

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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EDITORIAL

A Season of Conflict

The one most striking feature of the information we gathered for this issue of the *Protected Area Update* has been 'conflict'. Elephant destroying crops and houses, killing humans; elephants electrocuted, elephants shot dead; a bear burnt to death; human deaths in leopard and tiger attacks; leopard and tiger deaths in retaliatory human action; a huge monkey menace across a number of states and cities. Incidents from across the country, from Maharashtra in the west to Orissa and Assam in the east, from Jammu & Kashmir in the north to Karnataka and Kerala in the south.

The table on Page 22 lists about 50 incidents of conflicts over a three month period ending January 2007. That's more than one incident every two days and yet only a small tip of a huge iceberg. It's obvious that all incidents are not reported and further that we have serious limitations in accessing all of what is available. The Karnataka Forest Department (KFD), for instance, has listed nearly 3000 'conflict incidents' in and around Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserves alone for 2005-06. It's not clear how the KFD has defined a conflict incident, but there can be no doubt that this is a mammoth problem we have on our hands and one that needs urgent engagement.

The first effort that should be made is to get a clearer picture of what is happening. There can be no substitute to putting together a basic database that will record and track as many incidents of conflict as is possible. We need clearer answers to many questions before we can think of working towards solutions - what are the trends, which seasons, which regions, what kind of animals, what are existing human responses of avoidance, resolution or retaliation?

It needs to be a joint effort that involves everybody; the government agencies, NGOs, village communities, field biologists, the vets and the media. If this does not happen what we are only going to see is an escalation. This is something that we can certainly not afford, particularly when conflict is already so intense. The price being paid on both sides is already too high. We have little choice but to work on resolving this, and quickly.

Protected Area Update

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NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ASSAM

Butterfly Conservation Initiative

A Butterfly Conservation Initiative has been launched in Assam by a group of young and enthusiastic naturalists. Supported by Horizon International, a USA based NGO, the group has planned a number of activities to ensure their objective of butterfly conservation.

This includes holding workshops in colleges and regularly monitoring of butterflies in protected areas like the Kaziranga, Orang and Nameri National Parks. The project will also include statewide fieldwork to gather baseline data and identify threats to butterfly populations, research and documentation of different species, their habitats and taxonomy and creation of a photo database to help people identify and distinguish one specimen from another.

Institutions like Bajali College, Pathshala and Margherita College have already created butterfly study groups as part of the endeavour.

Source: Roopak Goswami. 'Crusade to save butterflies takes wing', *The Telegraph*, 04/12/06.

Contact: **Maan Barua**, Wild Grass, 107, MC Road, Uzan Bazar, Guwahati 781001, Assam. Email: maanbarua@gmail.com

Manas celebration program held

A day-long Manas Celebration Programme was held on December 13 at Zumduar at the foothills of the Indo-Bhutan Black Mountain border located in the Gossaigaon subdivision of Kokrajhar district.

The program that was organized jointly by the Assam Forest Department (Kachagaon Forest Division), NGOs and the fringe villages of the Manas National Park was attended by thousands of people. It was organized as per the resolutions of the Manas Biosphere Celebration (Ultapani) 2005 aimed

at accelerating the process of peoples' participation in the conservation process of Manas. The program was supported by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and sponsored by the BTC, the Wildlife Trust of India, ARANYAK, the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Rhino Foundation.

One of the main aims of the celebration at Zumduar was to re-establish the linkage of the various communities with Manas. It also provided a platform to exchange and share views among the stakeholders about future conservation and management needs of the park.

The programme began with the ceremonial inauguration of the celebration by BTC Deputy Chief Khampa Borgoyari and was followed by traditional dances.

A public meeting to discuss and recommend measures for the future conservation of Manas was chaired by Gossaigaon MLA Majendra Narzary. Community Conservation Executive Director Dr Robert Horwich of USA; the SDO (C) of Kalikala Subdivision of Bhutan, Dilip Kumar: MP, Bhutan, SP Gotmare; SDO (C) Gossaigaon, SK Tyagi; Commandant, 31 SSB GB Gurung; BDO from Bhutan, GM Karki; Assistant BDO, Bhutan and many other dignitaries from Bhutan, BTC and the Assam FD also participated. (Also See *PA Updates* Vol XI, No. 4 (Aug. 2006), and Nos. 54 and 45).

Source: 'Manas celebration meet highlights the importance of conservation', *The Sentinel*, 14/12/06.

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

Demand for adequate compensation for victims of elephant depredation around Kaziranga

Two organizations— the *Kaziranga Surakhya Aru Unnayan Samiti* (KSAUS) and the *Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti* (KMSS) of Golaghat district submitted one each in December to the Bokakhat SDO (C) demanding payment of adequate compensation to the families that have lost their family members in attacks by elephants straying from the Kaziranga NP and also those whose properties have been destroyed. Members

of the Golaghat district unit of the KMSS took out a bicycle rally on National Highway 37 to make their protests heard and also held a *dharna* in front of the SDO's office.

The organizations have threatened that if the demands were not met they would not cooperate with the organizers for the Kaziranga Festival 2007.

It was pointed out that cases of elephants straying into areas of human habitation in the region were on the rise and a number of people had been killed. Not a single rupee in compensation has yet been paid. The total compensation amount to be paid here by the Centre from the fund under Project Elephant is said to have touched Rs. 8 lakh.

The organizations also expressed concern that initiatives were not being taken to protect the park from erosion by the River Brahmaputra. The matter of providing health and medical facilities for the people of the villages surrounding the park was also brought up.

Source: 'Two organizations against Kaziranga Elephant festival', *The Indian Express*, 19/12/06.

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

Poachers surrender in Orang



The recent creation of the *Orang National Park Surakhya Samiti*, an initiative of DFO Sukumar Momin of the Orang Wildlife Division has resulted in a number of positive developments in and around the Orang National Park. The

most recent of these was the surrender by two poachers of Village Laudong under the Dalgaon police station. They were compelled to do so by the villages like Hami sar, Nabu sar and Lohori sar located on the fringes of the park.

The two are also reported to have confessed that they were involved in the killing of five rhinos in recent times.

Source: 'DFO's initiative bears fruit; poachers surrender', *The Sentinel*, 21/12/06.

Contact: **DFO**, Orang NP, Mangaldoi Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Darrang - 784125, Tel: 0914-22065(O), 22349(R)

Proposal to declare Sareswar Beel a wildlife sanctuary.

Nature's Friend, a Dhubri based wildlife NGO, has requested the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD) to declare the Sareswar Beel a bird sanctuary. The NGO also expressed concern over the deterioration of the ecosystem of the beel, which has been listed as a site of global importance in the Directory of Asian Wetlands.

A proposal has also been reportedly sent to the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state. The Dhubri Deputy Commissioner too has given a no-objection certificate to the proposal.

The beel that is located at Rupshi is spread over 3,270-hectare and is surrounded by the Rupshi, Atharocotta, Bamunjhora and Monglajhora Reserve Forests. It falls in the Number 1 Parbatjhowar constituency of the BTAD.

The beel is home to a large number of local and migratory birds, aquatic plants and animals. It has however suffered because of rampant deforestation in the nearby reserved forests and illegal and commercial fishing.

Source: 'Prod for sanctuary tag', *The Telegraph*, 22/12/06.

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

GUJARAT

Extensive tourism development plan for Gujarat PAs

In a bid to boost tourism in the State, the Gujarat Government has mooted a proposal to set up interpretation centres at a number of protected areas. Existing centres and facilities at other sites are also being upgraded.

The sites where new facilities are being put up include the Khijadia Bird Sanctuary (Jamnagar district), Koteswar-Narayan Sarovar (Kutch district), Thol Bird Sanctuary (Gandhinagar district), the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (Narmada) and Pirotan Island (Jamnagar). Other non-PA sites include Ajamgadh-Keliya Dam and Wilson Hills (both in Valsad district), Pariej Wetland (Kheda) and Kevadia (Vadodara).

The Forest Department (FD) is reported to have already submitted a Rs 3.25 crore project proposal to the State Tourism Department for these centers and work would start as soon as it is approved.

