

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XIII No. 4

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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

Some lessons from Gir

If one goes by news reports of the last couple of months (see stories from Gujarat in this issue of the *PA Update*), a lot has been happening in the lion forests of Gir. A number of measures have been proposed or are being implemented by the Gujarat Government and the Forest Department for the protection of lions. There is a recruitment drive in Gir to add new protection staff and to fill up posts that have been lying empty for a long while. There is a realization that the average age of staff is on the higher side and unless younger people are brought in, protection work will suffer.

The State has decided to set up a Wildlife Crime Cell to track and deal with poaching and other wildlife related crimes and there is now going to a ten member monthly monitoring committee to constantly keep an on the happenings in and around the forests here. Officers and staff are being given better equipment, more vehicles and the communication infrastructure too is being improved.

Additional efforts are reportedly being made to work with the local communities with a ‘*vanyaprani mitra*’ scheme and by recruiting them as informers. An insurance scheme is also being put in place for the forest staff.

At one level it all seems welcome; it’s good that vacant posts are being filled, that younger staff is being recruited, that they are being adequately equipped, that a safety net with an insurance cover is being put in place and there is an acknowledgement of the need to work with local communities.

What is very striking, however, is that the initiatives appear to have come like a sudden torrent and that too measures that should have always been in place. What can be the justification for posts lying vacant, for protection staff to be working with inadequate equipment or security? Why do we expect that our forests and our wildlife will be protected when this is the ground situation? Why is that that these lacunae are noticed only after a disaster strikes, after nearly a dozen lions have been killed in an unprecedented spate of poaching incidents; after the proverbial horse has already bolted?

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For details see Page 24

The lesson here is one that needs to be taken across the country. Forest Departments and protected areas across most, if not all, states in the country have been complaining of exactly the situation that is now being corrected in Gir.

It is not that an acknowledgement of the situation does not exist. The recent meeting of the Tiger Reserve Directors held in June in Ranthambore Tiger Reserve (see page 19) lists out pretty much the same problems. It is important that these be addressed and corrective action be taken at the earliest. It is unrealistic otherwise to expect that those at the forefront of protecting our increasingly threatened wildlife will be effective or be able to perform. That is the minimum we owe them and it is certainly not too much.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Villagers for protection of Pakhui TR

Heads of 16 villages bordering the Pakhui Tiger Reserve have formed a committee that will work jointly with the Forest Department for protection of the reserve. The committee, locally called the *Ghora Aabhe*, recently passed a resolution listing penalties for hunting of 17 different wild species ranging from Rs 200 to Rs 30,000.

Following the initiative that is also being supported by the Wildlife Trust of India, about 32 illegal locally made guns were seized from poachers, who have also now promised to work for the protection of the reserve.

The committee would also work to strengthen intelligence networks, enforcement activities and create awareness for conservation among local the people.

Source: 'Villagers join hands to protect Pakhui Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh', *The Hindustan Times*.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary Division, P.O. Seijusa, Dist. West Kameng - 790 103

CWLW, Forest Department, Itanagar – 719111, Arunachal Pradesh. Tel: 0360 – 222310 (o)/ 224370 @. Fax: 0360 – 222351/223556

ASSAM

Meeting held for Kaziranga protection

A public awareness camp for the protection of wildlife in Kaziranga National Park (KNP) was held recently at the office campus DAGROB, an NGO of Dhansirimukh, a Mising dominated area adjacent to the KNP on the eastern fringe. The meeting was organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) with the co-operation of the forest wing Kaziranga and the NGO, Bhumi.

200 local people also participated in the meeting. They assured the KNP authorities of extending full support in the matter of protection of wild animals. They however urged the forest department to create a highland in the area for the distressed animals. They also asked the FD to initiate steps for vaccinating the cattle of the neighbouring people, to allow the poor people to take temporary shelter on the embankment adjacent to the park at times of need, to allow them to collect wood for making farm tools and to provide compensation for damage done to crops by the wild animals of the park.

Source: 'KNP wildlife protection awareness meet', *The Sentinel*, 23/07/07.

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

Veterinary Camp around Pobitora WLS

The Early Birds, an NGO for animal care, conducted a free veterinary vaccination cum treatment camp around the Pobitora Wild Life sanctuary on 19th and 20th May'07. A total of 497 heads of cattle in the villages of Morabori and Kuchiani were treated as part of the camp.

The DFO (WL) and the RFO, Pobitora offered field support for the initiative that was the 26th such camp organized at Pobitora in last 14 years.

Source: Moloy Baruah. Email dated 29/05/07.

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

781003, Assam. Tel. 0361-666353. Fax: 550158. Email: baruahm@iocl.co.in
Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**,
Pobitora WLS, Nagaon Wildlife
Division, P.O. & Dist. Nagaon –
782001, Assam. Tel: 03672-223104(O),
222310(R)

Timber smuggling in Manas NP

There are a number of reports of increased timber smuggling from within the Manas National Park.

About 100 logs were seized in the month of May by SSB jawans at Kahitema Beat under Bansbari Forest Range when an attempt was being made to load them into a boat. These were then handed over to Barpeta Road forest office

Similar such seizures of 55 logs at Lubdunguri and 200 logs from Nichukaghat were also made in the preceding months. It has been alleged that timber smugglers are carrying out their activities in connivance with a few officials and workers of the Forest Department.

Source: 'Timber smuggling on at Manas NP' *The Sentinel*, 20/05/07.

Contact: **Director**, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd.
Dist. Barpeta – 781315, Assam. Tel:
03666 – 261413. Fax: 232253 / 260253
Email: abhijittrabha@hotmail.com
Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam,
Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam.
Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386

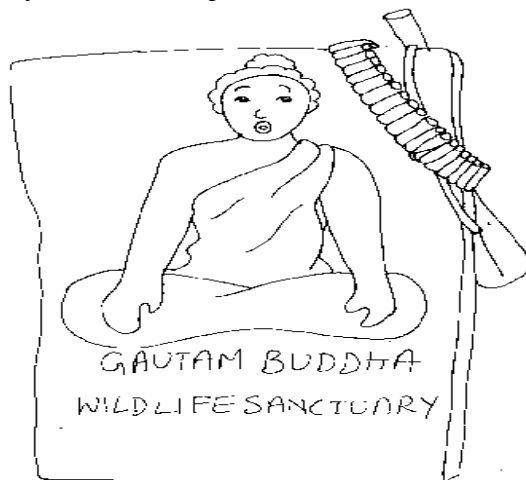
Bihar

Gautam Budha WLS under naxal control

A large part of the Gautam Budha Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Gaya district is believed to be under Naxal control. The land here is reportedly being used for making bunkers and conducting training camps.

Posters have also been put up inside the sanctuary warning commoners against trespassing. For forest staff, the warning is more severe. They have been warned that they would be be-headed if they entered Naxal territory. Senior forest officials have said that

this has resulted in affecting the mobility of their staff, who are also unable to defend themselves as they do not have sophisticated arms.



Source: 'Bihar's forests under Naxal shadow', *Times Now*, 18/06/07.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Gautam Budha WLS, Gaya Forest Division, Gaya, Bihar.
Tel: 0631-2423566 (O), 2423566 @
CWLW, Government of Bihar, Patna, Bihar. Tel: 0621-287507. Fax: 284425

GUJARAT

Protection measures being augmented at Gir

The Gujarat Government is reported to be taking a number of steps to augment protection in Gir following the recent incidents of lion poaching here (see *PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 3, June 2007).

The Forest Department (FD) will be recruiting over 100 young beat guards and 300 'vanyaprani mitras' to be deployed in the Gir forests. It has been decided to fill up the 40 vacant posts of beat guards and also create four new posts of range forest officers (RFO) and six of foresters. The number of mobile squads is being doubled here to four, with each squad comprising one ACF and two foresters in a jeep equipped with a wireless set and other facilities.

It has been pointed out that average age of the 200 beat guards in service is 46 years and there is a need for younger people to be inducted. The FD has also decided to employ local people as 'informers' to help forest officials keep a close watch on possible poaching activities. Firearms will now be provided to foresters and beat guards,

starting with those in the areas of Babra, Savarkundla, Palitana and Mahuva talukas where these have already been provided.

The forest staff will also get 75 wireless sets in addition to the 300 units in use now. Five more jeeps equipped with wireless sets will be added to the 10 existing ones.

