

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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**EDITORIAL**

**Securing corridors...Snapping corridors!**

An interesting set of 'infrastructure' is to come up in protected areas in different parts of the country. These are bridges for wildlife, physical constructions that will allow wild animal movement along traditional routes. Conventional flyovers have been proposed on roads running through the Rajaji and Manas National Parks (*PA Update* Vol. XIII, No. 5) for vehicles to move over and allow animals to cross under. In the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary, on the other hand, custom made steel bridges, designed like trees are to come up for gibbons to cross over a rail line running through their forest (see story below).

In another, first of its kind initiative in the country, a group of NGOs is actually purchasing land that constitutes corridors between significant forest areas (see stories from Karnataka in this issue of the *PA Update*). The move is ensured at permanently securing these small 'patches' of forests so that these vital but tenuous connections are not broken.

While there might be questions about the implementation of the bridge construction plans or the widespread and long term financial and logistical viability of purchasing corridors (how many can be bought and where will the money come from?), there can be no denying their importance. These initiatives are also clear pointers towards the realization that corridors are absolutely crucial in a landscape that is being ruthlessly fragmented, where wildlife habitats are rapidly shrinking and protected areas are left only as islands in a sea of hostility all around. They are the symptoms of a larger problem where there is no vision or planning for the larger landscape and where attempts at securing corridors for wildlife like those discussed above are savagely outnumbered by the magnitude and scale of the snapping of existing corridors.

Mining projects like in Orissa, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh; dam building like in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh; road, railway line & canal construction, and destruction of the forests by encroachers all over are rapidly cutting off channels for wild animal movement. The results

are evident: rapidly escalating elephant depredation like in Orissa; increased animal deaths in road accidents and on railway lines like in North Bengal and growing hostility of local people as they suffer even more damage to life and property from the 'straying' animals.

An equally important but little studied dimension is the slow but visible breakdown of the traditional pastoral and agricultural practices. Agricultural systems, in particular, used to be far more tolerant but are becoming increasingly unfriendly to wildlife as they get rapidly commercialized and intensified.

There is, without doubt, a serious and urgent need to go to the root of the problem. Corridors for human movement like the road and rail networks need to be planned (or even stopped or removed when necessary) to ensure that wildlife corridors are not snapped; a larger picture of the landscape (the oft repeated landscape planning) and the needs of wildlife have to be kept in mind; local communities need to be taken into confidence and made part of the conservation agenda; and hugely destructive activities involving construction of ports, dams, mines and industrial complexes that go under the name of developmental projects need to be reigned in.

All we could end up with, otherwise, is another huge cement, concrete and steel construction binge in the name of wildlife. There will be many bridges but all useless, because nothing will be left on either side to bridge.

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### Blackbucks feared poisoned near Rollapadu WLS



Three blackbucks were found dead in fields adjoining the Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary in December. The incident occurred in a maize field near the Chintalakunta

Village of Midtur Mandal.

Forest officials believe that the local farmers may have poisoned the animals as they have been raiding crops in Aspari, Maddikera, Alur, Midtur, Tuggali and five other mandals. The dead animals were taken to the Atmakur Veterinary hospital and details of the postmortem are awaited.

Source: 'Rayalaseema ryots poison Blackbuck?', <http://www.wildlifewatch.in/news/87420/12/07>

Contact: DFO (Wildlife Management), Rollapadu WLS, Atmakur, Kurnool. Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08516-283337

#### Area of Nagarjunasagar – Srisailam TR reduced by over 1000 sq. kms

The area of the Nagarjunasagar – Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR) has been reduced by over a 1000 sq. kms. The reserve that was spread over 3568 sq kms in the districts of Mahbubnagar, Nalgonda, Prakasam, Kurnool and Guntur is now 2527 sq. kms.

The move was initiated following a directive of the Central Government to form an expert committee and delineate the Critical Tiger Habitat (CTH) as per the 2006 amendments made to the Wildlife Protection Act. An expert committee that went into the matter suggested the change including the removal of all area from Nalgonda district.

It has been pointed out that lot of these areas had already been denotified for mining, irrigation and other such projects. The prominent example is that of uranium mining (*PA Update* 45) and work on the irrigation project that have already been going on in within the NSTR in Nalgonda district.

The notification was issued in the last week of December 2007.

Source: Mir Ayood Ali Khan. 'Tiger reserve shrinks', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/07/01/08>.

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

## ASSAM

### **Domestic elephants to deal with wild elephant depredation**

The Assam Forest Department (FD) is creating a special force of 150 specially trained mahouts and a few *kunkis* (leader elephants) to help combat the growing depredation of wild elephants by driving them away from human habitats. A special training module has been used to build the new force. A two-week training for the last batch of 25 mahouts was conducted in October 2007.

Domestic elephants have been used to drive away wild elephants in the past but the lack of success of the operations was attributed to the fact that neither the elephants nor the mahouts had the right kind of training.

It is hoped to correct this situation with the training this time that was provided by the well known elephant expert, Parbati Baruah.

It has also been pointed out in this context that most of these domestic elephants were earlier engaged in the timber extraction industry and were left with no work following Supreme Court orders on felling and transportation of timber here. Many of these were deserted by their owners on account of the huge cost incurred for feeding them.

Critics of the present program have questioned its success. They point out that most of the domestic elephants were sold off in Bihar and in South India and that it would be a tough task to find healthy elephants for the new force.

Source: 'Jumbo power tapped', *The Telegraph*, 18/10/07.

### **Bridge over rail line in Gibbon WLS**

The Northeast Frontier Railways had decided to build two bridges over an 800-metre stretch of railway line inside the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in Jorhat district of Assam. The idea is aimed at connecting the gibbons who have been separated on account of the rail line.

The bridges, the first of their kind in the country, would be made of steel and designed to look like trees. The Railway Authorities have said that the exact sites for the

bridges have been identified and a proposal will soon be submitted to the Forest Department (FD) for clearance. Work would start as soon as the FD pays the deposit fund.

(Also see *PA Updates* 50 and 57)

Source: Pullock Dutta. 'Railways to put gibbons back on track', *The Telegraph*, 04/01/08.

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

**Dr. Dilip Chetry**, Gibbon Conservation Centre, Meleng, Mariani, Jorhat – 785634. Tel: 09435043982 / 03771-244378. Email: chetryd@rediffmail.com

### **Tiger death in tea estate bordering Kaziranga; management proposes acquiring part of estate**

One tiger cub was found dead and another was found in a semi-conscious state in the Rongagora division of the Tata Tea owned Hathikuli Tea Estate bordering the Kaziranga National Park. Other wild animal carcasses are also reported to have been found here in recent months. Wild animals often stray into the tea estate, which forms part of a corridor from Kaziranga to the Karbi Anglong hills on the other side of National Highway 37.

Forest officials have said the recent incident happened because the tiger cubs consumed dead cattle that was laced with a strong pesticide. Samples of the cattle flesh have been sent to State Forensic Laboratory in Guwahati and the Forest Department has said that legal action would be initiated against the tea estate if pesticide presence was confirmed. They have also proposed to acquire the Rongagora Division of the tea estate to prevent such incidents in the future.

The Tea Estate Management has, however, said that the company was aware of its responsibilities and that a decision had been taken to convert the 470 hectares estate into an organic plantation. 160 hectares are reported to have already been made organic and the rest would also be converted in three years time. They have also not ruled out the possibility of one of their workers spraying pesticide on the cattle carcass to avenge for loss he may have faced on its killing by the tiger, but have argued that they cannot be

held responsible for the actions of one of their employees.