The centres will provide detailed information to tourists about wildlife, birds, reptiles and bio-diversity of these sites through various mediums such as audio-visuals, posters, films, three-dimensional models of birds/animals and pamphlets. These centres will also guide tourists to visit other places of interest. Other facilities such as drinking water, sanitation, reception centres and accommodation will also be created.

Some of the proposals for specific sites are the following:

Nal Sarovar Sanctuary: The existing interpretation centre is to be revamped and expanded at a cost of Rs 40 lakh. Four rest huts are also to be set up. Relevant information about the type and original destination of domestic as well as migratory birds visiting the sanctuary will be provided to tourists through this centre. The installation of three observation towers at strategic points around the bird sanctuary has been proposed to help tourists watch birds. The FD will also purchase binoculars.

Velavadar Sanctuary: The center at Velavadar Sanctuary is to be upgraded at an estimated

cost of Rs 5 lakh. A proposed 30-bed dormitory is to also be constructed

Gir Wildlife Sanctuary: There are also plans to totally revamp the centre at the famous Sasan-Gir wildlife sanctuary, with parking area near Devalia already undergoing construction.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XII, No. 3, June 2006 and No. 49)

Source: Bashir Pathan. 'Eco-tourism to take flight with new plan for sanctuaries', *The Indian Express*, 12/12/06.

Contact: ACF, Nal Sarovar WLS, At & P.O. Vekaria Tehsil Viramgam, Dist. Ahmadabad. Gujarat. Tel: 079-2122430. Fax: 2122430

Increased traffic inside Gir posing threat

A report of the Gujarat Forest Department has pointed out that increased vehicular traffic inside Gir, particularly on the Dhari-Una road is posing a threat to the forests and the wildlife here.

One of the reasons for this is the fact that people travelling to Diu take the Dhari-Una road passing through Gir so that they can view wild animals. People also use the road to visit the Tulsishyam temple.

Records with the FD show that four lakh people and one-lakh vehicles use this road every year in either direction.

The FD is planning a wildlife interpretation center at Ambardi, six kms off the Amreli – Kodinar state highway and the Dhari-Una road and says that this could help reduce the traffic inside the protected area.



Source: Rajiv Shah. 'Increased traffic upsets Gir sanctuary's delicate balance', *The Times of India*, 09/12/06.

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

Rs. 60 crore project for lion conservation

The Gujarat Forest Department has recently submitted a Rs. 60 crore lion conservation project to the State Government with a request to include it in next financial year's budget.

The project that is to be implemented over five years includes the setting of one gene pool each in Junagadh, Bhavnagar and Rajkot districts. 30 animals will be picked up for this purpose from Gir and placed in each of these three places in a semi-captive situation. The proposal has also sought to augment new lion habitation areas in the eastern region of Gir at Jessore, Palitana and Mahuva.

Source: Bashir Pathan. 'The roar in Gir? Rs. 60 cr project to conserve lions', *The Indian Express*, 07/12/06.

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

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Plans for HP wetlands

Plans were drawn up for various wetland PAs in Himachal Pradesh during the recently held meeting of the National Wetland Committee (NWC). The meeting that was held at Nurpur in Kangra district was chaired by Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Environment and Forests, BS Parsheera who heads the National Wetland Committee. The wetlands that were discussed in the meeting include the Pong Dam WLS, Renuka WLS, Khajjiar WLS and the Rewalsar wetland.

A plan of Rs. 48 crore was also sanctioned for undertaking various activities at Pong that include catchment area treatment, bio-diversity conservation, sustainable educational awareness, weed control, work management and soil conservation.

(Also See *PA Updates* Vol. XII, No.1 and Nos. 53 & 47).

Source: 'Wetland committee sanctions Rs. 48 cr for HP', *The Pioneer*, 29/11/06.

Contact: **DFO (Wildlife)**, Pong Lake WLS, Chamba Division, Chamba - 176310, Himachal Pradesh. Tel:01899-22639. Email: cfchamba@nde.vsnl.net.in

Demand for comprehensive policy on human-animal conflict

The Himachal Gyan Vigyan Samiti has decided to launch a statewide stir to press its demand for a comprehensive policy to contain the animal-human conflict which was creating a plethora of problems for the people, particularly farmers whose crops are being damaged. The samiti has constituted a 14-member joint action committee for the purpose.

The Samiti has pointed out that they had been left with no option but to launch an agitation as the government had not taken any steps to address the problem that included attacks by leopards and bear and large scale crop damage by a number of wild animals including wild boars, monkeys, blue bulls, and *sambars*.

Every year crops worth over Rs 400 crore were being destroyed and prowling leopards and bears were targeting human beings and livestock. Of the 3,200 panchayats in the state, 2319 are said to have been affected by the problem in some way or the other.

Members of the samiti also pointed out that translocation of the problem animals was no solution as they created problems in the area where they were released. As a move to provide immediate relief they have demanded a relaxation on the ban on export of monkeys and declaration of select species in specified areas as vermin for a specified period. The setting up of a task force up to carry out scientific culling of undesirable animals in such areas has also been suggested.

Source: 'Stir threat over animals' issue', *The Tribune*, 04/12/06.

Forest guards may get motorcycles for better patrolling



The Himachal Pradesh Forest Department has submitted a project report to the state government that proposes to make motorcycles available to forest guards to ensure better patrolling. A forest guard in HP covers almost 20 kms of mountainous terrain everyday as part of patrolling duty. It is hoped that providing vehicles will make the task of protection easier.

If the project is approved, the first lot of motorcycles will be provided to guards at the Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary located in the Kangra valley.

Source: 'Forest guards in Himachal to patrol on motorcycles', *The Pioneer*, 28/12/2006

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Himachal Pradesh, Dept. of Forest Farming & Conservation, Mist Chamber, 1st Floor, Khalini, Shimla – 171001. Tel: 0177-223038 / 0191-544575. Fax: Fax 0177-224192 / 223038

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Rising leopard population threatens hangul in Dachigam NP

A six-year study conducted by the Jammu & Kashmir Department of Wildlife Protection with the support of the Wildlife Institute of India has indicated that one of the main threats to the endangered hangul population in the Dachigam National Park comes from the rising leopard population here.

According to census figures the population of the hangul has declined from 850 in 1988 to somewhere between 170 and 250 in 2005. While there are no figures for leopards in

the area, the researchers are certain that the numbers have increased.

It has also been pointed out that large-scale grazing of sheep and encroachment in the upper reaches of the park have led to the shrinking of the hangul's home range, making it easy prey for leopards in the lower reaches.

Increase in the population of the Asiatic black bear is also believed to be against the interests of the endangered deer.

Solutions being suggested to deal with the problem include translocation of leopards from the area and also culling, though only as a last step.

Source: Toufiq Rashid. 'In J&K's Dachigam, too many leopards mean too few hanguls', *The Indian Express*, 22/12/06.

Troops in J&K forests affecting wildlife habitat

Large-scale deployment of troops in various parts of the Kashmir Valley including in forest areas is believed to be seriously affecting wild animals and their habitat. Experts say that the entire stretch from Zabarwan, Twin Peak to Tral in Pulwama district is highly militarized, blocking the passage of the wild animals. Forests in Zabarwan have also been fenced with barbed wire, hampering the movement of wild animals like bears and leopards, who normally move to the lower reaches during the winter months. The foothills of the Zabarwan range also house the headquarters of the Army's 15 Corps and the residences of many senior government functionaries including the Chief Minister and the Governor. The entire belt has also been mined by the army, complicating the situation even further.

Animals like the bear and leopard have frequently been spotted in Harwan, Brein, Buchwara and Gagribal areas, which fall in the Zabarwan range. The Dachigam National Park is also located in the Harwan region here.

There have been many reports in the recent past of wild animals straying into inhabited areas and a situation of increased conflict. The problem has been compounded by the fact that wild animal populations here have increased on account of the hunting ban in the valley for the last two decades.

The problem is also said to be severe in areas like Kupwara, Pulwama and Varmul where the higher reaches are heavily dominated by troops.