Source: Bashir Pathan. Poaching: Gir to have beat guards, 'friends of animals', <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/33254.html#>

Court denies bail of those arrested in lion poaching in Gir

The district court at Una, Junagadh recently turned down the bail application of the 34 arrested in connection with the recent poaching cases in Gir. The (CID) – Crime, investigating the case had filed an affidavit before the Chief Judicial Magistrate in Una requesting that it reject the bail applications of those arrested.

The CID had argued that most of those arrested had given fictitious names and addresses and that if bail was granted, the CID would not be able to trace them. The arrested tribals had initially claimed that they belonged to Katni district in Madhya Pradesh. However, when their statements were recorded, they gave addresses of two villages — Mahuva-Kheda (Pavai taluka, Panna district) and Bediyaun (Chhanera taluka, Khandva district). When a CID team went there subsequently for verification, they found no such names and addresses. The only person who appears to have given his correct identity and address is Sarkaslal, believed to be the leader of the group. He has however, denied his involvement in the case.

The accused have been in judicial custody since their arrest and had moved a bail application, The CID affidavit in response claimed that the accused have admitted to using lethal weapons and poison to kill the lions. It also admitted, however, that poached claws, bones and other organs of the lions were yet to be recovered and forensic tests on the accused, including lie-detection and brain-mapping tests, were to be conducted. The agency also stated its suspicion that an international network of

poachers was operating behind the scenes in the case.

A similar incident of those arrested then going missing had occurred in 2004. Seven members (six women and one man) of a tribal gang — who claimed to be from Katni district in Madhya Pradesh — were nabbed with leopard skins, bones and feathers of some rare birds from Plaswa village. They were released on bail about a year later and never found again.

The court is said to have relied on the forensic evidence in its decision to reject the recent bail application. This includes traces of lion blood found on metal traps and other weapons like spears recovered from the accused that matched with samples taken from the lion carcasses. The CID also placed circumstantial evidence before the court and that too was accepted.

Source: Sibte Hussain Bukhari. 'Tough time for CID in poaching cases', *The Indian Express*, 18/06/07.

'Poaching case: MP conspirator held', *The Times of India*, 05/07/07.

NGO organizes conservation awareness programs around Gir

The Gir Nature Youth Club (GNYC) organized three cultural *lokdayras* in the first week of June to spread awareness about lion conservation. The first program was held at Jessore the proposed new home of the Lion and close to Bhandariya, where lions were found poached recently. The 2nd program was held at Gir Gadhdha, close to the Babariya range, another of the poaching sites while the third program, organized on World Environment Day, was held at Sasan.

Famous artists Ishardan Gadhvi and Anil Vankani along with a group of well known women artists performed on the occasion. More than 10000 people from the Gir periphery participated in these programmes.

Contact: **Amit B. Jethava**, GNYC, At Khambha, Did: Amreli -365650, Gujarat. Telafax: 02797 – 260121. M: +91 94 269 38812. Email: amitjethava@hotmail.com; amitjethava@rediffmail.com

Gir staff to get insurance cover

Forest staff of the Gir Sanctuary and National Park will now get insurance cover as part of a joint initiative of the Gujarat Government and the Wildlife Trust of India. The scheme will be financed entirely by the WTI, in return for employees each paying a premium of Rs. 70.

The policy will cover the insured person against accident or death when on duty for Rs. One lakh. The Gujarat government is now in the process of collating information about the number of staff working in Gir to put the insurance scheme into place.

Gujarat is the 22nd state in the country to become a part of this insurance program of the WTI that was started in 2001. Front line staff from 369 protected areas in 21 states across the country have already been covered under the insurance scheme. It has also paid 40 death claims to families of forest guards killed fighting poachers and in accidents involving wild animals while protecting forests.

Source: Sunil Raman. 'Indian lion staff get insurance', *BBC News*, 14/06/07.
Gujarat adopts WTI's accident insurance scheme for forest staff,
http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2007/070612_Insurance_Gujarat_forest.html

Monthly Monitoring Committee for Gir lions

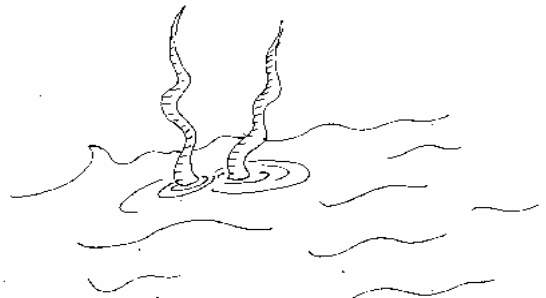
The Gujarat Government has formed a 10 member Monthly Monitoring Committee (MMC) to keep an eye on the situation in and around the Gir forests. A Government Resolution (GR) to this effect was issued recently.

The committee that will be headed by the DIG (Junagadh Range) will meet once a month to discuss and plan strategies to curb lion poaching. Other members of the committee include the Conservator of Forest (Wildlife, Junagadh circle), DSP Junagadh, Bhavnagar & Amreli, two Deputy Conservators of Forest (DFO) of Junagadh and one each from Amreli, Bhavnagar and Dhari.

Source: Nayan Dave. 'Panel formed to curb lion poaching', *The Times of India*, 30/05/07.

Contact: **Bharat Pathak**, CF (Wildlife) Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/ 630051. Fax: 631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in
Kishore Kotecha, Asiatic Lion Protection Society, 128, Star Plaza, Phulchhab Chowk, Rajkot, 360001, Gujarat. Tel: 0281 2444 074 Mobile: +91 98240 62062. Email: info@asiaticlion.org. URL: www.asiaticlion.org

168 Blackbuck washed away in flood in Velavadar NP; two lions in Gir also perish



At least 168 Blackbuck in the Velavadar National Park were washed away in flash floods in the first week of July. Other reports indicated that two lions were also similarly washed away in the Gir area.

Source: '22 Blackbucks dead in Gujarat floods', *Dainik Statesman*, 06/07/07.
Kishore Kotecha. Email dated 08/07/07.
Contact: **ACF**, Black-Buck National Park, Velavadar, F/10 Bahumali Bhawan, Bhavnagar – 360001, Gujarat. Tel: 0288-2552077. Fax: 0288-2555336

Gujarat to set up Wildlife Crime Cell

The Gujarat Government has decided to set up a state-level Wildlife Crime Cell to check poaching and other wildlife related crimes in the state. The cell is to be headed by an officer of the rank of the Inspector General of Police (CID Crime) and has been set up in response to the recent spate of cases of lion poaching in and around Gir.

The main function of the cell would be to detect wildlife related crimes and follow up the cases in court. It will gather information about gangs and also impart training to police on tracking wildlife crime. It will have monitoring committees headed by Range Deputy Inspector

Generals of Police and district level execution committees headed by District Superintendents of Police. It will also identify hyper-sensitive and sensitive areas with the help of Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI).

The District level execution committee will patrol jungles and keep an eye on bordering villages. Funds would also be generated for sting operations to unearth poaching rackets. The range level monitoring committee will do overall supervision and convene meetings of NGOs working for wildlife conservation.

Source: Nayan Dave. 'Special cell to check lion poaching', *The Times of India*, 16/06/07.

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

HIMACHAL PRADESH

HP to allow hunting of wild boar

The Himachal Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has sent a proposal to the government to allow hunting of wild boar to deal with the problem of 'exponential growth' in their population.

If approved, a permit would be issued for three weeks to anyone, including non-Himachalis, to kill a maximum of 10 wild boars. Each boar killed would entail a fee of Rs 500 and the meat can be consumed by the hunter. The move that comes in response to continued complaints by farmers about damage to crops and demands to do something about the problem is expected to be notified soon by the state government.

The move has however raised concerns of indiscriminate poaching in a state where hunting is already said to be rampant.

Scientists at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have said that there is a need to follow a scientific approach in the matter and the first step for that would be to conduct a survey of the number of boars and the carrying capacity of the forests to determine how many can be killed in a particular area. It has also been suggested that the killing, if permitted, should be under the supervision of forest staff

and that the exercise should be conducted by marksmen hired by the government for the purpose.

NGOs like the Kudrat Preservation Society too have expressed concern saying that the move will give an impetus to killing of wild animals in the state.

Source: Vikram Jit Singh. 'License to kill – A cull in Himachal', *Teelka*, 09/06/07.

Chandratal to be declared a wildlife sanctuary

The Government of Himachal Pradesh has, on 14th May, 2007 notified its intention to constitute the Chandratal wetland and surrounding areas covering 38.56 sq km as a Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) under section 18 of the Wildlife Protection (Act), 1972. This will be the 33rd wildlife sanctuary in the state.