The FD in turn has argued that a bottle containing pesticides was found at the site and even if done by a worker it was proof that the Tea Estate management was using pesticides in the plantation.

In related subsequent developments the TE management formed an eco-development committee to convince the FD of its commitment to wildlife protection. Space has also been provided to the FD to set up camp in the plantation area and a plea was also made to the plantation workers to help the park authorities to protect wildlife, particularly those animals that entered the area.

Source: Pullock Dutta. 'Kaziranga management counters tea pesticide threat', *The Telegraph*, 02/01/08.

'Tata in save-wildlife pledge', *The Telegraph*, 08/01/08.

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

### Increase in Swamp Deer population in Kaziranga



A recently conducted census in Kaziranga NP has counted 681 Swamp Deer here; a significant increase from the 468 deer that were reported in the last census in the year 2000. The figure, however, was 58 short of the population during the first Swamp Deer census conducted in 1998. The first census conducted in 1966, which was carried out along with the rhino census, had found 213 swamp deer.

Of the 681 swamp deer this time, 189 were male, 384 female and 108 yearlings.

The park was divided into 14 compartments for the purpose of the count. The

Burapahar Range which had never reported any Swamp Deer earlier had 22 animals this time.

Park officials have also informed that population estimation surveys of buffaloes, tigers and elephants are to be conducted in Kaziranga in early 2008.

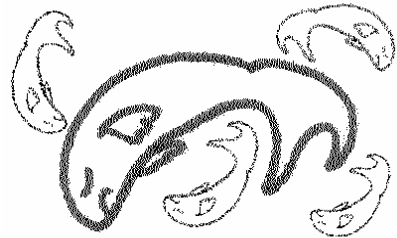
Source: 'Swamp deer population jumps in Kaziranga', <http://www.wildlifewatch.in/news/786,14/12/08>.

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

### BIHAR

#### Large scale fish deaths near Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary

A large number of fish have been reported dead in the waters near the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary. The cause of the deaths has not yet been established and fears have been expressed about the threats this could pose to the dolphins themselves.



Official sources said over 500 quintals of fish died in the first week of January in the Ganga in Bhagalpur. While local people said some fishermen might have poisoned the fishes, others have said that the deaths might have been on account of the pollution in the river.

Source: 'Fish deaths near dolphin sanctuary cause of worry', [www.mangalorean.com](http://www.mangalorean.com) 07/01/08.

Contact: **DFO**, Banka Forest Division, I/c Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin WLS, Banka, Dist. Bhagalpur, Bihar. Tel: 06424 – 232216.

## JAMMU & KASHMIR

### 118 fire incidents in PAs in last three years

The Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) Minister of State for Forests G M Saroori recently informed that nearly 1747 hectares of forests in J&K were affected in 438 fires in the period April to December 2007. The figure for the year 2005-06 was 334 fires affecting 1461.1 hectares of land, while that for 2006-07 was 227 fires over a land area of 1172.3 hectares

It was also pointed out that 118 fire incidents took place in protected areas in the state affecting 162.13 hectares of area during the last three years.

The Minister said that nearly half the fires were caused intentionally for burning the under-growth to collect Minor Forest Produce (MFP), for scaring away wild animals, to get good growth of grass in the following season and to clear land for cultivation.

The State has also taken a number of steps to deal with these fires. Forest fires are managed by the territorial staff of the Forest Department (FD) by beating the ground fire and spraying water from nearby streams and springs. Cooperation from local people residing in the area who avail various concessions from the forests is also solicited. Control Rooms have been established in all the territorial divisions. Patrolling parties are constituted during the vulnerable period and fire vulnerable compartments have been identified in every division and kept in special focus. Control burning, slash disposal and creation and clearance of fire lines is resorted to in the vulnerable areas. Watch towers have also been constructed at number of places where staff is deployed for round-the-clock duty during the dry spell. The FD has also submitted a proposal under 'Integrated Forest Protection (IFP) scheme' with a financial outlay of Rs. 29.13 crores to the Government of India.

One of the key constraints in dealing with fires is the lack of adequate infrastructure. The Minister pointed out that a forest guard in J&K has to monitor 5 to 10 sq. kms of area; that the FD was unable to control the movement of security forces and other people inside the forests during the dry season and that

they did not have any aerial back up for dealing with crown fires.

One particularly vulnerable target has been the timber depots of the Jammu and Kashmir State Forest Corporation (SFC). These have been regularly vandalized, particularly in the inaccessible areas of erstwhile Doda district. 98 fire incidents have been reported since 1990 in SFC coupes and operational areas gutting 47877 lakh cft of timber. The cost of gutted stocks has been estimated to be Rs. 4201.303 lakh.

Source: '227 fire incidents in JK this year', [www.greaterkashmir.com](http://www.greaterkashmir.com) 24/01/08.

### Siltation threat to Hokersar

A recent report 'Comparative studies on Ecology of Hokersar wetland, Kashmir: present and past,' conducted by the Centre of Research Studies, Kashmir University, has pointed out that the Hokersar wetland is being seriously threatened by siltation. The wetland that was spread over 13.5 sq kms is now said to be barely 5.5 sq kms in area. The main reason is said to be the silt brought down by the perennial streams, the Dudhganga and Sukhnagh that feed the lake.

It has also been pointed out that the unchecked siltation is responsible for the disappearance of economically viable species like *Nelumbium nucifera* and *Euryale ferox* that are found here. Species composition too has changed drastically over the years. In 1985 there were 85 macrophytic species found whereas now their number is just 24. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIII, No. 6, and *PA Updates* 43 and 41).

Source: 'Incessant silt deposition poses major threat to Hokersar', <http://www.wildlifewatch.in/news/935>, 28/12/08

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, C/o Chief Wildlife Warden, J&K State Tourist Reception Centre Srinagar – 190001. Tel: 0194-2492627

## KARNATAKA

### Dog squad to fight wildlife crime

The Karnataka Forest Department (FD) has proposed the setting up of its own squad of

trained sniffer dogs to tackle the increasing problem of poaching and wildlife crime. The FD has already written to the Secretary, Department of Forests, seeking permission to set up a dog squad.

The squads, if approved would have six dogs of different breeds and six trainers. They would be set up in Bangalore, Hubli, Mysore and Shimoga. The estimated cost of creating one such dog squad is Rs. 20 lakhs

Source: TS Ranganna. 'Dogs to be trained to go after smugglers, poachers', [www.hindu.com](http://www.hindu.com) 28/12/07.

### **Opposition to wall inside Ranganathittu WLS**

Naturalists and local villagers have opposed the Forest Department's work on the construction of a 130 meter wall inside the Ranganathittu Wildlife Sanctuary.

While the naturalists feel that the concrete wall will disturb the natural ambience and the nesting birds here, the people of Palahalli and other surrounding villages fear that their fields may be inundated when there is a heavy outflow of water from the Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) reservoir.

Forest officials have argued that the project has been planned taking into account the expert opinion from the KRS engineers. They say that an outflow of more than one lakh cusecs of water inundates the area and the wall was being constructed to avoid the inconvenience caused to the visitors and birds. It has also been pointed out that the excess water would join the river and there was no question of it being diverted to the neighbouring fields.

Source: 'Wall in sanctuary draws flak', [www.newindpress.com](http://www.newindpress.com) 18/12/08

Contact: **Forester**, Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, Palahalli, Shrirangapatta Taluk, Mandya – 571401, Karnataka

### **NGO initiative secures elephant corridor connecting BRT Wildlife Sanctuary**

In the first initiative of its kind in India the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)

and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) have purchased a strip of 22.5 acres of land to secure it as an elephant corridor connecting the forests of the Biligiri Rangaswamy Wildlife Sanctuary (BRTWLS) to the forests of Kollegal.