Minister for Forests Qazi Muhammad Afzal is said to have acknowledged the problem and taken it up with the Chief Minister. He said, however, that all the troops could not be moved out of the forest areas, but an effort will be made to restrict their movement to prevent disturbance to wildlife. The government is also said to be planning a massive fencing exercise of the forest areas to prevent the entry of wild animals into nearby residential areas

During the past two-years at least 30 persons have been killed and hundreds have been injured in attacks by wild animals. Scores of wild animals including 25 leopards also lost their lives in the incidents.

Increasing encroachments, cutting of trees in the forests and illegal grazing have also been blamed for the escalating human-wildlife conflict here.



Source: 'Troops in forests disturb habitat of wild animals: Expert', <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/Home/Newsdetails.asp?newsid=1808&Issueid=98&Arch=,> 23/12/06

KARNATAKA

Spatial mapping tracks forest fire zones

The Karnataka State Remote Sensing Application Centre (KSRSAC) has completed a project "Standardisation of geospatial database of Karnataka forest department," that has been able to identify divisions that are prone to forest fire during summer.

The project, which took about two years to complete, covers 40,000 sq km of

forest area in Karnataka with an open forest area of 10,835 sq km and 26,156 sq km of dense forest, 37 territorial divisions and 10 wildlife divisions. It has used Indian Remote Sensing Satellite 1-C and 1-D for the spatial mapping

The spatial images have identified the extent of dry deciduous, scrub vegetation, evergreen, semi-evergreen forests and grasslands. The mapping comprises identification of fire risk zonation wherein pockets prone to forest fire during summer are indicated on the maps.

These include the wildlife divisions of Nagarhole and Bandipur — dry deciduous forest; Muthodi — deciduous, semi-evergreen forest which has bamboo; Chikmagalur division with Bababudangiri where high grasslands are vulnerable to fire; Shimoga division, Anandpura area which has teak plantations, Bhadravathi and Haliyal divisions with teak and bamboo plantations.

The agency has used the services of US satellite Modis to capture real-time forest fire data. Modis has on board NASA's Terra and Aqua satellites which have thermal sensors that give out alerts based on rising temperature of the area.

Source: S Kushala. 'Spatial mapping tracks forest fire zones', *The Times of India*, 28/11/06.

Escalation in human-wildlife conflict in Bandipur, Nagarhole NPs; other forest areas

Statistics collated by the Karnataka Forest Department indicate that there was a serious escalation in human-wildlife conflicts in the year 2005-06, particularly in Mysore and surrounding areas. Increase of human population in areas surrounding forests and resultant increase in fuelwood collection and grazing of cattle in the forests has been suggested as one of the main reasons for this escalation. The other reasons include the conversion of forest areas to agricultural lands and development spurred by the water reservoirs in the region at Kabini, Nugu and Tharaka.

The statistics show an unprecedented rise in crop loss due to animal attacks over the last four years. In Mysore Forest circle alone, which includes Mysore, Mandya and Hunsur, human-animal conflict is said to have gone up nearly four times within the last one year. While 815 cases

including crop damage, death of animals, humans and injury by wildlife were reported in 2004-05, this number was 2,331 in 2005-06.

A similar trend has been noticed in the Rajiv Gandhi National Park, Nagarhole and Bandipur NPs too. A total of 2,446 incidents were witnessed in 2005-06 against 2,262 in 2004-05. In Nagarhole conflict instances increased three fold, from 408 in 2004-05 to nearly 1300 in 2005-06. This is the highest figure of conflicts here in the last five years.

The Forest Department is said to be making a number of efforts to deal with the problem but not much success has been achieved. Elephant squads, headed by a guard and involving unemployed local youth have been created. Solar fencing too has been tried. While it has been effective, a big problem is created on account of the loss due to theft and damage by shepherds.

The Forest Department has now submitted a Rs. 1.5 Crore proposal for the construction of permanent walls in Kodagu, Nagarhole, Bandipur, Mysore, Mandya, Chamarajnagar and Kollegal. Efforts are also going to be made to improve habitat and cater to the water and fodder needs of the wild animals so that the chances of them straying into nearby villages is reduced.

Source: S Prashantha. 'Habitat loss triggers animal conflicts in Mysore forest circle', *Deccan Herald*, 18/12/06.

Contact: **Field Director**, Bandipur Project Tiger Reserve, Aranya Bhawan, Ashokapuram, Mysore – 570008, Karnataka. Tel: 0821-2480901(O), 2484980 (R).
Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993 / 3345846. Email: pccfwl@vsnl.com

KERALA

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau in Kochi likely

The southern unit of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) proposed by the Centre is likely to be located in Kochi.

The WCCB would be modelled on the Narcotic Control Bureau (NCB) with powers to detect and investigate wildlife crimes. It would act as a nodal agency and work in tandem with State Forest Departments, law enforcing agencies and Customs and Central Excise units in South India. The proposed unit would focus on poaching, smuggling of wildlife animals and their parts and products, illegal felling of valuable forest trees and misuse of forest cover for drug cultivation.

Source: G Anand. 'Wildlife Crime Control Bureau in Kochi likely', *The Hindu*, 30/11/06.

Nature interpretation center at Pampa, Periyar

A Nature Interpretation Centre constructed by the Forest Department was recently inaugurated at Pampa with the aim of providing nature education to the pilgrims visiting the Sabarimala shrine. The center will be run by the Periyar Foundation

The Centre will have a museum with information on the flora and fauna in the sacred grove of Sabarimala. It will also highlight the importance of forest conservation with the help of photographs, video clippings, and posters.

Source: 'Forest Minister to inaugurate Interpretation Centre in Pampa', *The Hindu*, 07/12/06.

Contact: **Field Director**, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Aranya Bhavan, Forest Complex, S.H. Mount P.O. Kottayam - 686006. Kerala. Tel: 0481-2562940(O) / 2560297(R). Fax: 2569217 / 2565740
Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-2322217 / 2360452 / 2204896. Fax: 2360452 / 2322217

MADHYA PRADESH

MP State Wildlife Board reconstituted

The MP State Wildlife Board was finally reconstituted in the month of December. The Chief Minister is the ex-officio Chairperson of the board while the Forest Minister is the vice-Chair.

Other members on the board include filmmaker Mike Pandey; Surendra Tiwari of the newspaper, Nai Duniya; former PCCF (Wildlife) Dr AP Dwivedi; Lokendra Singh of the former

royal family of Panna; retired forest officer HS Panwar and Avinash Kohli of Ambar Travels. Legislators on the board are Dhyendra Singh, KK Singh, Dev Singh Saryam, Jagannath Singh and Jayram Singh Marko.

The Jabalpur based veterinary institute and Bombay Natural History Society and Care for the Wild have been nominated as institutions. Retired forest officer HS Panwar has also been made a member.

Notable exclusions from the board this time include long time member Dr MK Ranjitsinh and Dr. Raghu Chundawat. All members who had raised questions on the working of the Forest Department in the recent past have been dropped.

Source: Finally, State Wildlife board reconstituted', *The Pioneer*, 13/12/06.

Demand for rights in the Satpura Tiger Reserve

An estimated 1000 adivasis affected by the Satpura Tiger Reserve held a demonstration in the first week of January at Banglapura on the banks of the Tawa reservoir demanding their rights over the forests. They also asked for the scrapping of the Tiger Reserve and other protected areas in the region. The Satpura Tiger Reserve comprises of the Satpura National Park and the Bori and Panchmari WLSs.

The demonstration was organized under the auspices of the Kisan Adivasi Sangathan (KAS) and the Samajwadi Jan Parishad (SJP). The protestors also warned that they that if their rights were not granted within 15 days they would cordon off the area and forest officials and tourists would not be allowed into the forests. A boat rally of about 100 boats was then taken out on the Tawa Reservoir. It started from Banglapura and terminated at Sakot in the Bori WLS.

A few days earlier, on December 23, 2006, forest officials had issued orders prohibiting fishing in the reservoir as it is part of the sanctuary. The fishing lease granted to the Tawa Displaced Adivasi Fishing Cooperative was also recently cancelled. It has been pointed out that nearly 4000 families of those affected by the Tawa dam are likely to be affected again as the FD is preventing draw

down agriculture being practiced by them in areas notified as the Bori WLS.

Source: Statement issued by the KAS and SJP dated 02/01/07.

Contact: **Fagram (KAS) / Sunil (SJP)**, Village and PO Kesla, Dist. Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07572-272291 / 09425040452.