The wetland, located at an altitude of about 14,000 feet above mean sea level (msl), is considered to be the origin of the Chandra River which then joins the Bhaga (originating from near the Baralacha pass) to form the Chandra-Bhaga or the Chenab as it is better known.

Chandratal is the largest wetland in the state and has also been declared a Ramsar site. It has, of late, come under increasing tourist pressure with several negative impacts on this fragile wetland becoming obvious. The Forest Department hopes that its declaration as a sanctuary will help protect and conserve this wetland and perhaps bring back summer migratory birds here.

Source: Vinay Tandon. Email dated 28/05/07.
Contact: Vinay Tandon **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Himachal Pradesh, Talland, Shimla – 171001. Tel: 0177-2624193. Email: Vtandy@gmail.com

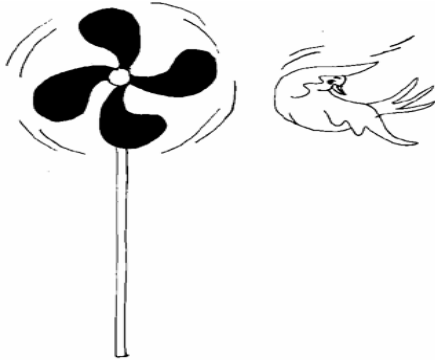
KARNATAKA

Windmills proposal for Kudremukh NP

Member of Parliament Ms Manorama Madhwaraj recently alleged that the Lanco Group, which has a controlling stake in Nagarjuna Power Corporation (NPC) is setting up its wind-powermills in the Kudremukh National Park. She has pointed out that the Karnataka Government's

Energy Department has already given permission to the Lanco Wind Power Pvt. Ltd. for implementation of the project in the Manikya Hill range in the Kudremukh National Park limits that includes the Narasimha Mountain range.

The project will generate 156 megawatts of power by the 260 windmills that are to be erected for the purpose.



Source: 'Windmills will damage environment: MP', *The Hindu*, 04/07/07.

Contact: **DCF**, Kudremukh Wildlife Division, Karkala, Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka. Tel: 08258-221183(O), 221004(R). Fax: 08258-221183

Ban on NTFP collection impacting adivasis and BRT Wildlife Sanctuary

A field investigation conducted by Kalpavriksh in May 2007 has revealed that the most crucial issue facing the Biligiri Rangan Temple Wildlife Sanctuary (BRTWLS) and the adivasis was the ban on collection of non-timber forest produce (NTFP). NTFP collection has traditionally been a significant source of livelihood for several thousand Soligas living in the forests here and the ban had caused widespread suffering, and also backfired on conservation itself.

The investigation had been undertaken to understand the recent incidences of forest fires and resulting tension between the Forest Department and Soliga adivasis here sanctuary.

It has been suggested that urgent steps are needed to resolve the situation and to move towards healthier collaboration between the Forest Department and the Soligas, aided by NGOs that have been working in the sanctuary

for many years. The investigation report gives details of the findings, and a set of recommendations for the state government, the Soliga Sangha, and NGOs. It can be accessed at <http://www.kalpavriksh.org/f1/f1.2/ccbtreport/index.html>

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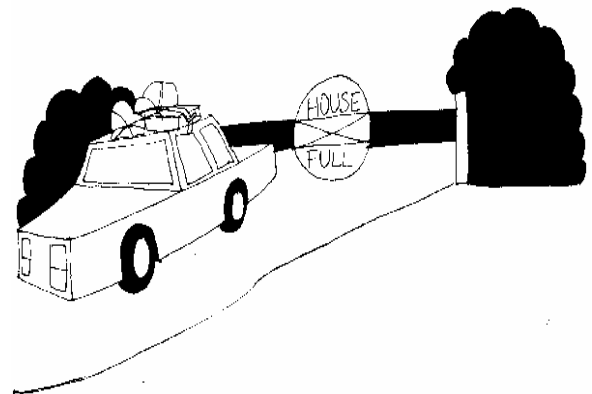
DCF, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Wildlife Division, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka. Tel: 08226-222059(O), 222156(R)

Cap on visitors to some PAs in state

The Karnataka Government is believed to be thinking of imposing a cap on visitors to some of the protected areas in the state. The number of people visiting PAs here are gone from about five lakh annually three years ago to ten lakhs a year now. The Nagarhole and Bandipur NPs in particular have been very popular with nearly 10,000 vehicles visiting here annually, while the figure for all the PAs in the state is said to be 50,000 vehicles.

The FD has pointed out to the government that the parks cannot accommodate more tourists and brakes need to be applied. It has also suggested the enhancement of buffer zones around PAs by another 10 kms.

The Chief Minister of Karnataka, Mr. H.D. Kumaraswamy too has supported the idea of putting a limit.



Source: S Rajendran. 'Forest Dept. wants Government to limit number of eco-tourists', *The Hindu*, 10/06/07.

16 elephant deaths in first half of 2007 in Kollegal Wildlife Division

16 wild elephants are reported to have died in the first half of 2007 in the Kollegal Wildlife Division. Two of the deaths were due to electrocution, while the causes for the other 14 are not clear. The large number of deaths has become a cause for concern and efforts are being made to find out the reasons. Forest officials believe that a long dry spell, which dried up many water bodies and caused contamination of water bodies due to use by domestic cattle could be the reason.

Scientists from the Institute of Animal Health and Veterinary Biologicals (IAHVB), Bangalore, have collected the viscera of the dead animals and water samples to study the causes. Anthrax has been ruled out and it has been suggested that the deaths could have been caused by septicaemia and hepatitis.

The wildlife division has also taken up a study of water bodies and their conditions, including hygiene, water quality and holding capacity. The water bodies are to be disinfected with lime and potassium permanganate and it was decided that steps would be taken to prevent cattle from going near water bodies that are regularly used by wildlife. It was also noticed that reports of elephant deaths had stopped once rains started in the area.

The Kollegal wildlife division, which is bigger than the Bandipur National Park, has also sent a proposal to the State Government seeking grants for the improvement of the elephant habitat in the division. The measures include revival of water bodies, restrictions on cattle grazing, planting of grass in the villages for cattle, and conservation of soil and moisture for improving productivity of biomass in the division, which falls in the rain shadow area.

Source: Shankar Bennur. 'Elephant deaths alarm forest officials', *The Hindu*, 05/06/07.
Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993 / 3345846. Email: pccfwl@vsnl.com

KERALA

Kerala to use Wildlife Protection Act in Mullaperiyar Dam case

The Kerala Government appointed National Expert Committee on the Mullaperiyar Dam has recommended utilizing the provisions of conservation laws including the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WPLA), 1972 to counter Tamil Nadu's demand for raising the height of the dam.

The committee, in its recent report, has said that under the amended Section 29 of the WPLA, diversion of water into or outside the sanctuary is possible only with the permission of the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State and only if the State Wildlife Board is satisfied that the diversion will lead to better management of wildlife in the protected area.

The Committee has also asked the state to examine a 2006 amendment to the WPLA that provides Tiger Reserves legal status. The amended sub-section 38 (O) (1) (b) prohibits diversion of tiger reserves and areas linking two reserves for ecologically unsustainable uses except with the approval of the National Board for Wildlife and the Tiger Conservation Authority.

The committee has also pointed out that the forest to be submerged if the dam height is raised needs to be looked at in the context of orders of the Supreme Court in the Godavarman case.

The Kerala government has said up the committee in the month of March and was made up of the following people: Dhruvajyoti Ghosh, Vice-Chairman (South Asia), Commission on Ecosystem Management, IUCN as Chairman; Prof. HSA Yahya, Dept of Wildlife Sciences, Aligarh Muslim University (Member) and SK Patnaik, former Orissa Additional PCCF (Member).

Kerala has opposed the increase in the height of the dam on grounds of safety and the fact that the increased submergence would adversely affect the forests and ecology of the Periyar Tiger Reserve. (Also See *PA Updates* 63, 60, 47, 40, 36, 34 & 30)

Source: Girish Menon. 'Use conservation laws to protect dam, says panel', *The Hindu*, 09/07/07.

Contact: **Field Director**, Periyar Tiger Reserve,
Aranya Bhavan, Forest Complex, S.H.
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Kerala cabinet rejects Community Reserve proposal for Vembanad lake

In a meeting held in the last week of May, the Kerala cabinet rejected a proposal for the creation of a Community Reserve (CR) in the Vembanad lake. The proposal was for the creation of a reserve that would include the heronry (the largest in Kerala) in the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) Tourist complex, the Pathiramanal Island and the lake part in between the KTDC complex and Pathiramanal Island.