A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was recently signed between the Karnataka government and WTI transferring the land, known as the Edayargalli-Doddasampige (E-D) corridor, to the Forest Department. In return for the title deeds, forest officials will maintain the corridor as a safe passage for elephants.

The E-D corridor is a narrow strip of land (0.5 km wide and 2km long) that lies between Kurubaradoddi village (to the north) and Aandipalya village (to the south). These villages are connected by the Kollegal -Satyamangalam highway. The corridor is crucial to the local elephant population and is also home to other endangered wildlife like tigers and leopards.

WTI, IFAW and their partners have also acquired part of the Tiruneli - Kudrakote elephant corridor linking the Wayanad WLS in Kerala to the Brahmagiri WLS in Karnataka. Four families of the Thirulakunnu settlement located in the corridor are reported to have also voluntarily moved.

Source: 'Safe passage for Endangered Elephants: Karnataka corridor given to Government', [http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2007/071220\\_elephant-corridor.htm](http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2007/071220_elephant-corridor.htm)

Contact: **Rosa Argent / Monica Sood**, WTI, A-220, New Friends Colony, New Delhi - 110065. Tel: 011 - 26326025/26. Fax: 26326027. Email: [rosa@wti.org.in](mailto:rosa@wti.org.in); [monica@wti.org.in](mailto:monica@wti.org.in). Tel: 09958 127685 / 09810 606228

### **Soliga tribals to be allowed to remove NTFP from the BRT Wildlife Sanctuary**

The Karnataka State Government has taken a decision to allow the Soliga tribals to collect Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) from within the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary (BRTWLS). The decision was taken during a meeting of the State Wildlife Board held in July 2007. A proposal for the implementation of the decision was formulated in September. It lays down the rules and conditions under which this

harvest can be conducted and also lists the NTFPs that can be harvested as also the quantities to be permitted.

A letter with the proposal was sent to the Central Government in October 2007, with a request to consider this as a special case for lifting of the existing ban and allowing the Soligas to collect the NTFPs through their LAMP societies.

It is not known yet whether the Central Government has granted its approval.

Source: Letter dated 22/10/07 from the Principal Secretary, Forest, Ecology and Environment Department, Govt. of Karnataka to Deputy Inspector General (WL), MoEF, Govt. of India.

Contact: **DCF**, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Wildlife Division, Chamaraanagar, Karnataka. Tel: 08226-222059(O), 222156(R) **PCCF Wildlife**, Govt. of Karnataka, Aranya Bhavan, IInd Floor, Malleswaram, Bangalore – 560003. Email: [pccfwl@gmail.com](mailto:pccfwl@gmail.com)

### Deer to be translocated from Mysore zoo to Bandipur NP



Mysore Zoo authorities are reported to have launched a process of translocation of sambar and spotted deer to their natural habitat in Bandipur.

59 sambar and 79 spotted deer will be moved as part of a population control measure for the zoo.

The doctors at the zoo had dewormed the animals to be moved, screened them for the presence of endemic pathogens and administered prophylactic measures so they do not pose a threat to wildlife in Bandipur.

Source: P Krishna Kumar. 'Mysore zoo procuring lion-tailed macaques for captive breeding', *The Hindu*, 23/11/07.

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

### Illegal road construction work inside Jayamangali Conservation Reserve

Tumkur based conservationists have reported the illegal road construction work inside the recently notified Jayamangali Blackbuck Conservation Reserve. It has been pointed out that the small bullock cart path from Giregowdanahalli - ID Halli Cross that passes through the conservation reserve was expanded without seeking relevant permissions under the Forest Conservation Act and the Wildlife Protection Act.

The work on the road resulted in uprooting of a large number of small trees and shrubs and damage to vegetation as well. Initial complaints and queries to concerned authorities drew a blank and information was got only after the filing of the Right to Information Application.

It has also been alleged that the work has been carried with the local area funds of the Member of Parliament and Member of the Legislative Assembly of the area.

Source: Ameen Ahmed. Email dated 28/11/07. <http://tumkurenvironment.blogspot.com/2007/07/as-has-been-happening-in.html>

Contact: **Ameen Ahmed**, Ghose Buildings, Hospet Main Road, Tumkur 572101, Karnataka. Email: [tumkurameen@gmail.com](mailto:tumkurameen@gmail.com) **DCF**, Tumkur Territorial Division, Tumkur City 572101, Karnataka

**Chief Wildlife Warden** - Karnataka, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 18<sup>th</sup> Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993 / 3345846. Email: [pccfwl@vsnl.com](mailto:pccfwl@vsnl.com)

### KERALA

#### Elephants move to TN forests with onset of Sabarimala season

The onset of the pilgrim season in the Sabarimala hill shrine has resulted in huge disturbances for the elephants in the forests here, forcing them to move to adjacent forests of Tamil Nadu. Nearly 60 elephants were reported to have entered the forests in Kaliyal, Kulasekaram and Azhagiypandipuram of the neighbouring Kanyakumari district.

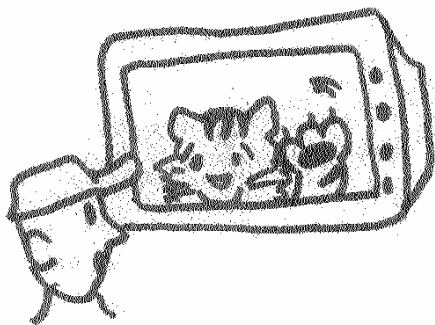


There were also reports of elephants spotted roaming along the fringes of Perunkuruvi, Akasthiyarkoodam and Vellararithodu forests near Sabarimala on the Kerala side

Three teams of forest personnel have been formed to keep a watch on the elephants.

Source: 'Elephants move to TN forests with the onset of Sabarimala season',  
<http://www.hindu.com/08/12/07>

### Cameras to monitor tigers in Periyar TR



The Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) authorities have decided to use cameras to identify individual animals, home ranges and their stripe patterns. About 40 cameras in pairs of two each are to be set up in four sq km grids to 'trap' the animals and the entire park would be covered within four to five months time. Seventeen tribals and two local youth have been trained to operate the cameras and help the forest officials in the exercise.

The gathered information is to be submitted to the Field Director's office and would then be sent to the National Tiger Conservation Authority in New Delhi.

Source: 'Periyar Tiger Reserve to use cameras to monitor tigers' <http://www.hindu.com/24/12/07>

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

### Meeting of Madhya Pradesh Tiger Foundation

A meeting of the Madhya Pradesh Tiger Foundation (MPTF) was held at the Van Vihar National Park in Bhopal in the month of January 2008. The meeting that was presided over by State Forest Minister Kunwar Vijay Shah took a number of decisions to ensure protection and conservation of forests and wildlife.

These include organizing of at least one ambulance for the use of local people in every national park in the state, construction of dormitories with a capacity of about 50 school children near every national park keeping in view the requirements of educational tours and the setting up of ashram schools by the State Tribal Welfare Department for villages located inside protected areas.

The Foundation has also decided to appoint agents, on a commission basis to collect funds for carrying out various projects and activities.

Those attending the meeting included Minister of State for Forests, Narayan Singh Kushwaha; State Principal Secretary (Forests), Prashant Mehta; Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, V. R. Khare; PCCF (Wildlife) P. B. Gangopadhyaya; Additional PCCF (Wildlife) H. S. Pabla and park directors from across the state.

Source: 'Madhya Pradesh to whip up public support for wildlife conservation',  
[www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com) 20/01/08.