MP ecotourism board to promote public-private partnership

The Madhya Pradesh Ecotourism Development Board (MPEDB) organised a daylong workshop on December 17 at Chidikhoh (Narsinghar Sanctuary) for exploring the opportunities and scope for promoting Public-Private-Partnership in Ecotourism and conservation in Madhya Pradesh.

This is in line with the objectives of MP State Ecotourism Policy which suggests encouragement to private sector participation in ecotourism and conservation. Area where private sector participation has been sought includes infrastructure development, facilities operation, investment and demand generation.

Details of the meeting or the outcomes are however not known.

Source: 'MP ecotourism board to promote public-private partnership', *The Pioneer*, 15/12/06.

Kanha barasingha may be moved to Satpura TR



The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department is likely to request help of the USA based voluntary organisation Safari Club International Foundation (SCIF) to translocate some of the 335 barasinghas from the Kanha National Park to the Satpura Tiger Reserve in Hoshangabad.

The issue was discussed during a meeting in December chaired by Forest Minister Himmat Kothari. Details are not available and Principal Chief Conservator Forest (PCCF) P.B. Gangopadhyay was also reported to have said that though the government is concerned about

stagnation of the *barasingha* population, it was premature to comment on the idea of translocation.

Source: Lemuel Lall and Neelesh Chaudhari. 'Kanha barasingha may find Satpura Reserve a safe haven', *The Hindustan Times*, 22/12/06.

Contact: **Director**, Kanha Tiger Reserve, Mandla -481661 Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07642-250760(O), 250761(R). Fax: 251266, 250830
CWLW, MP, Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0755-2557371/ 2550391.

MAHARASHTRA

Money for tourism projects in PAs not yet released

The Rs. 8.4 crore sanctioned to the Forest Department (FD) for tourism development in PAs in Maharashtra had not been released till the middle of January. This has given rise to concerns whether the money could be spent before the end of the financial year in March. The proposal for tourism development that had been waiting for a go-ahead from the state government for many years was finally approved in the recent session of the Maharashtra Legislature in Nagpur.

The PAs where the projects are to be implemented are Melghat TR, Tadoba TR and Sanjay Gandhi NP (Rs. 1.6 cr each); Pench TR (Rs. 1.2 cr), Nagzira WLS (Rs. 0.8 cr), Gautala Outram Ghat WLS (Rs. 0.62 cr), Bhimashankar WLS (0.6 cr), Bor WLS (Rs. 0.2 cr) and Jayakwadi WLS (Rs. 0.18 cr).

The facilities to be created with the money includes roads, camp sites, nature interpretation centers, elephant rides, nature trails, additional accommodation, training of forest guides and guards, tree top huts and renovation of British period rest-houses.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Eco-tourism plan on track, but where's money?', *The Indian Express*, 16/01/07.

Captured leopards to be released into the wild

The Maharashtra FD will be shortly releasing 47 captured leopards back into the wild. The leopards were caught in 2004 and 2005 after straying from the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai. Electromagnetic chips will be planted in their tails to help in their capture in case they were to start attacking humans again.

The move of the FD comes as a result of an order of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for their release. The order is reported to have said that a year or more in captivity was too long for the animal and that they should now be freed.

It's not clear whether all the leopards to be released had been captured in Mumbai and which forests will they be set free in.

Source: 'Indian leopards on parole, with tag and warning', <http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/39441/story.htm>

2nd meeting of the State Board for Wildlife

The 2nd meeting of the Maharashtra State Wildlife Board was held in December in Nagpur under the Chairmanship of CM, Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh. This was the 2nd meeting of the board after it was constituted in 2002, when the stipulation is for two meetings every year. The last meeting was held in 2005.

The main issues listed on the agenda of the meeting included relocation of the 1000 odd villages from protected areas in the state; the demand from Ayurvedic companies for legal permission to use sambhar horns and shells; funds for the eco-development program; establishment of a separate eco-development and tourism board; protection of wildlife outside protected areas and quick disposal of compensation cases for human and cattle kills made by wildlife.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'State Wildlife Board meets, only 2nd time since inception', *The Indian Express*, 11/12/06.

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

ORISSA

Crocodile victim's family paid Rs. 1 lakh compensation

The Orissa Forest Department recently gave a compensation of Rs 1 lakh to the family members of 33-year-old woman Chhaila Parida of Banabiharipur in the Bhitarkanika National Park, who had died in a crocodile attack on July 27, 2005. She was killed when she was crossing the river to give food to her husband, who was repairing a boat on the other side of the creek.

The compensation amount provided in similar cases earlier was Rs. 10,000 but was raised to Rs. 1 lakh in 2004.

Forest officials have pointed out that such accidents occur due to frequent human intrusions into the crocodile habitat for fishing, poaching, collection of wood, honey and *nalia* grass or while setting traps for deer or wild boar very close to rivers or creek.

According to FD records at least nine persons have been killed and 19 injured critically by crocodiles since 1999. Similarly, a total of 32 domestic animals including cows, buffaloes, bullocks, calves and goats have also fallen prey to crocodiles in the last five years.

Source: Rajesh Behera. 'Rs. 1 lakh compensation given to crocodile victim's family', *The Pioneer*, 05/12/06.

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

Increase in Blackbuck population

According to the latest census conducted by the wildlife wing of the Orissa Forest Department in December 2006, the state has seen a significant increase in number of blackbucks. The population that was 551 in 1998 and 786 in the last census of 2004 is now said to be 1,101. This includes 306 males, 664 females and 131 young ones.

The areas in Orissa where these animals are found in significant numbers includes the Bhetani-Balipadar areas of Ganjam district and the Balukhand Wildlife Sanctuary near Konark in Puri district.

The enthusiasm of local people to protect the animal and improve their habitat is believed to be a big reason for this increase in numbers.

Source: 'Black buck population on the rise in State', *The Pioneer*, 22/12/06.

Elephants from Chandka kill one

Elephants believed to be from the Chandka Wildlife Sanctuary entered the Chainpur Gram Panchayat under the Delanga Block in the month of December causing havoc and also killing one person. Another person was also injured as were a number of bullocks.

An ex-gratia payment of Rs. One lakh was paid to the family of the deceased by the Forest Department that will also bear all the treatment expenses for the injured. The Block Development Office of the area paid a sum of Rs. 5000 to the family of the deceased for the last rites and Rs. 2000 from the Red Cross for treatment of the injured.

The villagers have, however, demanded that a compensation of Rs. Five lakh and Rs. One lakh respectively be paid to the families of the deceased and the injured.

Source: 'Elephants kill farmer, injure another in Puri', Prasanta Mahapatra. *The Pioneer*, 22/12/06.

Contact: **DFO**, Chandaka WLS, SFTRI Campus, Ghatikia, P.O. Barmunda Colony, Bhubaneswar – 751003. Tel: 0674-2440168 @

Turtle protection guards report sickness

A large number of forest guards posted for turtle protection duty along the Gahirmatha coast were reported sick in the month of November, seriously affecting patrolling and protection work.

The State Forest Department's (FD) turtle vigilance program was started on November 1 and by the end of the month a majority of the 53 guards employed here were said to have fallen ill. The ailing personnel were brought back and replaced by those guarding forest and wildlife in the Bhitarkanika National Park.

One of the main reasons for the sickness is said to be the prolonged exposure to the saline

environment and many of those affected were suffering from fever and frequent vomiting.

The problem has been compounded by the fact that a majority of forest staff here are above 50 years of age. The plea for filling up the 24 vacant forest posts in Bhitarkanika has also remained unheeded

The situation was partly helped, however, by the fact that the police has sent in their personnel to help with protection work on their ground.

Source: 'Turtle guards fall sick', *The Statesman*, 30/11/06.

Turtle protection camp in Gahirmatha set on fire

An offshore turtle protection camp at Agarnashi in the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary was set on fire in the month of December. The incident occurred when the camp occupants were out on patrolling duty. The two-room camp was completely burnt down and an FIR was subsequently filed in the Mahakalapada police station in the matter.

Forest officials suspect the involvement of fishermen of Kharanashi village under Mahakalapada block and it is believed that the act was to avenge the recent death of a villager who was shot dead by forest guards when fishing in the prohibited area.