Four Panchayaths too were reported to have agreed to protect the area as a CR. It has been alleged however that the proposal was rejected in the name of tourism.

Source: Prashant Narayanan. Email dated 31/05/07.

<http://www.hindu.com/2007/05/28/stories/2007052817060100.htm>

Contact: **Prashant Narayanan**. Email: prasanthns2004@yahoo.co.in
Dr. B. Sreekumar. President Kottayam Nature Society. Email: ktm_bskumar@sancharnet.in

Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala,
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MAHARASHTRA

No plan to move out VIP guest house complex from Tadoba

Senior forest officials have said they don't know when the VIP Guest House complex located within the Tadoba Tiger Reserve will be moved out. The complex which is situated on the southern shore of the Tadoba Lake includes the Forest Department's own colony of 15 quarters, the VIP Guest House, the Forest Officers Guest House, Holiday Homes and a canteen.

This is being seen in sharp contrast to the FD's insistence and recent move to relocate the six villages from inside the reserve (see PA Update Vol. XIII. No. 2, April 2007).

The complex is known to be a major source of disturbance to wildlife as it adjoins an important source of water for the entire Tadoba valley. The staff and families living here also regularly celebrate festivals like Diwali and other important occasions like marriages by playing music and indulging in other activities detrimental to wildlife. The tourism complex itself generates its own garbage and disturbances.

It has also been alleged that this shifting is being purposefully delayed as this complex consists the support staff of the VIP Guest House that is set on a hillock over looking the Tadoba Lake and that ministers and VIPs want to continue enjoying the exclusive privilege of staying 'inside a tiger reserve.'

Source: 'Fence eating farm – Forest Colony inside Tadoba Tiger Reserve', *The Hitavada*, 20/06/07.



Tadoba Andhari TR's Kolara Gate to be opened for tourists

The proposal of the Forest Department (FD) to open a new entry point from Kolara on the eastern side of the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) has come in for sharp criticism from some NGOs.

The wildlife management plan for Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve has proposed to three tourist entry points into the park. The plan retains the Mohurli gate as the main entry point

from Chandrapur to the south. It proposes closure of both gates on the western boundary, which are connected by tar roads to the important towns of Warora and Bhadravati, which is also the Tehsil headquarters of the park and under which most of the villages inside the park fall.

Two new gates are proposed to be opened at Kolara and Pangari. The Kolara gate will be for tourists visiting from Nagpur, although no tourist, reportedly, visits Tadoba via this route. The main NH7 / SH 31 route to Chandrapur is preferred as the main access to Tadoba as it is better maintained and has support infrastructure. The third gate at Pangari will also be from the eastern side and will send tourists straight into some of the quietest forests of Tadoba.

It has been alleged that forest officials and their relatives have purchased land near the Kolara gate and hope to make financial gains when the gate here is opened for tourists. The FD has proposed the construction of tourist facilities at this gate.

It has been also pointed out that the entry gates at Kolara and Pangri would lead into the remotest parts of Tadoba and will negatively the forests and wildlife here.

Source: 'Proposal to open TATR's Kolara Gate for tourists draws flak', *The Times of India*, 23/06/07.

Contact: **Field Director**, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Project, Mul Road, In front of Sanchiti Chamber, Chandrapur – 442401, Maharashtra. Tel: 07172-51414(O), 56382(R)

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

MANIPUR

Wetland International report expresses concern over Loktak

A report by Wetland International South Asia (WISA) titled 'Conservation and Management of Loktak lake and Associated Wetlands

Integrating Manipur river basin' has expressed concern over the status of the Loktak lake. The report is an outcome of a study conducted by WISA with the active support of the Planning Commission.

The report has pointed out that the size of the natural habitat of the brow antlered deer (*sangai*) has shrunk from its earlier 40 sq kms to only 6 sq kms now, the main reason being the construction of the Ithai Barrage. It has also pointed out that the soil in the Keibul Lamjao National Park (KLNP) has become highly acidic and this is preventing the growth of many kinds of vegetation. The acidity of the soil has also disturbed the fish breeding farm here.

The report also says that in 1982 the phumdis (aggregations of floating vegetation) covered only 30 percent of the lake area, but after the Ithai Barrage was built this increased to 74 percent in 2002. The ability of the lake to retain the water has also decreased to 175 million cubic metre in the last two decades. The rapid deforestation in the catchment areas is said to have resulted in large scale erosion that has caused siltation in the lake. Shifting cultivation has too has led to the erosion of soil from the hills.

The report has stressed the need to formulate a policy for the operation of the Ithai Barrage and the creation of an Environment Flows Team for the implementation of the policy. It has been suggested that the team be comprised of representatives from the National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC), the State Forest Department, Fisheries, Irrigation and Flood Control, Agriculture, the Loktak Development Authority and Wetlands International.

The report further said that based on the data and information collected by the SDWRA, an alternate site for the *Sangai* has been identified at the *Phumdis* at Maibam Phumlak. Other suggestions mooted in the report include planting over 3000 tree saplings in the catchment areas of the lake by the Forest Department and the additional planning of bamboo over 5000 hectares under an Integrated Forest programme

To control floods, the report has mooted the opening of 10 regulators at the southern and northern zone of the lake as well as the construction of 10 culverts on the IV road between Toubul and Mayang Imphal. Installation of 16 fresh hatcheries to enable the Fisheries

Department to breed fingerlings and construction of 2000 low cost latrine around the lake by the PHED has also been suggested. (also see *PA Updates* 61, 43, 40, 39 & 25)

Source: 'Sangai's habitat shrinks to 6 sq. kms',
The Sangai Express, 04/06/07.

Contact: **DCF**, Keibul Lamjao NP, Sanjenthong,
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Chief Wildlife Warden - Manipur,
Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795001, Manipur.
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Salam Rajesh, Sagolband Salam,
Leikai. PO: Imphal-1, Manipur. Tel:
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ORISSA

Steps to check encroachment of Chilika Lake

Acting on the recommendations of the Justice P.K. Tripathy Commission of Inquiry that probed into the Sorana police firing, the Orissa Government has initiated a series of measures to tackle the problem of encroachment in Chilika Lake.

A number of meetings at the level of Chief Secretary had been held for implementation of the recommendations of the Commission, the Government said in an action taken report while laying the Commission's report in the State Assembly recently on Friday. The Government said that the Revenue and Disaster Management Department was taking expeditious steps for finalisation of Chilika (Regulation) Bill, 2005 in consultation with Forest and Environment Department and the Department of Fisheries and Animal Resources Development. Keeping in line with the Commission's recommendation that Chilika be placed under the administrative control of one authority, the Government said the proposed Bill will also have provision to keep the lake under the administrative control of the Chilika Development Authority alone to ensure better control, management, eviction of encroachment and prevention of damages to the ecology. The new Bill will also have the provision of imprisonment and fine for the

encroachers, the government observed. Pending enactment of a new legislation, it had been decided to strengthen the enforcement strategy in Chilika Special drives.

According to the action taken report, a decision had also been taken to establish two special police stations for Chilika areas one in Puri police district and another in Khurda police district. Further, the Forest and Environment Department had been requested to take appropriate steps for protection of Chilika. Environment Protection Act will be made applicable to the lake.

Source: 'State initiates steps to check encroachment of Chilika Lake', *The Hindu*, 16/07/07.

Contact: **DFO (WL)**, Chilka, 1865/66 Nuasahi
Nayapalli (near Sub PO), Bhubaneswar –
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bravo_123@satyam.net.in
Chilka Development Authority, BJ-45,
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0674 – 434485. Email:
ajitpattnaik@hotmail.com Website:
www.chilika.com

Night safari proposed by Satkosia Wildlife Division



The Satkosia Wildlife Division has proposed the starting of a night safari at Tikarpara on the banks of the River Mahanadi. Tikarpara is the site of the world's longest gorge measuring 22 kms. Forest officials have said the safari would provide dual benefits: it would boost the tourist arrivals in the area and also help in patrolling.

The night safari proposal is in addition to tourism facilities and projects that have already been introduced here (see *PA Update* Vol. XIII, No. 3, June 2007). An initiative started earlier this year by the Forest Department

in collaboration with a local NGO is reported to have already made an earning Rs 70,000.