### New entry rules for NPs in MP

The Madhya Pradesh Government has decided to enforce new rules for entry into national parks from January 2008. Entry fee to the park would now be charged per vehicle and not per individual as has been the norm so far.

According to the revised rates, foreign tourists would have to pay Rs 2000 per vehicle while Indian visitors will pay Rs. 500 per vehicle for entry into tiger reserves. This fee is applicable for light vehicles with a capacity of up to eight-passengers. For the minibus with a capacity from nine to 32 passengers, Indian and foreigner tourists would have to pay Rs 8000 and Rs 12000 respectively per vehicle.

For other protected areas the fee structure is slightly different. It would be Rs. 400 for Indians for light vehicles and Rs 1500 for foreigner tourists while for minibus it would be Rs. 1000 and Rs. 12,000 respectively.

In view of increasing pressure of tourism on the national parks and in a bid to control crowding, the state government has decided to limit the number of vehicles entering the main National Parks (Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench and Panna). Under this system, the number of vehicle entries has been limited to 150 in Kanha National Park, 165 in Bandhavgarh, 66 in Pench and 70 in Panna. This number is equivalent to or less than the present pressure of vehicles in the National Parks, but it is hoped that limiting their number would be very effective in the future when these areas would come under added pressure from more visitors

In the sensitive area of Kanha zone in Kanha National Park the number of vehicles would be limited to 70. In the Tala zone in Bandhavgarh the entry of vehicles has been limited to only 50.

Two additional tourism zones have, however, been provided in Kanha and Bandhavgarh so that tourists do not feel disappointed or are not inconvenienced.

Information and reservation facilities are also being provided on the web at <http://www.mponline.gov.in/forest>

Source: 'New entry fee in national parks from January', [www.centralchronicle.com](http://www.centralchronicle.com). 1/12/07

Contact: **CWLW**, MP, Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 755-557371/ 550391.

## MAHARASHTRA

### Construction of wall around SG National Park to be speeded up

Following a series of four incidents of leopards straying out of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) in one month, forest officials have decided to speed up construction of a 21-km 'leopard proof' wall around the park. The Forest Department says that the wall will be ready in about a year's time and will prevent

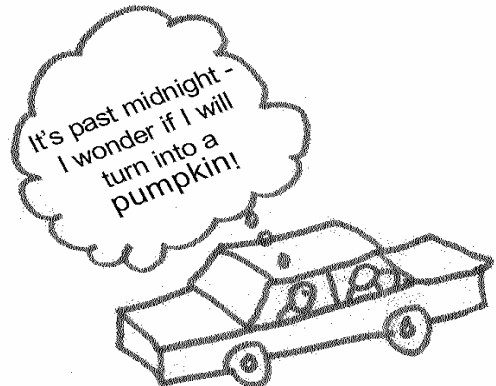
wildlife from straying into human settlements. 13 kms of the wall has already been constructed and the state government has sanctioned Rs. Five Crore for the work. The money has already been allotted to the Public Works Department.

NGOs like the Conservation Action Trust (CAT) have however pointed out that the wall will not help keep leopards inside as they are expert climbers and can make use of the trees along the wall to jump across. It has also been pointed out that the existing wall is broken at many places in Malad, Dahisar and along the Western Express Highway and people who intend to encroach on national park land won't be deterred by it.

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'The great wall of Borivli', *DNA*, 23/12/08.

Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests**, SGNP, Borivili (East), Mumbai – 400066, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-28860362, 28860389(O), 8862780(R) Email: [sgnpb@rediffmail.com](mailto:sgnpb@rediffmail.com)  
**Debi Goenka**, CAT, 6 E-1, Court Chambers, 35 New Marine Lines, Mumbai-400 020, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-22006116/5/4. Fax: 2200 6115. Email: [debi.cat@gmail.com](mailto:debi.cat@gmail.com). Website: [www.cat.org.in](http://www.cat.org.in)

### Minister visits Tadoba TR after midnight in violation of rules



Maharashtra Finance Minister Jayant Patil was reported to have illegally entered the Tadoba Tiger Reserve after midnight in the first week of December 2007.

The tiger reserve permits visitors only between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays except Tuesday. The Minister,

along with principal secretary (reforms) Sunil Soni and some friends entered during the prohibited period even after forest officials apprised him of the rules.

The Minister justified his visit, saying he was there for a meeting with forest officials as they had approached him for funding for the reserve management but could not reach in time as he was delayed in a meeting in Gondia.

The Director of the Park, Mr SH Patil said that the Minister had reached late on account of his meetings in Gondia and Bhandara and he was given permission because he was part of the government and was here to discuss issues related to the management of the reserve. He also added that the Minister did not move around the park at night.

Wildlife activists have expressed serious concern over violation of rules by the minister and pointed out that if government officials themselves violate rules in this manner it would be difficult to expect the common citizens to abide by the law.

Source: Pradip Kumar Maitra. 'Minister's midnight visit to tiger reserve', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com) 07/12/07.

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

**Chief Wildlife Warden**, Maharashtra State, Dr. Ambedkar Bhawan, 4 & 5th Floor, M.E.C.L. Building Seminary Hills & Campus, Nagpur – 440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-2526758 / 2530126. Fax –2510671. Email: cfwl@nagpur.dot.net.in

## ORISSA

### Bird census conducted in Chilka

A bird census conducted at Chilka lake on January 5, 2008 has counted nearly nine lakh birds belonging to 168 species in the lagoon. The bird population in the Nalabana Sanctuary area was 4.04 lakh.

The count was conducted jointly by the Chilika Development Authority (CDA) and Orissa State Wildlife Organisation. A total of

85 personnel and bird experts from different government and non-government organisations such as Bombay Natural History Society, Regional Museum of Natural History, World Wide Fund for Nature, State Pollution Control Board, Wild Orissa, Wildlife Society of Orissa and many academicians participated.

The lagoon was divided into 17 units for the purpose of the census. Four of these were in the Nalabana Sanctuary area.

The counts indicate that Gadwalls were the predominant species with their number being more than 1.69 lakh. The population of other species which exceeded one lakh in numbers were Northern Pintails and Northern Shovellers. The number of birds counted that exceeded 50,000 were Eurasian Wigeon, Common Poachard and Common Coot. 1624 Greater Flamingos and 56 lesser flamingoes were also counted.

Source: 'Bird census conducted in Chilka', [www.statesman.net](http://www.statesman.net) 08/01/08

Contact: CDA, BJ-45, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 – 2434485. Website: [www.chilika.com](http://www.chilika.com)

### Bhitarkanika closed for tourists for annual census

The Bhitarkanika National Park was closed for tourists for a week in the month of January for the conduct of the annual census operations.

Tour operators have expressed concern of the impacts of this on tourism as this is the main season for tourist arrivals here. They have pointed out that the closure of the park affects the livelihood of boatmen, local guides and businessmen dependant on the tourism industry. While a section of the tour operators have argued that the census operations should be held in the rainy season when tourist arrivals are low, others feel that tourists should not be prevented from entering the park even if the census is on.

Forest officials have, however, pointed out that the count will be affected if tourists are present. They had said, for instance, that only non-mechanised country-boats are used for the census while tourists prefer to use mechanised boats which could disturb the animals during the counting operations. (Also see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 2)

Source: 'Bhitarkanika closed down for animal census', [www.newindpress.com](http://www.newindpress.com), 07/01/08.