The camp at Agarnashi was one of three similar ones set up recently by the FD for turtle protection work. The other two are at Barunei and Babubali. Fearing for their safety, forest guards have now expressed their reluctance to go back to the camps.

Source: 'Turtle protection camp in Gahirmatha set on fire', *The Pioneer*, 23/12/06.

Satellite telemetry project for Orissa Olive Ridley Turtle

The Orissa Forest Department is likely to initiate a satellite telemetry project in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to study the migratory routes of Olive Ridley turtles that nest on beaches here in large numbers every year.

Satellite transmitters are to be fitted on 70 turtles for the project.

More details of the project are not available but it has been suggested that one of the reasons for taking up of the project is the off-shore oil drilling work taken up a number of agencies in areas which the turtles are known to use.

The project is being undertaken in accordance with recommendation of Multi-disciplinary Expert Group (MEG) constituted by the Union Ministry of Forests and Environment.

Source: 'Satellites to keep track on turtles', *The Statesman*, 01/12/06.

CWLW- Orissa, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneshwar - 751007, Orissa.
Tel: 0674- 2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840.
Fax: 512502

RAJASTHAN

Sariska missing tigers: CBI says can't file chargesheet till all accused are arrested

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), probing the disappearance of tigers from the Sariska Tiger Reserve has said that it can't file chargesheets in the case until all the accused are arrested. The CBI had so far filed four FIRs: RC - 4/2005, RC -5/2005, RC- 6/2005 and RC - 7/2005 against some 20 accused, most of whom are absconding.

The agency has said that the accused are 'nomadic in nature' and it has been unable to apprehend them despite raids in Alwar and Dausa in Rajasthan, Ludhiana in Punjab, and Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh.

Some of the accused were arrested, but they are now out on bail.

Source: Raman Kirpal. 'Missing tiger: CBI says can't file chargesheet till be net all accused', *The Indian Express*, 11/12/06

No water in the Keoladeo NP

A poor monsoon and failure to release water from the Ajan Bund has resulted in very little water this year in the Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur. Consequently, migratory waterfowl that the park

is well known for have given the place a complete miss.

Roughly 11 sq. kms of the park is marshland and needs 500 million cubic feet of water annually. Most of this used to come from the Ajan Dam but this was stopped three years ago following opposition from residents of Karoli village who also wanted the water.

Two bore-wells have been dug and five pumps have been installed to deal with the situation but this has not helped much. A project is also pending for bringing water from the Chambal to the park in Bharatpur (see *PA Update* 54).

Source: Teena Thacker. 'There's no water this winter in Bharatpur so no birds have landed', *The Indian Express*, 07/01/07.

Contact: **Director, Keoladeo Ghana NP**, Forest Department, Bharatpur- 321 001 Rajasthan. Tel: 05644-22777(O), 22824(R). Fax: 05644-22864

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

TAMIL NADU

Meeting to discuss human-animal conflict in Coimbatore district

The Coimbatore District Forest Joint Management Committee held a meeting in the month of December to discuss measures being taken to combat the human-animal conflicts along the fringe areas of the forests here. The meeting that was chaired by the District Collector, Neeraj Mittal, along with the District Forest Officer, I. Anwardeen, mainly discussed the incidents of pachyderms straying into villages and the resultant damage caused to crops and humans.

The meeting stressed the need for educating the farmers in the fringe areas of the forest to change their cropping pattern in order to avoid maize, sugarcane and plantains since these crops lure the pachyderms to the farms.

The District Collector informed the meeting that 28 forest guards had been appointed in Periyanaickenpalayam,

Mettupalayam, Pooluvampatti and Sirumugai ranges. Steps were also being taken to establish a 20-km long solar electric fencing at a cost of Rs. 32 lakh. 18 powerful searchlights had been given to animal conflict prone areas for chasing back the elephants. 12 more searchlights were proposed to be given to affected villages in Karamadai range. Additionally Rs. 1 lakh each is to be given to the Nellimarathur and Paralikkadu Joint Forest Management and Tourism committees.

Source: 'Man animal conflicts: Panel discusses strategy', *The Hindu*, 21/12/06.

Rs. 7 lakh project for Vallanadu Blackbuck Sanctuary

A Rs. Seven lakh project for the Vallanadu Blackbuck Sanctuary in Tuticorin district has been recently approved under the Centre's 'Development of Sanctuaries' scheme.

Of the total outlay, Rs. 4.5 lakh will be spent to repair fencing while the remaining will be used for increasing the height of a watchtower by 14 metres, improving water supply and erecting awareness boards.

Plans are also in the offing to plant fruit-yielding *Ficus infectoria* tree saplings on the rocks inside the sanctuary to attract more birds.

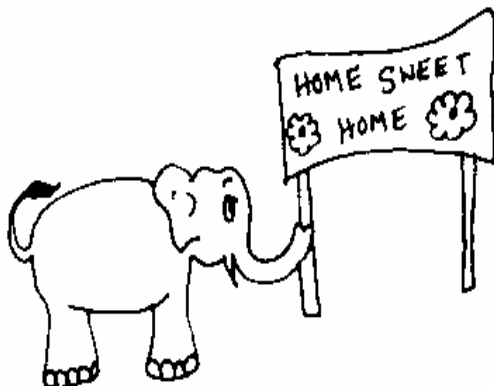
Source: Biodiversity: Plan to educate people', *The Hindu*, 22/12/06.

Elephant camp to be back at Theppakkadu in Mudumalai

The elephant camp of the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park was resumed after a brief closure. The 23 elephants at the camp had been shifted to Bombax in an interior part of the sanctuary in November as a precautionary measure following the death of 14 wild boars due to anthrax. The situation was being closely monitored and the decision to move the elephants back was taken when no further anthrax cases were reported over a two week period.

The ban imposed on movement of cattle through the sanctuary was also lifted. The cattle transporters have however been asked to ensure that their animals should be vaccinated against

anthrax and foot and mouth disease at least 15 days before the transportation.



Source: 'Elephant camp to be back at Theppakkadu', *The Hindu*, 23/12/06.

Eco-tourism plan for Pulicat Lake

A blueprint is under preparation for developing eco-tourism at the Pulicat Lake on the Tamil Nadu-Andhra Pradesh border.

The plan aims at making the lake a more attractive weekend getaway for Chennai residents through the year. Facilities to be created here include a food court to be managed by local residents, houseboats and better access with a road due for development under a Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority project.

A survey is being carried out by architects to arrive at a cost estimate for the project.

Source: J Malarvizhi. 'Eco-tourism plan for Pulicat Lake', *The Hindu*, 29/12/06.

WEST BENGAL

Elephants from Buxa TR raid school

Elephants from the Buxa Tiger Reserve were reported to have raided the Patkapara Junior Basic School in the Patkapara Tea Estate located some 16 kms from Alipurduar town.

They ate up the food grain and other edibles stored in the office for mid-day meals. The animals also destroyed the office and a classroom. Classes and the mid-day meals were

suspended indefinitely, affecting the more than 200 students of the school.

Last year too, wild animals had damaged the Phoshkadanga Shishu Shiksha Kendra nearby and classes are still being held under open skies.

The management of Patkapara Tea Estate has expressed its own annoyance. They have complained that workers are busy tackling the wild elephants at night and then don't report for work the following day. The animals also damage new plantations, thatched houses and culverts causing a lot of financial loss to the estate. The estate has asked the Forest Department to set up a temporary camp in the tea estate and the request is said to be under consideration.

Source: 'Elephants have a meal', *The Telegraph*, 30/11/06.

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

NGO forum to protest elephant deaths on railway tracks in North Bengal

A large number of NGOs and wildlife support groups are joining hands to create a forum to check the recurring deaths of elephants on the Siliguri Junction-New Alipurduar broad gauge line. A number of deaths of elephants have occurred on this section, particularly after the meter gauge track was converted to a broad gauge a few years ago. Serious concerns had been expressed at that time of the impact this would have on elephants, but those had been ignored (see *PA Update* Vol. XII, No. 3 and Nos. 49, 47, 43, 39, 34, 32 & 29).