Facilities that have been set up include 10 temporary tents with the provision of toilets, drinking water, kitchen and solar light lighting. Boating has also been introduced.

Source: 'Take a night ride in Tikarpara', www.newindpress.com, 17/05/07.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Satkosia Wildlife Division, At/P.O Dist. Angul – 759143, Orissa. Tel: 0674-230218(O), 230219@

NREGS for tribals affected by Satkosia Wildlife Sanctuary

At least 20,000 tribals whose lives and livelihoods have been negatively impacted because of the Satkosia Wildlife Sanctuary would be benefited by the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), which came into effect from April 1 in Angul district.

The affected people are those whose livelihood activities like bamboo cutting and collection of NTFPs like mahua from the forests of the sanctuary were stopped following Supreme Court orders in 2000. They belong to nine villages under Prunakote panchayat and are reported to be suffering from hunger and malnutrition following the ban.

Forest officials and NGOs have welcomed the implementation of the NREGS in the area in this context. The Forest Department (FD) is reported to have already prepared a blue print to provide 100 days of minimum work to these people as per the scheme. This will mainly focus on water harvesting and road construction works permissible inside the sanctuary. A job card registration drive too has been undertaken.

Source: 'To benefit Satkosia villagers', www.newindpress.com, 28/04/07.

Captive bred crocs released in Bhitarkanika

48 captivity bred estuarine crocodiles were recently released into water bodies of the Bhitarkanika National Park.

Forest officials have said that one of the reasons of releasing the crocodiles was to create fear and stop human intrusion into the park that was causing the destruction of the mangrove forests here. Accordingly the animals were released in the Kharinasi and Jamboo areas where large scale tree-felling has been reported. Forest areas here are also reportedly being converted to farmlands and shrimp cultivation ponds.

Source: 'Crocodiles to protect Bhitarkanika', *Press Trust of India*, 20/06/07.

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

Eviction from Sunabeda WLS opposed

The Orissa Forest Department (FD) is reported to be working on a proposal for the eviction of 17 villages from the Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), supposedly to declare the area a Tiger Reserve.

The FD claims that the 17 villages have agreed to be part of the first phase of relocation and have also passed a resolution to that effect. Five villages with a total number of 859 households are to be relocated in the 2nd phase. Villagers from these villages and a local forum, the Sunabeda Sangharsh Vahini (SSV), working in the area have, however, contested the claims of the FD and said that none of the 17 villages with a total of about 400 families (total population 1661) want to relocate and that they are opposing the move of the FD.

The genesis of the present situation lies in the October 2006 visit to Sunabeda by a Central Government Team in connection with the proposed Tiger Reserve here. Soon after the Panchayat elections in the state in 2007, there were reports in the media in March 2007 that 17 villages from the Sunabeda WLS are going to be evicted and that a meeting was held by the wildlife department in Jangaon village, Sunabeda Gram Panchayat (GP) on March 11 2007 wherein these villagers had passed a resolution to the effect that they are ready to relocate to the proposed village of Dhorlamunda, outside the sanctuary, if they are rehabilitated under the Relief & Rehabilitation (R&R) policy of the government. It was reported that this meeting was presided over by the newly elected Sarpanch of

Sunabeda GP, Malati Majhi. The media reports also quoted the DFO as saying that the evictions are proposed as per a Supreme Court order.

Responding to the news of the evictions, the SSV took up the matter, visited the villages and held discussions with the local people. Villagers shared that the March 11 meeting was held, not in Jamgaon, but in Cherechua village and that the meeting was called, not to discuss relocation for the proposed Tiger Project, but to distribute smokeless chullahs and blankets. Other discrepancies also emerged including the fact that people from only two and not 17 villages had participated and that even the Sunabeda Sarpanch (Narad Singh Chhatria, not Malati Majhi) was absent on the day of the meeting.

The SSV held the Jeevan Jeevika Suraksha Divas on 2nd April 2007 at Kermeli village wherein villagers from the affected area, PRI members, people's organization and local representatives participated to protest the eviction. Requests under the Right to Information (RTI) Act were also made to the government for details of the tiger reserve proposal, for a copy of the earlier Gram Sabha resolution and the Supreme Court order mentioned by the DFO. The information provided by the FD said that no such gram sabha resolution has been drawn in the meeting of March 11. The RTI response also admitted that there is no Supreme Court order that asked for the eviction of people.

A counter resolution was adopted in a meeting of the Sunabeda GP meeting held on May 2nd 2007, condemning the eviction drive and asserting the right of the people's to live in their lands.

Source: 'Draft Note on Eviction from Sunabeda Sanctuary, June 2007'. Report by the Orissa Protected Area Network.

Contact: **Tushar Dash**. C/o Vasundhara, 14 / E, Gajapati Nagar, PO Sainik School, Near Press Chakk, Bhubaneswar – 5. Orissa. Mob: 9861048888. Email: tushardash01@gmail.com; vasundharanr@satyam.net.in
DFO, Sunabeda Wildlife Division, At/P.O. Dist. Nuapada – 766105, Orissa. Tel: 06678 - 23372(O), 23401(R).

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

PUNJAB

Three new PAs in Punjab

Three new protected areas: one wildlife sanctuary and two conservation reserves have recently been declared in Punjab. The new sanctuary is the Kathlaur-Kushlian Wildlife Sanctuary spread over 7.67 sq. kms in the Gurdaspur district.

Conservation Reserves have been created at Lalwan (12.82 sq. kms) in Hoshiarpur district and at Keshopur Chhamb (3.44 sq. kms) in the Gurdaspur district.

Contact: **Dr. J.S. Kathayat**, National Wildlife Database Cell, Wildlife Institute of India. Email: jsk@wii.gov.in. Web: http://www.wii.gov.in/nwdc/pa_list.pdf.

RAJASTHAN

'Friends of Tigers' for Ranthambor NP

The NGO Tiger Watch has initiated a new program called 'Friends of Tigers', which seeks to create a network of people who would like to contribute towards the protection of the Ranthambor National Park.

Contact: **Mittal Gala**. Tiger Watch, Friends of Tigers, MAA Farm, Sherpur Khiljipur, District Sawai Madhopur - 322001, Rajasthan, India. Tel: 07462-22063 / 09414031666. Email: friendsoftiger@gmail.com

Rajasthan Police gets Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Award 2007

The Rajasthan Police Department was recently honoured with the Clark R. Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Awards 2007 for their bravery and commitment to wildlife law enforcement. The award was given at the recent Conventional on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) Conference of the Parties in The Hague, Netherlands.

The awards were presented at the Species Survival Network's reception for delegates of the conference. The program was jointly conducted by the Animal Welfare Institute, one of America's most respected animal welfare organizations and the Species Survival Network - an international coalition of non-governmental organizations.



The recipients of this award were chosen for their excellence, bravery and commitment to wildlife law enforcement. The officers of the Special Operation Group (SOG) of the Rajasthan Police Department were awarded for their work in apprehending several wildlife traders and for seizing large volumes of endangered wildlife articles through numerous well-planned operations since 2003. The most notable of these was the arrest of the notorious wildlife trader Sansar Chand, his wife Rani and their son Akash in 2005. The trio had been responsible for repeated smuggling of tiger, leopard and otter skins from India to Tibet. In February 2006, following a sting operation by a team of officers from the SOG, 34 freshly tanned leopard skins and four otter skins had also been seized in Delhi.

Other recipients of the award are Paul Cerniglia, Supervisory Wildlife Inspector United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Yvan Lafleur, Canadian Wildlife Service; Paulin Ngobobo, Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature; Late Samson Parsimei Ole Sisina, Kenya Wildlife Service; Attorney John T. Webb, U.S. Department of

Justice and Tourism; Emmanuel Juma Muyengi, Ministry of Natural Resources, United Republic of Tanzania and the Last Great Ape Organisation, Cameroon.

Source: 'Rajasthan Police Department honoured at the CITES',
http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2007/050607_Rajasthan_Police_Award_CITES.html

Rains hit Rajasthan wildlife census in May

Untimely rains and hailstorms in the first half of May affected the wildlife census being conducted by the Rajasthan Forest Department.

The census that began on May 2 and was to have been completed by May 18 across the state was suspended in many parts on account of the rains.

In some PAs like the Jamwa Ramgarh and Nahargarh Wildlife Sanctuaries the census was rescheduled for June 1 and 2. The latest in the matter is not known.