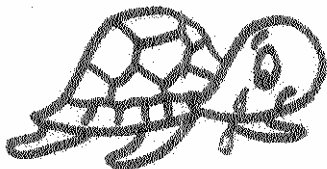
**DFO**, Bhitarkanika NP, At/PO Rajnagar, Dist. Kendrapada – 745225. Orissa. Tel: 06729-72460/64. Fax: 06727-20775

### **DRDO link for turtle protection units; mass turtle mortalities reported**

In a move to thwart possible attack on Forest Department (FD) patrol vessels guarding the breeding Olive Ridley turtles, the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) has established a direct communication link with turtle protection units along the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary. Turtle patrolling vessels had been linked with aerial communication of the defence installation in 2005 but this was discontinued the following year. The 2006-07 nesting year also saw a number of bloody incidents involving the FD and intruders into prohibited waters (*PA Updates* Vol XIII, Nos. 2 & 1, Vol XII, Nos. 6 & 1 and No. 54).

All the patrol vessels engaged in operations to intercept deep-sea trawls illegally fishing in the Gahirmatha waters have been directly connected with the high frequency communication network. Turtle protection crew can now seek immediate help from DRDO surveillance vessels to meet with any exigencies

The link has been established following a FD proposal seeking DRDO's active help in conservation of the turtles. DRDO has also agreed to extend berthing facilities to FD vessels on the defence base. Besides, they have agreed that ground level forest staffs would be allowed weeklong restricted entry into prohibited defence base once the turtles lay eggs.



Meanwhile, more than 1200 turtle carcasses have been found in the last three months at the prominent nesting sites of the Gahirmatha, Rushikulya and Devi river mouths. Continued illegal fishing by mechanized trawlers along the state's coastline is believed to be one of the main reasons for these deaths and experts have claimed that the actual mortality would be much higher than the official figures released so far.

The FD has said that it has initiated steps to deal with the problem. 45 camps (40 on-shores and five off-shores) have been set up along the coastline to keep a strict vigil on the illegal fishing activities and APR forces have been deployed in the camp to assist the wildlife persons. As many as 72 persons have been arrested and 12 fishing boats including nine trawlers and one gill-net have been seized so far by the enforcement wing of the department.

The FD has also decided to fence off the Habelikhathi nesting site to prevent animals like dogs, jackals and hyena from feeding on the eggs laid by the turtles here.

Source: 'Turtle protection gets defence support in Orissa', [www.kalingatimes.com](http://www.kalingatimes.com) 03/12/07. 'Help in offing for disturbed Olive Ridley mass nesting', <http://www.hindu.com> 11/01/07. 'Coasts turning graveyard for turtles', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com) 22/01/08.

### **Reduced elephant menace around Chandaka-Dampara WLS**

The elephant menace around the forests of the Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary (CDWLS) is believed to be substantially lower this year than in the recent past (See *PA Updates* Vol XIII, Nos. 3 & 1, Vol XI, No. 4 and Nos. 49, 46, 41 & 39)

Elephant depredation here affects nearly 40,000 families over 111 revenue villages including 72 hamlets and also parts of the capital Bhubaneswar.

The villages of Sundarpur, Patharadiha and Baramana on the north-western side of the sanctuary and Kusupangi, Pathapur and Dulanapur along the eastern boundary have been less affected as compared to earlier years.

Part of the reason for this is the increased vigilance on part of the villagers and the Forest Department (FD). Armed with search and focus lights and crackers, villagers remain vigilant throughout nights in shifts and keep the forest officials informed of the movement of the animals. Information boards set up at different strategic positions are also helping the adjoining villages in getting an idea of the 'movement pattern' of the pachyderms.

Source: 'Elephant menace on decline',  
[www.newindpress.com](http://www.newindpress.com) 01/12/08

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

group of organisations in the name of providing succour to poor are supporting infiltrators and the unauthorised occupation of both, the revenue and forest lands. Besides felling trees and converting the forestland to homestead and paddy fields, these inhabitants were fishing in prohibited territory with resources and equipment provided by the NGOs. The FD has also alleged that the NGOs were giving cattle and goats to the illegal settlers here under social security schemes. Many of these were freely grazing inside the forest areas causing further degradation.

The FD report also says that there is evidence that some organisations were clearing the existing mangrove and then trying regeneration to show the activity as their own project.

It is not known whether the FD has made public the list of NGOs it has named in this report to the state government.

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

## **PUNJAB**

### **Fresh water dolphins spotted in Harike**

Fresh water dolphins, hitherto known to survive only in the Indus River basin, especially in Pakistan, were recently spotted in the wetlands of the Harike Wildlife Sanctuary. A dolphin pair was photographed by a forest officer near

the confluence of the Sutlej and Beas Rivers in the middle of December.

Subsequent surveys have reported the presence of at least five dolphins in the waters of the sanctuary.

Source: 'Rare freshwater dolphins enthuse wildlife experts', IANS, 21/12/07.

'5 dolphins in Harike lake',  
<http://www.tribuneindia.com> 22/12/07

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Harike Lake WLS, Near  
Police Station, Harike, Dist. Firozpur,  
Punjab. Tel: 0181 - 248409

**Chief Wildlife Warden**, Punjab, SC No.  
2463-64, Sector 22-C, Chandigarh -  
160022. Tel: 0172-2705828(O),  
2675661(R). Fax: 2705828

## **RAJASTHAN**

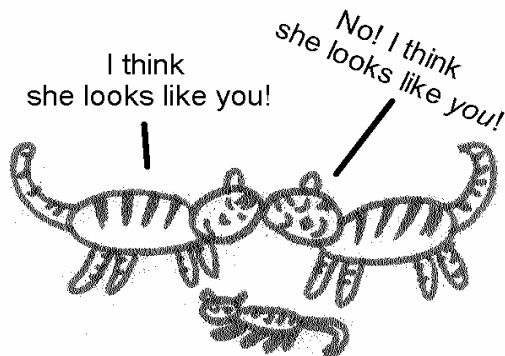
### **Rajasthan to get Museum of Natural History**

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is to set up the 4th Regional Museum of Natural History in Rajasthan. Dr. Hamid Ansari, Vice-President of India recently laid the foundation stone for the museum that will be located over seven acres of land. To be named the Rajiv Gandhi Regional Museum of Natural History it will be completed in three years time. The museum has been conceived as a non-formal centre for Environment Education and creation of public awareness on conservation of nature and natural resources.

The MoEF has already set up three such regional museums at Mysore, Karnataka (for the south zone), Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh (central zone) and Bhubaneswar, Orissa (eastern zone) with the themes of biological diversity, introduction to ecology and biodiversity respectively.

Source: 'Rajasthan to get museum of Natural History', *Travel Impact Newswire*, Edition 2 (2008), 10/01/08

### **12 tiger cubs born in Ranthambore NP in last two years**



As many as 12 tiger cubs have been born in the Ranthambore National Park (RNP) in the last two years. This has taken the total tiger population in the park to 40.

Three cubs, around four months old were sighted by tourists in Zone III of the Sawai Madhopur Range recently, while two cubs were born about a year ago in Zone V of the Chiroli unit. In the same Zone in Kachida unit, three cubs were born nearly two years ago while two were born in November 2007 in Wagda unit. Officials also sighted two three month old cubs in Zone IV recently when they were tracking tiger movements. The National Tiger Conservation Authority has asked the Wildlife Institute of India to radio-collar at least five cubs to study them and track their dispersal during adulthood.