The decision to form this forum was taken at an international meeting on elephants that was held in Kolkata recently.

The main demand of the forum would be to check the speed of the trains on the entire route and not in specific zones only.

Those joining the forum include the Himalayan Nature and Adventure Foundation, Junglee, Prakriti Sansad, NEWS and the WWF.

Source: Green lobby in track death protests', *The Telegraph*, 04/12/06.

Contact: **WWF- I**, West Bengal State Office, 5th Floor, Tata Centre, 43,

Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta
700071, West Bengal. Tel: 033 –
2889530. Fax: 2883761.

Tourism projects in Gorumara NP

A nature study and tourism center was recently opened at Murti in the Gorumara National Park. The center has various attractions for visitors including tenting facilities, a forest trail, classes conducted on various issues by foresters and environmentalists and facilities to watch films and documentaries on nature and wildlife.

The Kalipur eco-village has also been set up on the northern fringes of the park (see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 5, October 2006)

Source: 'A study center in the wild', *Deccan Herald*, 14/12/06.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)**, North Bengal, West Bengal Forest Dept. Aranya Bhawan (Near Court) Jalpaiguri, West Bengal.
Tel: 03561– 25627(O) 25596 (R).

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

UTTARANCHAL

Elephants from Rajaji NP raiding Rishikesh

Elephants from the Rajaji National Park are reported to regularly raid parts of Rishikesh town, particularly in winter, in search of water and food. The worst hit areas are Shyampur, Chidderwala, Gumaniwala, IDPL Colony and Dhalwala where the elephants left behind damaged boundary walls, huts, crops and trees.

Over the past three years a dozen people have also been killed by the rampaging elephants. Elephants too have been killed in retaliation by the villagers. The Forest Department has said they do not have the necessary resources to take measures like erection of electric fencing to deal with the problem. The FD proposal of building an 'elephant corridor' and 'elephant bridges' to

restore the fragmented habitat is also reported to have found no favour with the government.

Source: 'Elephants raid Rishikesh', *The Hindu*, 15/12/06.

Director, Rajaji NP, 5/1 Ansari Marg, Dehradun –
248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-2621669
Fax: 2621669

State to hire Assam elephants for patrolling, protection and tourism work

The Uttaranchal Forest Department is said to have initiated a process to hire 80 trained elephants from Assam to ensure better protection of forests and check poaching. The elephants would also be used for purposes of tourism. Tenders had been invited and the animals were expected to arrive by March 2007.

It is hoped that the elephants would be particularly useful in patrolling forest areas in the monsoons when access otherwise is difficult.

Source: 'Uttaranchal to hire elephants from Assam', *The Indian Express*, 11/12/06.

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

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Challenge to PIL against the NTCA

The Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD) that has spearheaded the campaign for the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 recently issued an 'Open Letter' addressed to the Bombay Natural History Society, the Wildlife Protection Society of India, Wildlife First and Conservation Action Trust in response to the petition that was filed by these organizations in the Supreme Court challenging the National Tiger Conservation Authority (see *PA Update* Vo. XII, No. 6).

The letter challenges many of the contentions in the PIL and has requested the organizations to withdraw the petition, open a dialogue on the issues that they have raised in the

petition and consider a democratic approach to conservation in which both wildlife and people's rights are given importance.

Contact: **CSD**, C/o SRUTI, Q-1, Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi-110016. Tel: 011 – 26569023 / 09968293978. Email: forestcampaign@gmail.com

Sanctuary-ABN Amro Wildlife Conservation Awards presented

The Sanctuary ABN Amro Wildlife Conservation Awards were presented recently in Mumbai. The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to well-known herpetologist Romulus Whitaker. Wildlife Service Awards were granted to Firoz Ahmed of Aaranyak, Assam; Parveen Bhargav, Wildlife First, Karnataka; Dr. Dharmendra Khandal, Tiger Watch, Rajasthan; the Sunderbans Protection Team, West Bengal and Nitiin Desai of the Wildlife Protection Society of India.

The Young Naturalists Award went to Hakabhai Makawana from Gujarat for his work to save vultures; Samir Kehimkar of Mumbai and Bajrang Bishnoi of the Bishnoi Flying Squad in Rajasthan.

The Wind Under the Wings Award went to New Delhi Television (NDTV) for their program 'Born Wild' by Swati Thyagarajan. The Green Teacher Award was given to Nishikant Kale and Prakash Laddha for their work in the Satpuda region in Maharashtra.

Contact: **Bittu Sahgal**, Sanctuary Magazine
145/146, Pragati Inds. Estate, NM Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400011.
Tel: 022-23016848/49 Maharashtra
Email: bittusahgal@vsnl.com

First meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority

The first meeting of the recently constituted National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was held in New Delhi in November. It was decided in the meeting to

- Ask all tiger states to launch a special drive to recruit local forest dwelling people to fill

- up ground staff vacancies in all tiger reserves
- Create a panel with NTCA experts, Ministry of Home Affairs (Internal Security), Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Social Justice, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and State Chief Wildlife Wardens to suggest measures to contain insurgency and naxalite problems in Indravati, Palamau and Valmiki Tiger Reserves
- Create a monitoring laboratory at the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun
- Complete Phase – I analysis of the All India Tiger Estimation using the new methodology
- Use the new protocol developed in the All India Tiger Estimation for regular, institutionalized monitoring of tiger reserves
- Set up a committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Madhav Gadgil to suggest networking with researchers towards fostering field research and refining the parameters for independent monitoring.

Other issues discussed included the general approach for the tenth plan, anti-poaching drives, human-animal conflict, determination of inviolate spaces for wildlife, mainstreaming livelihood concerns and strengthening of infrastructure for the NTCA.

The NTCA has also sought budgetary support for Rs. 104 crore for the next financial year. This would be three and a half times the present budget of Rs. 30 crores of Project Tiger.

Source: 'Tiger authority to rely on locals', *The Indian Express*, 30/11/06.

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

Workshop on Endangered Freshwater turtles and tortoises

A Workshop on 'Management, Conservation and Research Practices for Endangered Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises of India' was held at the Madras Crocodile Bank (CrocBank) from October 26 to 29, 2006. This was part of the CrocBank's ongoing freshwater turtle in situ and ex situ conservation program.

The main topics covered in the workshop included Diversity, Identification Criteria, Survey

Techniques, Data Collection Checklist, Sampling methods and Status assessment for Conservation Action Planning.

Resource personnel for the workshop included Dr. RK Sharma, National Chambal Sanctuary, MP Forest Department; Mr. D Basu, UP Forest Department; Mr. BC Choudhary, Wildlife Institute of India, Dr. Karthik Vasudevan, WII and Mr. Harry Andrews of the CrocBank.

Source: 'Management, Conservation and Research Practices for Endangered Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises of India', *Herpinstance*, December 2006.

Contact: **Harry Andrews**, MCBT Post Bag 4, Mamallapuram 603 104 Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044-27472447. Fax: 27472958. Email: mcbtindia@vsnl.net

Families of forest workers paid insurance money

Families of four forest workers who died on duty in various incidents in the last six months, received a sum of rupees 1, 00,000 each under the Van Rakshak Project of the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). Of the four beneficiaries, two were from Maharashtra, and one each from West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh. One of four was a forest guard in the Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary and had been shot dead by poachers. The other three died in different accidents while on duty.

Till date, 16,556 staff covering protected areas in 21 states across the country are registered under this insurance scheme and families of 45 workers who have died in the recent past have already been paid their insurance amount. According to an assessment by WTI, from the 69 cases that were reported between 2001 and 2006 - 64 cases were of death while, the remaining five were of disability. Nearly, 30% of the reported cases were on account of attacks by wild animals and the rest were on account of accidents, diseases and attack by poachers. Casualties are high in the states of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Kerala, and Uttaranchal.

As per the provision, in the case of death, the nominee can claim a sum of Rs 1 lakh through the Protected Area manager.

Persons who suffer partial or permanent disability can also apply.