Source: 'Rains hit Rajasthan wildlife census',
<http://in.news.yahoo.com/070522/43/6g3qe.html>

Contact: **CWLW** Government of Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, JAIPUR - 302 005.
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TAMIL NADU

Study of the Gulf of Mannar's eco system

The Suganthi Devadason Marine Research Institute (SDMRI) and Annamalai University will conduct a joint study of the inter-relationship and mutual dependency of mangrove, coral and sea grass eco systems in the Gulf of Mannar.

The aim of the study is to develop holistic strategies to conserve the three eco systems, which will be helpful for different stake holders involved in the management of marine resources in the region. The study will be carried out at a cost of Rs. 16 lakh allocated under a GEF-UNDP (Global Environment Facility-United Nations Development Programme) project, which

is being implemented by the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust.

While the micro-level studies would be carried out by an Annamalai University team under K. Kathiresan, Professor of Marine Biology, the SDMRI would concentrate on macro-level parameters.

The institutions have chosen areas in and around Poomarichan, Hare and Manoli islands for the study, all of which are part of the Mandapam group of islands.

Source: 'Study to conserve Gulf of Mannar's ecosystem', *The Hindu*, 19/07/07.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Gulf of Mannar NP, Collectorate Compound, Ramanathapuram – 623503, Tamil Nadu.

Tiger numbers up in Mudumalai WLS

A count conducted in the early part of the year in the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary has revealed at least 22 adult tigers. The census using camera traps (30 were set up) covered an area of 110 sq. kms of forest.

The number of tigers is based on a preliminary analysis of the data and the final figures will be made available towards the end of the year.

Source: P Oppili. 'Tiger numbers grow in Mudumalai sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 21/06/07.

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

UTTARAKHAND

High Court asks for reconsideration of FD order for eviction of Ban Gujjars from Rajaji

The Uttarakhand High Court has recently asked the 'concerned authorities' to reconsider a 2005 order of the Director, Rajaji National Park for the eviction of the *Ban Gujjar* community from the Rajaji National Park (RNP). The HC ruling came after a hearing in the Writ Petition No. 275 of 2006 (M/B) Ban Gujjar Kalyan Samiti (BGKS) vs State of Uttaranchal and others.

The matter is related to the 3000 odd families of the nomadic community that lives within the boundaries of RNP. 512 families had been relocated in Pathri and Gendi Kheta areas a few years ago (see *PA Updates* 55, 47, 41, 29 & 20), but this figure is said to be based on permits granted in 1951. It has been pointed out that by the 1990s the number of families had expanded to more than 3000 and therefore a majority had not benefited from the rehabilitation package. It has further been said that many of the families who have shifted are not happy with the situation.

The petitioner BGKS is a member of the Van Gram Avam Bhoo Adhikar Manch and had filed the petition invoking provisions of the new The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. The demands made in the petition include updating of list of number of families living in RNP area and the right to settle permanently in or around the park.

Source: Roma. Email dated 15/07/07

Contact: **Roma**, National Forum for Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW) / Human Rights Law Centre, Purab Mohal, Harsh Nagar, Robertsganj, District Sonbhadra – 231216, Uttar Pradesh Tel : 05444-224578. Email: romasnb@gmail.com; hrlkaimoor@gmail.com
Director, Rajaji NP, 5/1 Ansari Marg, Dehradun – 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-2621669 Fax: 2621669

Reliance Energy team found digging illegally in Askot WLS

A three member team of Reliance Energy was found digging inside the Askot Wildlife Sanctuary in June without any permission. They were sent back when found out by the Range Forest Officer.

In 2005, Reliance Energy had signed an agreement with the Uttarakhand Government for a 280mw hydro-electric project on the Dhauli Ganga River in Pithoragarh district, bordered by Tibet and Nepal. The three-member team was digging at the proposed project site to take samples as part of a preliminary survey.

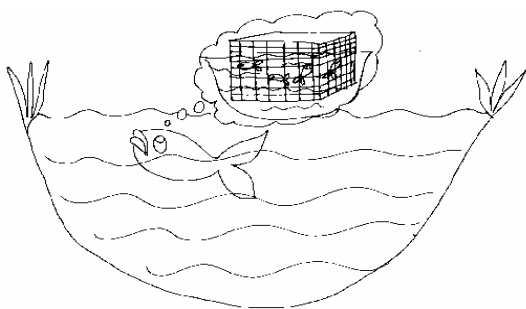
Source: 'Diggers in sanctuary', *The Telegraph*, 12/07/07.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Askot & Binsar
WLS, Dist. Almora, Uttarakhand. Tel:
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CWLW, 5, Chandrabani, Mohobewala,
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2644691

WEST BENGAL

Zoo proposed in the East Calcutta Wetlands



The West Bengal State government has proposed the construction of a zoo in the Ramsar site of the East Calcutta Wetlands to move the larger animals of the Alipore Zoo in Kolkata. The site for the new zoo is the Bhagwanpur *mouza*.

The proposal to shift the big animals to Bhagwanpur was ratified recently at a State Wildlife Board meeting, chaired by the Chief Minister. A note circulated among wildlife board members at the meeting stated that "500-600 acres of land will be required" for setting up the zoo. Around 225 acres have already been identified. The government has also issued a notice inviting expressions of interest from zoo consultants.

The State Forest Department is also reported to have constituted a committee — headed by the District Magistrate, South 24-Parganas — for the purpose of identification and acquisition of the required land and the animals are likely to be moved here in 2009.

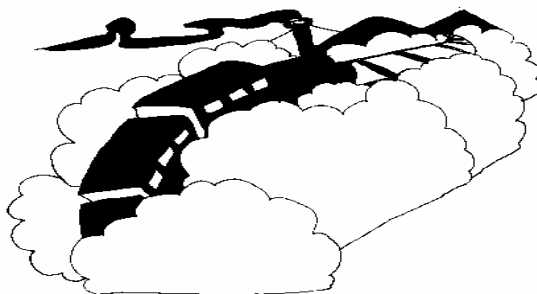
Environmental organizations like the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have opposed the proposal saying it will impact the environment of this very important wetland system. Government officials have, however, expressed confidence that necessary permissions would be obtained from the East Calcutta Wetlands Management Authority. The

Authority, meanwhile, has said that they have yet to receive any intimation of the proposed zoo.

Source: Jayanta Basu, Wetlands site irks green lobby – Zoo will destroy ecosystem'
http://www.telegraphindia.com/1070612/asp/calcutta/story_7904682.asp

Contact: **WWF- I**, West Bengal State Office, 5th Floor, Tata Centre, 43, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta 700071, West Bengal. Tel: 033 – 2889530. Fax: 2883761

Narrow guage line proposed inside Senchal WLS



The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) is working on a project to set up a rail link between Ghum — at 7408 feet, among the highest railway stations in the world — and Tiger Hill (8,482 ft). The project is expected to be a major tourist attraction and funds are being sought from the Ministry of Tourism for the same. The 8-km distance from Ghum to Tiger Hill, where tourists flock to see the sun rise over Kanchenjunga, could take between 45 minutes and an hour to cover by train because of the steep climb. Driving the distance takes only 20-25 minutes.

The DGHC was to officially bring the project proposal to the Railway Ministry during the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway's standing committee meeting on June 29 in New Delhi. It is then upto the railways to decide whether to take up the project. The details of the meeting are not yet known.

Environmentalists have pointed out that the entire Tiger Hill stretch of the proposed railway line lies in Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary and was therefore not desirable. The DGHC has, however, dismissed the concerns, insisting that if proper precautions are taken, the narrow gauge rail line would do no damage.

Source: Vivek Chhetri. 'Tiger down, train can now turn to Tiger Hill', *The Telegraph*, 21/06/07.

Contact: **DFO**, Senchal WLS, Wildlife Division-I, Old Secretariat Campus, P.O. & Dist. Darjeeling – 734101, West Bengal.
Email: dfowl1@dte.vsnl.net.in

Contact: **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

Call for proposals – Small Grants Program for Eastern Himalayas

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), India is calling for proposals for the Small Grants Programs (SGP) for work in the Eastern Himalayas. The CEPF-SGP is based in the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) Eastern Himalaya Office.

All projects proposed should focus on conservation of the region's flora and fauna that are in critical danger at key biodiversity sites and corridors in the Khangchendzonga-Singhalila complex (in Sikkim and Darjeeling district of West Bengal) and the North Bank Landscape (parts of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh). The particular species and sites of interest of this Small Grant Programme can be found in The Ecosystem Profile of the Eastern Himalayas (a copy can be downloaded from www.cepf.net).

