Pune 411004

Printed Matter

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