Source: Martyred forest workers get insurance money', http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2006/061117_insurance.html

Contact: **Rakesh Singh**, Wildlife Trust of India, A-220, New Friends Colony, New Delhi. – 110065. Ph. 011-26326025/6

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

National Dialogue on Restructuring of Protected Areas (PAs) in Nepal

A multi-stakeholder 'National Dialogue on Restructuring of Protected Areas in Nepal' was held on January 1, 2007. It was organized by the Community Development Organization (CDO); Nepal Forest Professional Association (NFA); FECOFUN; Majhi Musahar Bote Kalyan Sewa Samiti, HIMAWANTI and CUFSUN.

Those who participated included the local communities in the buffer zones of the protected areas in the Terai (Koshi Tappu Wild Life Reserve, Parsa Wild Life Reserve, Chitwan National Park, and the Bardiya National Park); Member of Parliament; representatives of the Forest Ministry, including the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation; representatives of Buffer Zone Management Council; representatives of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs); International NGOs; civil society organizations; experts, individuals, forest professionals and journalists.

The objectives of the program were

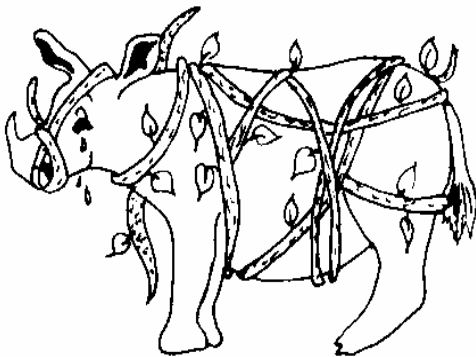
1. To discuss agenda of local communities affected by protected areas in Nepal
2. To collectively deliberate on democratization of protected areas that fulfills goals of bio diversity conservation and establish natural resource rights of local communities
3. To initiative multi stakeholders dialogue on restructuring of protected areas.

The areas of critical debate identified during the workshop included those related to

- People's sovereignty and leadership in protected area management.
- Deployment of army in protected areas
- Military solution to the poaching problem
- Livelihood crisis of poor and indigenous communities.
- Success of buffer zone management and development.
- Access of marginalized communities in benefits of protected area management.
- Co-existence of wild life and human beings; conservation and livelihood.
- Impunity and rule of law in protected areas.

Contact: **Sudeep Jana**, Community Development Organization Sahayog Marg, Anamnagar, Kathmandu, Nepal. P.O. Box: 15142 KPC 1010, Kathmandu Tel: 00977-1-4254017 (off) 4427060 (r). Email: janasudeep@gmail.com

Weed threat to Chitwan rhinos; other PAs



The rapid spread of the weed known locally as 'miles a minute' *Mikania micrantha* is said to be posing a serious threat to the ecosystem of the Royal Chitwan National Park in general and to the rhinos is particular. The weed that was not found in Chitwan till 1993 is being held responsible for destroying the grasslands on which animals like deer and the rhino are mainly dependant.

The plant has a bitter-sour taste and is therefore not consumed by the wild animals. Since large parts of the grasslands are covered by the weeds the animals are being forced to

move to the community forests on fringe areas of the national park.

This has increased their vulnerability to poachers. This is borne about by the fact that of the 10 rhinos poached in the last five months, nine were killed in community forests. Forest officials have pointed out that in most cases rhinos entering community forests are almost certain to be killed. The weed is also said to spreading in the wetlands of the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve.

Research conducted in 2003 by Lalit Prasad Kattel of the Department of Plant Resources indicates that the plant was first seen after a massive flood in the Rapti River in 1993. Seeds of the plant, which is a native of Central and Latin America, might have been brought here by the flood. The growth rate of the plant is rapid and it has encroached the area within a short span of time.

Efforts to deal with the problem include initiating of bio-control methods. Locals are being motivated to cultivate ginger which, it is expected, will help in restricting the spread of the plant.

It has also been suggested that the earlier system of allowing a week long cutting of grass twice a year inside the forest had helped control the weeds to some extent. This was then reduced to three days and finally to only once a year. Local entrepreneurs have further suggested that part of the problem is caused by the large number of tourist resorts inside the park. According to them the elephants that ferry the visiting tourists compete with rhinos and the wildlife as they too feed on the same grasslands and this further complicates the problem.

Source: Pragati Shah. 'Notorious weed killing rhinos', *Kantipur Online*, 14/12/06.

Indira Aryal. 'Poaching: A big threat to Chitwan rhinos', *Gorkapatra*, 22/12/06.

SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's 17th national park in Kavudulla

Sri Lanka's seventeenth national park was recently opened in Kavudulla in the Polonnaruwa district, around 200 km from Colombo. The Sri Lankan government is reported to have spent around Rs. 60 million to modernise the facility

under the Reservation Management and Wild Life Conservation Project.

The park has a tourist information centre, a lecture hall, inspection rooms, an office and workers' quarters. A boat service has been started on the Galoya reservoir to facilitate bird watching in and around the Park.

Source: Nalim M. Email dated 07/01/07.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

12th International Lake Conference in Jaipur

The 12th International Lake Conference is to be held in Jaipur from October 28 to November 2, 2007. Titled "Taal-2007", the conference will aim at conservation of lakes, water bodies, waterlogged areas and aquaculture.

About 1,000 experts from around the world are likely to participate in the event.

Source: 'Lake conference to focus on Jal Mahal, Man Sagar', *The Hindu*, 22/12/06.

Society for Conservation Biology's 'Distinguished Service Award' to Mr. JC Daniel

Well known conservationist Mr. JC Daniel was recently awarded the 'Society for Conservation Biology's' (SCB) 'Distinguished Service Awards' for his "extraordinary contributions to wildlife conservation in India and beyond through stewardship of the Bombay Natural History Society and mentoring the next generation of Indian wildlife scientists".

Previous winners of this award from India include Anil Agarwal, Bittu Sahgal, AJT Johnsingh, BC Choudhury and the Nature Conservation Foundation (Mysore).

The other four awardees for this year are Dr. Rodolfo Dirzo, Stanford University, USA; Dr. Malcolm Hunter, University of Maine, USA; Dr. Kathryn MacKinnon, World Bank; and Nature Kenya, Kenya.

Source: Gopi Sundar. Email dated 31/12/06.

UPCOMING

2nd South Indian Bird Watcher's Fair

The Palani Hills Bird Watchers Society (PHBWS) is organizing the 2nd South Indian Bird Watcher's Fair from February 23 to 25, 2007 at the Gandhigram Rural University in the Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu.

The organizers have invited papers on the following topics: Wildlife Conservation; Wildlife Management; Ornithology and Biodiversity.

For further details on participation contact

Joe Homan, PHBWS, Lakeside Guest House, Nr. Athoor Dam, Athoor – 624701, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0451-2556762 / 3298132. Email: joehoman2003@yahoo.co.in

8th Annual International Seminar on Protected Area Management

The 8th Annual International Seminar on Protected Area Management is to be held at the University of Montana, USA from August 1 to 18, 2007. The seminar is a technical and professional course designed for mid-career planners and managers of nationally significant PAs worldwide. The program is initiated and organized by Universities of Montana, Idaho and Colorado State and the USDA Forest Service Office International Programs.

Contact: Shelley Walker Saxen. Email:

pam@cfc.umt.edu.

Web: <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/is/ispam/welcome.htm>

WHAT'S AVAILABLE

- **Lahiri-Choudhary, DK** (2006). *A Trunk Full of Tales – Seventy years with the Indian Elephant*. Permanent Black, New Delhi. Rs. 495.

The book is an account of well-known elephant expert DK Lahiri-Choudhary's experiences with the Asian Elephants from across its range.

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

- **Arnold, David** (2005). *The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze – India, Landscape and Science – 1800-1856*. Permanent Black, New Delhi. Rs. 695.

One of the central themes of the book is the way in which India's material environment became increasingly subject to scientific scrutiny, much of it by itinerant naturalists, particularly by botanists.

Contact: **David Arnold**.
Email: d.arnold@warwick.ac.uk

- **Karanth, K. Ullas** (2006). *A View from the Machan – How Science can save the fragile predator*. Permanent Black, New Delhi. Rs. 350.

The book is a collection of essays on various aspects of natural history and conservation and draws heavily from earlier published articles.