Grants will be provided typically in the three areas mentioned below:

- For supporting action research for conservation of Critically Endangered and endemic species or ongoing targeted high impact projects having the potential for immediate conservation impact
- For conducting research to fill the information void for priority species in selected sites and corridors. Preference will be given to projects that seek to determine the population and threat

status of species from lesser known taxonomic groups including plants and

- For supporting scholars for completion of doctoral dissertation on conservation biology with emphasis on the Eastern Himalayas region of India.

The CEPF is a joint initiative of Conservation International (CI), the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank.

The last date for submission of proposals is 10 September 2007.

Contact: **Suman Rai**. ATREE, Darjeeling, Tel: (91) 9434045422 & (91) 9933357732. Email: sumankrai@gmail.com. Web: http://www.atree.org/CEPF_Small_Grants_230707.pdf

Centre urges apex court to wind up 'forest bench'

The Central Government has urged the Supreme Court to wind up its "green bench" which is hearing a batch of petitions related to forests including protected areas. In a recent affidavit moved before the bench headed by Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan, the Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is said to have urged the apex court to review its decision to constitute the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) for monitoring the managements of forests.

In its application, the Centre has submitted that it was closely regulating the forest management as it involved not only the precious ecology but also the livelihood of millions of people, most of whom are poor are inextricably linked to forests.

Source: 'Centre urges apex court to wind up 'forest bench', *Press Trust of India*, 20/07/07.

US \$ 105 million GEF environment Aid to India

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) would be giving India US\$ 30 million for biodiversity conservation and US\$ 75 million for climate change controls for the next four years.

The information was provided by the Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Mr. NN Meena in Parliament recently. The minister also said that the money would be spent on project proposals and concept notes received on biodiversity and climate change on a rolling basis through the year.

Source: '\$ 105 million Environment Aid for India', *The Hindu Business Line*, 05/05/07.

Meeting of Field Directors of all Tiger Reserves

A two day meeting of Field Directors of all Tiger Reserves in India was held in Ranthambore in the last week of June. The decisions taken at the meeting include the following:

- Government of all tiger bearing states will immediately take up special recruitment drives for filling up of all front line vacant posts. In cases where there is a major gap between sanctioned posts and actual requirements of posts, like the Namdapha Tiger Reserve; the sanctioned strength would be increased accordingly without loss of time.
- Eco-tourism with involvement of local people to be given priority. Funds so generated could then be used for providing ecologically sustainable livelihood options to local people to reduce their dependency on the protected area resources.
- Source populations of tiger will be consolidated and management of source-sink dynamics will be taken up.
- All the staff members and others who are deployed in front line areas will be given proper facilities and special provision for free ration, medical facilities and insurance cover.
- Relocation of villagers from crucial habitats in tiger reserves will be concluded within two years with settlement of rights.
- The compensation pattern and the simplified procedure will be followed as being practiced in the States of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. Villagers also will be compensated

for crop damage caused due to recurrent depredations by wide herbivores.

- A site specific redressal strategy will be developed for the Tiger Reserves which are affected by extremists' activities. A Committee will be formed to advise a solution for this problem.
- Wherever relocation of human population is proposed on forest lands outside protected areas, the provision of modification /acquisition of rights on such forest lands will be made. Relocation can be done either on forest land, or on revenue land or cash compensation may be given.

Source: Press Release, Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), 29/06/07
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

National Board for Wildlife reconstituted

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has been reconstituted. The individual members on the board are Divyabhanu Sinh Chavda, Valmik Thapar, Biswajit Mohanty, Shekhar Dattatri, Mahendra Vyas, Brijendra Singh, Dilip Khatau, Bonani Kakkar, M.K. Ranjhitsinh, and Bibhab Talukdar. The NGOs in the NBWL are the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), Reef Watch, Wildlife First, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) –India and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

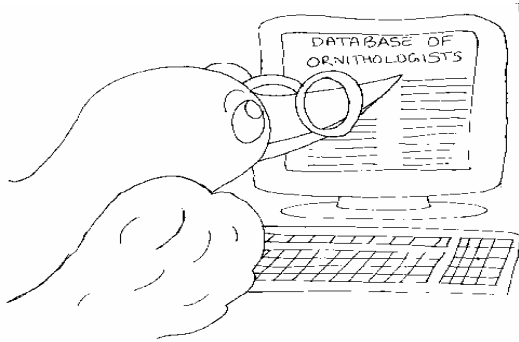
Ex-servicemen for tiger protection

The Union government is reported to have agreed to hire ex-servicemen for protection of tiger reserves. The move is said to have got the Prime Minister's approval when he recently reviewed the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) work and agenda on tiger conservation.

The meeting, attended by senior officials of the environment ministry, including the secretary, reviewed the action taken on the recommendations of the PM's tiger task force. The tiger task force, set up in the wake of the Sariska fiasco, had laid down a seven-point agenda for tiger protection.

Source: Nitin Sethi. 'Ex-servicemen to be hired for tiger protection', *The Times of India*, 12/07/07.

Database of Ornithologists



An effort is being made to compile a comprehensive database of ornithologists in the region. The proposed list would include: Ornithologists - with a formal degree (M.Sc/Ph.D) specifically in any/all branches of Ornithology; biologists/ornithologists - with a formal degree in any discipline of biological & allied sciences plus a deep interest in and sustained track record in ornithology; serious birders - in any vocation but with an abiding interest in ornithology; amateur birders; and students and young persons - interested in bird watching.

Contact: **SA Hussain**, Hussain Manzil, Near Anekere, Karkala - 574 104, Karnataka.
Tel: 09448171689. Email: s.anekere2003@gmail.com

SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH

Top Sunberban official arrested for corruption

The senior most forest official incharge of the Bangladesh's Sunderbans, Shaikh Mizanur Rahman, was recently arrested on charges of illegally selling timber and other forest resources. It has been reported that Rahman and three other forest officials face allegations

of making millions of dollars in a scam to commercially exploit the protected area.

It has been estimated that timber thieves strip Bangladeshi forests of millions of dollars worth of trees each year, sometimes in connivance with forestry officials.

The arrests of the forest officials are part of Bangladesh's military-backed emergency government's massive crackdown on corruption after it came to power in January.

Source: 'Top forest official held on graft charge', *Gulf Times*, 26/06/07.

NEPAL

Simultaneous public protests in five PAs

Local people affected by five protected areas in Nepal including the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP) and the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve launched simultaneous protests recently to draw attention to their situation. Members of the Protected Area People's Right Federation (PARF), a national network of communities affected by protected areas did a symbolic planting of paddy seedlings inside the five PAs on the same day.

Villagers of 13 VDCs of Chitwan put forward a nine-point demand to the government, citing problems related wildlife and those of river erosion. They pointed out they were facing serious problems on account of natural disasters and from wildlife that was destroying their crops, houses, and killing and injuring people. Villages from the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve too put forward a similar nine point demand to the government and also announced the launching of a series of protests against the government.

Source: Binod Tripathi. 'Protected area victims demand compensation', *Kantipuronline*, 01/07/07

Increasing number of Chitwan villagers involved in rhino poaching

Officials of the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP) have expressed concern over the increased involvement of local villagers in poaching rhinos and smuggling their hides and parts for immediate gains. It has been pointed out

that in the first half of 2007 alone, 22 of the 24 persons arrested on charges of poaching rhinos were from Chitwan district.

The most notable involvement in poaching has been that of the chairman of Kalabajar Forest Users' Group of Chitwan National Park, Amar Bahadur Tamang. A case was filed against him recently in the matter and he is said to be absconding.

Source: Increasing number of Chitwan villagers involved in rhino poaching', *Nepal News* 24/06/07.

Sacred sites trail project in Sagarmatha NP

The Mountain Institute (TMI) has been working on a Sacred Sites Trail Project in the Khumbu region of the Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) since 2003. The project was initiated in response to the increased number of tourists visiting the area and the consequent cultural and ecological implications. The number of visitors here has increased from 3600 in 1979 to over 20,000 in 2001. One of the main aims of the project has been to encourage visitors to visit less known sacred sites and villages so that the benefits are distributed more widely.

The new circular route goes clockwise from Namche Bazar, through the Thame Valley, passes 10 monasteries, caves, chortens, hermitages and nunneries before ending at the famed Tengboche Monastery. The project seeks to engage Sherpa communities in more effective preservation of the historical, cultural and natural sites of the park and its buffer zone. It also includes the objective of conserving and restoring the fragile upper forests and alpine zones of the Mt. Everest region.