Source: '12 tiger cubs born in Ranthambore National Park', <http://www.hindu.com/25/12/07>

Contact: **Director**, Ranthambore TR, Sawai Madhopur – 322001, Rajasthan. Tel: 07462-220223 / 222004 / 221139

### **Keoladeo NP could lose UNESCO world heritage status**

Continued shortage of water for the Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur (see *PA Updates* Vol XIII, Nos. 6 & 1, and Nos. 54, 53, 50, 43, 40 & 39)) could lead to the park losing its UNESCO world heritage status. Concerns over the lack of water in the park and the absence of birds here prompted the Union Minister of Tourism Ms. Ambika Soni to write to the Rajasthan Chief Minister (CM) expressing

fears that the park might be put on UNESCO's danger list.

The CM Ms. Vasundhara Raje has responded blaming the Central Government for the situation in the park. She said that the Centre had not approved projects for the park worth Rs. 100 crore that have been with the Ministry of Environment and Forests for over three years.

Source: Mahendra Kumar Singh. 'Raje slams Centre over Bharatpur heritage threat', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com) 17/01/08.

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

## **UTTARAKHAND**

### **Poaching alert in Corbett NP for New Year eve**

Forest officials issued a special poaching alert in the Corbett National Park for the heightened tourist activity coinciding with New Year eve. A large number of tourists visit the park during the period and park authorities wanted to ensure that this is not seen as an opportunity by poachers and other elements to strike.

A similar alert had been issued by the Corbett and Rajaji National Parks to coincide with the festive season of Diwali earlier in 2007 (*PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 6)

Source: 'Red alert in Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve during the festive season', [www.topnews.in/](http://www.topnews.in/) 02/01/08

Contact: **Field Director**, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar –244715, Nainital, Uttaranchal. Tel: 05947 – 85489. Fax: 85376

## **WEST BENGAL**

### **Tigress in Sunderbans radio-collared**

A tigress named Priyadarshini was successfully radio collared recently as a part of a new initiative to track and study tigers in the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve and to also get the exact number of the striped cats here.

The tigress was trapped with a bait at Choragajikhali, put into a cage and fitted with the collar after being tranquilized. Signals from the

collar will be received abroad and these will be transmitted to the authorities in Sunderbans every hour through email. A second receiver, placed on a boat, will follow the tigress' movements in the jungle.

If the satellite transmission is cut off, the boat will try to track down the tigress. The movement pattern will be plotted on a map and the distance travelled will be measured.

Source: 'Bengal tigress collared in Sunderbans', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, 08/12/08.

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

## 12 tigers in Buxa TR

The latest census conducted in the Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR) has confirmed the presence of at least 12 tigers here. This includes four adult males, six females and two cubs. Forest officials have said that there was evidence of the presence of at least another four to eight animals.

The count was conducted by the State Forest Department and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) from December 11 to 15, 2007. Twelve NGOs also participated. Four wildlife experts from the National Tiger Conservation Authority, Zoological Survey of India, WWF-India and state board of wildlife were also present during the operations.

Pugmarks were reported to be well-dispersed in forests between the rivers Pana and Sankosh, spreading over 600 sq km, which is over 80 per cent area of Buxa. Scats collected during the tiger census have been sent to the WII for DNA analysis. The final results are expected in March.

Source: Suchetana Haldar. 'Buxa had 12 tigers says latest census', [www.expressindia.com](http://www.expressindia.com) 21/01/08.

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

## Food problem for increasing rhino population in Jaldapara WLS

A rapid increase in the rhino population in the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary is reported to have resulted in a severe food shortage for the animals. The increase in rhino numbers here from just 14 in 1985 to 122 presently has left the forest officials struggling to cope with their increasing demand for food, particularly green fodder.

The Forest Department says that efforts are being made to arrange enough fodder in the sanctuary and to also extend the habitat. Newer varieties of grasses like *purundi*, *mal*, *khagra*, *madua* and *malsha* which are preferred by rhinos are being planted in the grasslands. The FD is also cutting down trees in certain parts because the grass does not grow properly under shade.

The main rhino habitat here used to be 115sq km of grassland on the western bank of the River Torsha. In a bid to give the rhinos more space and fodder area, grasslands on the eastern side of the river have been included taking the total areas of grassland here to 216 sq. kms.

Source: 'Jaldapara had enough rhinos, but not enough food', <http://www.wildlifewatch.in/news/762>, 10/12/08.

Contact: **DFO**, Jaldapara WLS, Cooch Behar Division, P.O. & Dist. Cooch Behar, West Bengal. Tel: 03582-227185. Fax: 227185

## MoEF proposal to deal with elephant deaths in train accidents in North Bengal

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has initiated steps to deal with the problem of continued deaths of elephants in train accidents in North Bengal.

In a span of seven years, 26 elephants have been killed in North Bengal. Most of the deaths have been reported from a 100-km railway stretch between Alipurduar to Siliguri. This includes ten deaths in the Panjhora region under the Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary, five cases from Gulma under Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, four cases from the Mongpong stretch under the Kalimpong division and three in the Rajabhatkhawa stretch of the Buxa Tiger Reserves (see *PA Updates* Vol XIII, No .6 & 3;

Vol XII, No. 3, and Nos. 49, 47, 43, 39, 36, 34, 32 & 29).

Responding to a proposal submitted by the West Bengal Forest Department the MoEF has identified four extremely vulnerable corridors in this stretch and also made recommendations to the Railway Board. It has also recommended that train movements in these corridors be suspended at night because elephant movement increases after dusk.

The Centre has also called for imposing a maximum speed limit of 25 km per hour for trains in these vulnerable areas. An expert committee comprising Director, Project Elephant; senior forest officials and representatives of the Railways will be constituted to oversee to the implementation of the scheme.

Concern has also been raised over the sudden increase in the number of goods trains in this stretch in the last two years.

Source: Suchetna Haldar. 'Elephant deaths: Ministry takes notice', <http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/Elephant-deaths-Ministry-takes-notice/246141/> 'Bengal to check elephant deaths on railway tracks', *DNA*, 07/01/08

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Vikas Bhawan, North Block, Salt Lake, Calcutta - 700 091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3346900/3583208. Fax: 3345946. Email: [wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in](mailto:wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in)

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### Traffic to be monitored in tiger reserves to avoid animal mortality

In view of the continued reports of wild animals being killed in road accidents, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has recommended monitoring of

vehicle movement in 16 tiger reserves across the country.

A letter prescribing guidelines which include deployment of mobile squads to prevent the animals from falling victim to hit and run cases have been sent to the reserve authorities. State Wildlife Wardens have also been asked to work towards making travellers aware of the wildlife movement on the roads, particularly during nights. Speed detecting guns to determine the speed of vehicles in forest areas are also to be procured.

Source: 'Centre to monitor traffic through sanctuaries', [http://www.wildlifewatch.in/news/1125\\_27/01/08](http://www.wildlifewatch.in/news/1125_27/01/08)

### 273 villages to be relocated from tiger reserves

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has identified 273 villages for relocation from the core areas of 28 tiger reserves located in 17 states. The information was provided by Dr. Rajesh Gopal, member-secretary, NTCA during a recent program for the release of a compilation of Tiger Action Plans drawn up by 12 tiger range countries.

He also pointed out that so far only one village in the Sariska Tiger Reserve had been relocated. The 21 families shifted were each given a two-room house, 6.25 bighas of land and Rs. 84,000.

Source: 'Tiger action plans at work', *The Hindu*, 14/12/08.

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](mailto:dirpt-r@hub.nic.in);

### Wildlife Service Awards 2007

The Sanctuary ABN AMRO Wildlife Awards 2007 were given recently. The Lifetime Service Award was given to Dr. Ullas Karanth while Wildlife Service Awards were given to lawyer Ritwick Dutta; Forest Ranger from Kerala, Sasi Kumar T; the mahouts of Bandavgarh Tiger Reserve led by Head Mahout EA Kuttappan;



birdwatcher Bholu Abrar Khan from Bharatpur and journalist Prerna Singh Bindra.