Contact: **Ulhas Karanth**, Wildlife Conservation Society, India Programme, 403 Seebo Apts, 26/2 Aga Abbas Ali Road, Bangalore - 560042, Karnataka. Tel: 080-5591747 / 5591990. Email: ukaranth@vsnl.com

- **Gandhi, Tara** (2007). *A Bird's Eye View – The Collected Essays and Shorter Writings of Salim Ali* (Two Volumes). Permanent Black. Rs. 1495.

Put together by Salim Ali's former student, Tara Gandhi, this body of work brings together a large collection of Ali's large number of scientific papers, essays, popular articles, public lectures and interviews that have never been put together in the form of a book.

Contact: **Tara Gandhi**. Email: tara_gandhi@yahoo.com

OPPORTUNITIES

Field researcher needed for work in Pakke TR

Field researchers are required for a year long study on "Seed dispersal and regeneration of hornbill dispersed tree species in the Eastern Himalayas." This research is a continuation of an ongoing study in the Pakke Tiger Reserve and adjoining Reserve Forests. The focus of the research is on the consequences of anthropogenic disturbance (primarily hunting and logging) on hornbill densities and the recruitment of their food plants. The study also encompasses bird surveys (of hornbills and other frugivorous species), focal tree watches and vegetation assessments.

The project will be initiated in March / April 2007. Candidates should possess a Master's degree in Wildlife Biology / Ecology / Zoology or a related field of biology and be willing to work in extremely demanding field conditions. Prior field experience in bird identification (particularly Himalayan species) and field techniques is highly desirable.

Contact: **Pia Sethi**. Email: psethi@uic.edu;
sethipia@yahoo.com

Field researcher needed for project in the Sarika Tiger Reserve

A field researcher is required for a two-year field study on the linkages between forest resource extraction and community structure of forest birds in Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan. The study will focus on the effects of anthropogenic disturbance on dry forest bird communities at both local and landscape levels.

Normal UGC scales payable to Senior Project Fellow will be applied. The study can be utilised for a MS/PhD thesis based on an MOU with the Council for Social Development (CSD), New Delhi.

Candidates should possess a Master's degree in a related field of biology and demonstrate commitment to sustained field-based work. He/she should be willing to work independently under difficult field conditions.

Prior field experience in bird identification is necessary and quantitative ecological knowledge will be preferred. Otherwise exceptional candidates who do not have prior experience will also be considered favourably.

Contact: **Dr. Ghazala Shahabuddin** Environmental Studies Group, CSD, 53, Lodi Estate, New Delhi-110003. Email: ghazalafarzin@yahoo.com; ghazalafarzin@rediffmail.com

SEASON OF CONFLICT

Instances of human-wildlife conflict from end October to end January.

The main source of information are newspaper reports from across the country

Details	Place	State
OCTOBER		
1) Tusker electrocuted	Gudgudia Forest Range, Jaishpur dist.	Orissa
2) Elephant electrocuted	Champua Range, Keonjhar Dist	Orissa
3) 300 dead beetles and butterflies seized by FD	Nilambur, Mallapuram Dist	Kerala
4) Bear burnt alive	Mandoora, Tral	South Kashmir
NOVEMBER		
5) Herd of 15 elephants enters town	Dhanbad	Jharkhand
6) Train kills elephant	Madarighat, near Alipurduar	West Bengal
7) Elephant found dead, tusks removed	Madhapur Forest Range, Angul	Orissa
8) Elephants trample four to death	Borbhugia, Sonitpur District	Assam
9) Bears kill three, wound dozens	Saidpora Vil, Kondabal Vil, (Kupwara, Baramulla and Srinagar, Handwara Dists)	J&K
10) Speeding train kills elephant	Mongpong	W Bengal
11) Leopard trapped in cotton field	Rajupalem, Guntur District	Andhra Pradesh
12) Elephants kill three women	Jattowali Bagh, Kadach, Latowali (All Rajaji NP, Haridwar Dist	Uttarakhand
13) Elephants block traffic on NH	Jhargadia and Baulpur, Dhenkanal Dist	Orissa
14) Tusker Found dead	Ulunda Range, Sambalpur South Division	Orissa
15) Tusker Found dead	Kuldiha, Balasore Wildlife Division	Orissa
16) Tusker Found dead	Puranakote, Satkosia WLS	Orissa
17) Herd of 20 elephants damages houses, paddy fields	North Jamuri Area, Sonitpur Dist	Assam
18) Two elephants raid school	Patkapara Tea Estate near Alipurduar Town	West Bengal
DECEMBER		
19) Two elephants allegedly killed by poachers	Hinjikila Forest, Sundergarh Dist	Orissa
20) One elephant killed by poacher	Ghatagaon, Keonjhar	Orissa
21) Elephants kill two	Bihali Village, Northern Assam	Assam
22) Elephants trample four to death	Saina Reserved Forest, Eastern Assam	Assam
23) Death warrant for elephant 'Laden', for killing 13 people in 3years	Sonitpur District	Assam
24) Leopard kills 14 year old	Gadari Nagad Vill. Pauri District	Uttarakhand

25) Tiger caught in leg trap	Kanha TR	MP
26) Leopards attack tourists in jeep	Kalapur, HD Taluk	Karnataka
27) Tiger kills two people, shot dead by FD	Basapura, Fringes of Bandipur TR	Karnataka
28) Tiger attacks, then killed by forest department	Uwamballi, HD Kote Taluk	Karnataka
29) State kills elephant	Behali TE	Assam
30) 100 elephants lay siege, two people injured, houses damaged	Hojai Town, Nagaon District	Assam
31) Leopard kills 12 year old	Devarkharoda Village, Chamoli District	Uttarakhand
32) Elephant kills one, injures one	Delanga block, Puri	Orissa
33) 550 dead olive ridleys found	Gahirmatha	Orissa
34) Herd of 10 elephants destroys crops	Korabattahalli, Anjalige, Korabattahalli and villages, Alur Taluk	Hassan Dist. Karnataka
35) 8 Elephants stray into agricultural fields	Pachapalayam, near Perur, Outskirts of Coimbatore	Tamil Nadu
36) Leopard in bedroom	Vadodara City	Gujarat
37) Elephant and calf die of poisoning (some say shot)	Dhingmukh, Sivasagar district	Assam
38) Leopard kills 12 year old, toll death toll in a week – four	Deverkharoda Village, Chamoli Dist	Uttaranchal
39) Elephants destroy five acres of paddy	Kodagu	Karnataka
40) Elephant kills three, injures 10	Purulia	West Bengal

JANUARY

41) Lions maul two	Dervan Village, Dist. Junagadh Katwal Tukum, Vilodhi villages, Near Tadoba	Gujarat
42) Tiger electrocuted	Tiger Reserve	Maharashtra
43) Rouge elephant trapped	Hassan Kusumbhatta village, Kebidi panchayat,	Karnataka
44) Elephants kill two children	Borigumma block, Koraput district	Orissa
45) Leopard beaten to death	Nasik	Maharashtra
46) 10 leopards in ten days	All India	
47) Poaching of four musk deer	Behram Kala, Surankote,	J&K
48) Leopard kills 4 people in 15 days	South Kashmir	J&K
49) Elephants destroy sugarcane fields	Sundakkamuthur	Tamil Nadu
50) Elephant herd destroys seven acres of plantation crops	Panchapalli, Dharmapuri	Tamil Nadu
51) Leopard trapped without killing	Baguna, Pulwama district	J&K

IN THE SUPREME COURT

A list of matters related to protected areas that came up before the SC appointed Central Empowered Committee on December 12, 2006 and January 15 & 16, 2007:

- 1) Seeking permission for laying water pipeline under Narmada Water Project through the Ratapani Wild Life Sanctuary
- 2) Directions to remove encroachments and hand over the to the Forest Department the land which has been declared as Reserved Forest Area in Nahargarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan
- 3) Regarding violations of the Forest (Conservation) Act in the Kaimur Wild Life Sanctuary, Bihar.
- 4) Seeking permission for construction of fencing and patrol road along the Indo-Bangladesh border within the boundaries of the Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram.
- 5) Seeking permission for laying of a water pipeline over 0.170 hectares of forest land within the Majathal Wildlife Sanctuary, Himachal Pradesh
- 6) Seeking permission to remove windfall trees from within the Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat

'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.
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