The TMI was recently awarded a US \$ 10,000 grant from the organization Tourism Cares for the project which is part of the Sacred Himalayas Landscape project proposed by ICIMOD in collaboration with WWF Nepal and TMI (*PA Update* Vol XII, No. 2).

Source: 'Sacred sites trail project in Sagarmatha National Park (Nepal)', *Mountain Protected Areas Update*, 01/06/07.
www.mountain.org/work/himalayas/sacredsites.cfm

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds

The Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds was formally launched on 18 May 2007 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The partnership aims to protect globally significant natural wetlands, home to tens of millions of migratory waterbirds, including many globally threatened species.

The agreement was signed in a special ceremony held during the Sixth Meeting of the Signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on Conservation Measures for the Siberian Crane, also known as the CMS Siberian Crane MoU. This international agreement brings together all the Siberian Crane Range States, the International Crane Foundation, as well as the newest MoU partners: Wetlands International, and the Crane and Cracid Conservation and Breeding Centre. The Site Network will focus conservation efforts on sites of international importance for the Siberian Crane along its West and Central Asian flyways in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, the Russian Federation (western Siberia), Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Ten sites from five countries were formally accepted to the Network at the launch ceremony. These include, from Kazakhstan: the Kulikol-Taldikol Lake System, Zharsor-Urkash Lake System, Naurzum Lake System, Delta of the Ural River and Coastal Zone of the Caspian Sea, and the Tyuntyugur-Zhanshura Lake System; from the Islamic Republic of Iran: Bujagh National Park and Fereydoon Kenar, Ezbaran & Sorkh Ruds Ab-Bandans Ramsar Site; Termez in Uzbekistan; Durnaly in Turkmenistan; and Keoladeo Ghana National Park in India. Additional sites nominated by Azerbaijan, Pakistan, and the Russian Federation are currently under formal consideration. With the establishment of the Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds, the sites of importance for the Siberian Crane now receives formal recognition across all its three flyways.

The Eastern population of the Siberian Crane of around 3,000 birds breeds in Siberia and migrates through Mongolia and northern China to central eastern China, where the large majority of the population winters within the Poyang Lake basin. The conservation of the Eastern population is promoted under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Site Network which was launched in November 2006 under the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership. This new Network covers all migratory waterbirds and incorporates the North East Asian Crane Site Network that was active since in 1997.

Source: 'The Western/Central Asian Site Network for Siberian Cranes and other waterbirds was formally launched on 18 May 2007 in Almaty'

<http://www.wetlands.org/articlenumenu.aspx?id=f51dd161-fad1-458b-aa73-6872476cd799>

Contact: **Taej Mundkur**, WISA, A-25, 2nd Floor, Defence Colony, New Delhi - 110024, India. Tel/Fax: 011 -24338906. Email: tajmundkur.wi@vsnl.net; wisaind@del2.vsnl.net.in

Call for Wildlife Reserve to cover 30% of Oceans

More than 250 scientists from around Europe signed a declaration to coincide with World Oceans Day recently, calling for almost a third of the world's oceans to be turned into protected areas for marine wildlife - to maintain food supplies and stop damage to underwater habitats and wildlife.

The call comes in light of substantial documentation of a steepening decline in the marine environment: anoxic dead zones because of a build-up of organic matter and the collapse of coral reefs and fish stocks. It has also been estimated that as a result of continued fishing less than 10% of the large fish populations present 100 years ago survive today. This is because fishing practices and technologies have intensified allowing for fishing up to a depth of 2000 m.

Presently less than 0.006% of the world's oceans are designated as protected, as compared to 12% of its landmass.

Source: 'Call for wildlife reserve to cover 30% of Oceans', *The Guardian*, 09/06/07.

UPCOMING

Global Change and PAs

An international conference on 'Global Change and Consequences for Protected Areas' is being held on October 18 and 19 in Trafoi, Italy. The conference is co-sponsored by the Alpine Network of PAs and the Stelvio National Park.

Contact: Email: climate-change@alparc.org
Web: www.alparc.org

II Latin American PA Congress

The 2nd Latin American Protected Area Congress is being held in Bariloche, Argentina from September 30 to October 6, 2007.

The congress is held once every 10 years and has been co-sponsored by the IUCN this time.

The four themes that the conference will cover are: PAs and biodiversity conservation; Advances and challenges in knowledge and information about PA management; Strengthening management capacity and support for PAs; and Equity and quality of life issues.

Contact: Carmen Miranda. Email: cmiranda@ibasbolivia.com

WHAT'S AVAILABLE

- **Dutta, Ritwick** (2007). *Commentaries on Wildlife Law*, Conservation Series 5, Wildlife Trust of India, New Delhi.

The book is a compilation of some of the most significant orders of the Supreme Court and the High Courts on the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

It meets an important need felt by forest officers, NGOs, activists and civil society who are working on issues related to forests and wildlife.

Contact: **Ritwick Dutta**, C/o WTI, A-220, New Friends Colony, New Delhi - 110065.
Tel: 011 - 26326025/26. Fax: 26326027.

OPPORTUNITIES

Field researchers for seed dispersal study in Pakke TR

Two 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 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. It encompasses bird surveys (of hornbills and other frugivorous species), focal tree watches and vegetation assessments.

The project will be initiated in August/September 2007. A monthly stipend equivalent to JRF/SRF scales of UGC as found applicable will be paid.

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**. Department of Biological Sciences, University of Illinois at Chicago, 845 W. Taylor Street (M/C 066), Chicago, IL-60607, USA. Email: psethi@uic.edu; sethipia@yahoo.com

JRF for project on Shifting agriculture in the North East

The Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development (GBPIHED), Almora has invited applications for a temporary research project in the North East titled 'Project: Shifting agriculture: issues and options with focus on adaptive

interventions to make it ecologically, economically and socially viable'.

The post available is for a Junior Research Fellow. Candidates should have a Masters degree in wildlife/ zoology/ ecological/ life sciences or any subject relevant to Wildlife Sciences from a recognized University with first division and a consistently good academic record.

Candidates with interest and skills in bird and mammal identification; field experience in monitoring animals/habitats; experience in field based wildlife/conservation research projects will be given preference. Experience of working in the north-eastern region and knowledge of local languages is desirable.

Contact: **Scientist In-charge**, GBPIHED, NE Unit, Vivek Vihar, Itanagar – 791 113, Arunachal Pradesh. Email: neunit@gmail.com; gbpihedne@yahoo.co.in

Research assistants for project on Trawl Fishing along the Coromandel Coast

As part of the UNDP Post Tsunami Environment Initiative Project, the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) in Mysore is looking for three full time research assistants to study fisheries along the Coromandel Coast (Pulicat to Point Calimere) with the main emphasis being on the trawl fishing sector.

The eligibility requirements of the project include: Fluency in English and Tamil; MSc in Fisheries, Marine Science, Wildlife Science, Environmental Science or any other life science; License for two and/or four wheelers; Computer operational skills (MS Office); Good taxonomic skills for the identification of various marine species; Good Public Relations skills will be an added asset; Demonstrated ability for organized data collection and demonstrated ability to work independently as well as in teams

Contact: **Aaron Lobo**, NCF, 3076/5, IV Cross, Gokulam Park, Mysore 570002, Tel: 082-515601 Mobile: +919840854261 Email: aaronlobo@ncf-india.org
Dr. Rohan Arthur. Email: rohan@ncf-india.org

The PA Update needs support

It was around the same time last year that we had sent out a similar appeal for support for the *Protected Area Update*. Many readers and organizations had responded positively, which itself was an indication to us that the *PA Update* is useful and we have a number of well wishers.

The Foundation for Ecological Security continues to be our biggest supporter and has willingly agreed to provide a majority of the funding for the *PA Update* for another year. Just like last year, however, we are still short by about a 30% of the budget.

There are various ways, big and small, in which we can be helped. Individual readers are urged to send in their contribution as subscription. These are small amounts but if we receive a large number the help will be great. Organisations like Forest Departments and NGOs can avail of the bulk subscription method where we can together reach out to a larger number of people as well.

We also have back issues of the Update is a simple hard bound three volume set that would be a very valuable resource base for researchers, officials, activists or anybody else interested in getting a comprehensive picture of what has happened in the country's PA network over the last few years.

I do hope you will consider contributing. For any further details or clarifications please do write to me. We would also welcome any other ideas that you might have for us.

Pankaj Sekhsaria

Email: psekhsaria@gmail.com

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