The Green Teacher Award was given to Sukumar Paira, Headmaster of the Bijoynagar Adarsha Vidyalaya, Bali Island in the Sunderbans while the young naturalist awards were given to Aditya Chandra Panda of Bhubaneshwar and Latha and Aneesh of the Periyar Tribal Heritage Ecodevelopment Committee. The Wind under the Wings Award was given to Travel Operators for Tigers (TOFT) for efforts to turn wildlife tourism into a tool for conservation in India.

Contact: **Bittu Sahgal**, Sanctuary Magazine  
145/146, Pragati Inds. Estate, NM Joshi  
Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 011.  
Tel: 022-23016848/49 Email:  
[bittusahgal@vsnl.com](mailto:bittusahgal@vsnl.com)

## SOUTH ASIA

### BHUTAN

#### **Workshop to develop National strategy on human-wildlife conflict**

An international workshop was held recently in Paro to discuss a National Strategy for Bhutan to tackle human wildlife conflict. Organised by the Nature Conservation Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Bhutan, the workshop brought together nearly 80 experts from within and outside the country to discuss the issues.

It was pointed out that a large number of farmers living in and around forest areas including protected areas like the Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park regularly suffered crop losses on account of depredations by wild animals like wild pig, barking deer, macaque, and sambar. Another study done in the same park revealed that 76 domestic animals had been picked up in the year of 2000 alone. Farmers attributed 40 kills to leopards, 20 to tigers, 10 to wild dogs, and six to bears.

Senior officials said that the national strategy being planned would aim both to reduce poverty and facilitate conservation. Creation of micro-economic enterprises such as

eco-tourism trails and developing markets for local forest products on a sustainable basis were being considered as options to deal with the problem.

The strategy is to become a priority programme for the agriculture ministry from the 10th Five Year Plan, which begins in 2008.

Source: Ugyen Penjore

<http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?p?name=News&file=article&sid=9531>,  
11/12/07

### PAKISTAN

#### **Five year Houbara Bustard conservation project**

The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) Wildlife Department is planning a five year project for the conservation of the Houbara Bustard. The Rs100 million project would work towards organizing the human communities living in houbara's habitats into village conservation committees (VCDs) and for the declaration of the areas as community game reserves. The communities would be provided incentives for conservation and community representatives will be empowered with the powers of wildlife officers under relevant wildlife laws. Steps would also be taken to improve the houbara's habitat and intensive patrolling will be conducted during the migratory season to check illegal hunting.

Thousands of these bustards arrive every year in Pakistan in November from Siberia and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and return in March.

Source: 'Plan to protect houbara bustard in the offing', *Daily Times*, 03/12/07.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

#### **South East Asian Workshop on CCAs**

A South-East Asian Regional Workshop on Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) was held from November 27-30, 2007 in Coron, Philippines. This was organized jointly by the

ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity and the Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines, with inputs from the IUCN Theme on Indigenous/Local Communities, Equity and Protected Areas (TILCEPA).

Participants at the workshop included relevant government officials and NGOs from six of the region's countries, some regional institutions, and community representatives from the Philippines.

A detailed action plan was worked out. This includes greater documentation of CCA initiatives by/with communities; assessment of policies and working towards more progressive policies where they don't exist; exchange programmes; and national workshops to go further into the details of specific actions.

Contact: **Ashish Kothari**, Co-Chair, IUCN – TILCEPA, C/o Kalpavriksh at the editorial address. Email: [ashishkothari@vsnl.com](mailto:ashishkothari@vsnl.com)

## OPPORTUNITIES

### **Research Associate: Forest Fire Management**

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment is looking for a Research Associate for its project 'Forest Fire Management in India: Integrating Ecological and Cultural Contexts and Consequences'.

The 18 month pilot study aims to document fire occurrence in selected sites, assess the effects of fire on forest structure, composition, and functioning, and document people's perceptions of the role of forest fires. The ultimate aim of the study is to sensitize different constituencies to the ecological, socio-economic, and cultural roles of fire in Indian forests, as a means to initiate a renewed policy discussion on fires and fire management.

The project is to be carried out in cooperation with the Institute for Silviculture, University of Freiburg, Germany, and the Centre for International Forest Research, Indonesia.

Applicants should have a Masters degree in forestry or a related field, and a keen interest in conservation and forest management, as well as in field-based research. The position will be based at ATREE's office in New Delhi, but will entail travel and time in the field. Applicants should have good computer skills (data base management, MS office), basic knowledge in GIS, and a sound knowledge of basic statistics. Good written and spoken English and good spoken Hindi are a must.

Contact: **Dr. Ankila Hiremath**, ATREE, 431-432/D 22 Chattarpur Hill, New Delhi-110074. Tel: 011-2630 1044. E-mail: [hiremath@atree.org](mailto:hiremath@atree.org)

### **Research project on management and use of biodiversity in the North East**

The G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment & Development (GBPIHED) has invited applications for temporary positions of a Junior Research Fellow for its project 'Response assessment and processing of knowledge base to serve long-term management and use of biodiversity in the Himalaya – focus on representative protected sites'.

The applicants should have a Masters degree in zoology/ wildlife/ ecological/ biological/ environmental /life sciences with first division and a consistently good academic record. NET/GATE qualification is desirable as is experience of working in high altitudes, and with large carnivores/herbivore research and habitat evaluation.

Contact: **Scientist In-charge**, G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, NE Unit, Vivek Vihar, Itanagar – 791 113, Arunachal Pradesh

### **Work with CAT in the Mumbai Metropolitan region**

The Conservation Action Trust (ACT) has announced openings for projects related to studies of flamingoes and mangroves to be conducted in the Mumbai Metropolitan region.

Contact: **Vivek Kulkarni**, CAT, 6 E-1, Court Chambers, 35 New Marine Lines, Mumbai- 400 020, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-22006116/5/4. Fax: 2200 6115. Email: [vsk.cat@gmail.com](mailto:vsk.cat@gmail.com) Website: [www.cat.org.in](http://www.cat.org.in)

### **Wildlife Conservation Society Invites Applications for its RFP**

Administered by the Wildlife Conservation Society's (<http://www.wcs.org/>) Training & Capacity Building Program and jointly funded by the Conservation Leadership Program (<http://www.conservationleadershipprogramme.org/>), the Research Fellowship Program (RFP) is a small grants program designed to build capacity for the next generation of conservationists through support of individual field research projects that have a clear application to the conservation of threatened wildlife and wildlife habitat.

The program seeks projects that are based on sound and innovative conservation science and that encourage practices in conservation that can contribute to sustainable development. Most of the grantees are professional conservationists from the country of research and/or postgraduates pursuing a higher degree.

The RFP supports marine or terrestrial field research in Africa, Asia, and Latin America regardless of the nationality of the applicant. The average grant size is \$10,500 and the deadline for receiving applications is March 15, 2008.

For details see

<http://fconline.foundationcenter.org/pnd/10009984/wcs>

## **UPCOMING**

### **International Seminar on PA Management**

A 'International Seminar on Protected Area Management is being held at the University of Montana in the USA from August 4-22, 2008.

It being jointly organized by the Universities of Montana, Idaho, and Colorado State and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service Office.

The Seminar Themes include 'Integrated Planning for Protected Areas', 'Community Involvement', 'Tourism, Concessions and Visitor Management', and 'Transboundary Management in the Face of Climate Change'.

Contact: **Libby Khumalo**, Dept. of Society and Conservation, The University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812-1224, USA. Email: [pam@cfc.umt.edu](mailto:pam@cfc.umt.edu)

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

### **ButterflyIndia Meet 2008**

The ButterflyIndia Meet 2008 is being held in the Buxa Tiger Reserve from March 16 to 21, 2008. It is being organized by ButterflyIndia and Nature Mates. More details of the meet are available @ <http://butterflyindia.blogspot.com/>

Contact: **Vijay Barve**. Email:

[vijay.barve@gmail.com](mailto:vijay.barve@gmail.com)

**Arjan Basu Roy**, Naturemates. Email: [naturemates@gmail.com](mailto:naturemates@gmail.com)

### **Asian Wetlands Symposium 2008**

'Wetlands – The Heart of Asia', the 4<sup>th</sup> Asian Wetlands Symposium is being held in Hanoi, Vietnam, from June 22 to 28, 2008

The Asian Wetland Symposium is intended to reflect on the importance of wetlands to the daily life of people in Asia and to look into the progress and challenges in wetlands management and conservation. The symposium provides a single platform for discussions among various sectors including national and local governments, NGOs, scientific experts, the private sector, and local and indigenous people engaged in wetland management to discuss issues, approaches and priorities in wetland management in the Asian Region.

Themes to be discussed in the Symposium are as follows: Creating healthy wetlands; Transboundary cooperation in wetlands management; Wetlands and sustainable agriculture; Integrating wetland conservation into development; Wetlands and Sustainable

Livelihoods; Education for wetlands; Cultural heritage and wetland management; Climate change and wetlands - Impacts, adaptation and mitigation and The wetlands of Viet Nam - lakes, rivers, coasts and deltas.

Contact Email: [aws2008@iucn.org.vn](mailto:aws2008@iucn.org.vn)

### **Conference of the ATBC - Asia Pacific Chapter**

The Asia-Pacific Chapter of The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) in association with the Japanese Society for Tropical Ecology is organizing a conference 'Towards Sustainable Land Use in Tropical Asia' in Sarawak, Malaysia from April 23 – 26, 2008.

The conference that is being hosted by the Sarawak Forestry Corporation will have a number of symposia. These include Forest-based production systems in mainland

Southeast Asia; Impacts of oil palm and other plantations on biodiversity; Biodiversity conservation in production forests; Effects of rainfall variability on water and nutrient cycling in tropical forests under the Asian monsoon climate; Plant-animal interactions in a changing tropical landscape; Molecular ecology symposium; Toward understanding of the structure, dynamics and functional roles of arthropods in tropical forests; Research and conservation activities at Gunung Palung National Park, West Kalimantan, Indonesia; Biodiversity and people in Borneo; Ecosystems of tropical and subtropical islands; and Enhancing conservation through education in communities near threatened ecosystems.

Contact: Email [atbc\\_asia@yahoo.com](mailto:atbc_asia@yahoo.com);  
[atbcasia@gmail.com](mailto:atbcasia@gmail.com). Web:  
[www.atbcasia.org](http://www.atbcasia.org)

### **The PA Update needs support**

Many readers and organizations have responded positively to our continued requests for support and we are grateful for them. The need, however, to raise resources still remains.

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](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com)

## Critical Tiger Habitats & Critical Wildlife Habitats: A Status Report

Critical Tiger Habitats (CTH) Introduced by WLPA 1972 (2006 Amendment)	Critical Wildlife Habitat (CWH) Introduced by The Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act - STOTFDA (2006)
<p><b>1. Definition:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Areas within tiger reserves that are required to be kept inviolate for tiger conservation</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Criteria to declare CTH:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Scientific and objective evidence exists that the given area is required to be kept inviolate</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Process to notify CTH:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To be notified by the State Government in consultation with an Expert Committee</li> </ul> <p><b>4. Requirement to modify forest rights in CTH:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recognition, vesting and acquisition of land and/or forest rights is complete</li> <li>■ State govt has established with informed consent of forest-dwellers and consultation with an ecologist and social scientist that:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a). activities of people are threatening the tiger and tiger habitat</li> <li>b). coexistence is not possible</li> <li>c). Resettlement package is prepared and all resettlement facilities are complete</li> <li>d). Informed consent of concerned Gram Sabha to resettlement package is obtained</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p><i>Source: Section 38V, WLPA</i></p>	<p><b>1. Definition:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Areas within National Parks and Sanctuaries that are required to be inviolate for the purpose of wildlife conservation</li> </ul> <p><b>2. Criteria to declare CWH:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Scientific and objective evidence exists that the given area is required to be kept inviolate</li> </ul> <p><b>3. Process to notify CWH:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To be notified by the Central Government in the MoEF in consultation with a Central and State Expert Committee, including local experts and a MoTA representative</li> </ul> <p><b>4. Requirement to modify forest rights in CWH:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recognition, vesting and acquisition of land and/or forest rights is complete</li> <li>■ State govt has established that:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a). activities of people are threatening wildlife and wildlife habitat</li> <li>b). coexistence is not possible</li> <li>c). Resettlement package is prepared and all resettlement facilities are complete</li> <li>d). Informed consent of concerned Gram Sabha to resettlement package is obtained (<i>see note i</i>)</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p><b>5. MoEF Guidelines recommend that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ State govts conduct consultations and public hearings with local communities about the proposed CWH</li> <li>■ Important wildlife areas outside PAs are also considered as CWH</li> <li>■ Persons affected by CWH may send objections and comments to the Expert Committee</li> </ul> <p><i>Source: Section 2(b), 4(2) of STOTFDA &amp; MoEF Guidelines on CWH (Oct 2007)</i></p>

**Important to note that:**

- i. Considerable legal ambiguity exists regarding the exact sequence of CWH notification. Particularly relevant is that the above process described for CWH notification is as stated in the STOTFDA. However, MoEF Guidelines interpret the Act to mean that the requirements to modify forest rights in CWH apply to the initial CWH notification process as well. The result is that although STOTFDA appears to use CWH/“inviolate” areas to mean those permitting minimal to no human-use, the MoEF Guidelines interpret CWH/“inviolate” as areas with no human-use. Therefore, significant contradictions exist between STOTFDA and the MoEF Guidelines. However, legally speaking, subsequent guidelines/rules can only complement the Act, not supersede it.
- ii. A CTH can be de-notified in the name of “public interest” with approval of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the National Board for Wild Life (NBWL). A CWH cannot be subsequently diverted by the State or Central for any purpose other than wildlife conservation.

- iii. Rights of forest-dwellers in critical habitats can be modified only after they have first been recognized.
- iv. Both laws state that no forest-dwellers can be relocated or have their rights affected for the purpose of creating critical habitats. Although some ambiguity exists, this provision appears to mean that any modification of rights can take place only after the State or Central govt as required has officially notified the critical habitat.
- vi. STOTFDA requires that forest rights can be modified only after they have first been recognized under the Act itself. This implies that even in areas that are notified CTH prior to being to CWH, recognition of rights process must be carried out a second time under STOTFDA.

<b>Details of Notifications</b>	
<b>Critical Tiger Habitats (CTH)</b>	<b>Critical Wildlife Habitats (CWH)</b>
<p>Dec 31, 2007: All states with Tiger Reserves have notified CTH. Total area notified as CTH is 31,940 sq km. However, only few states have publicly announced these notifications. (<i>Source: Press Information Bureau</i>)</p> <p>1. <b>Maharashtra:</b> Dec 28, 2007 Notification of CTH: Core areas of Pench, Melghat and Tadoba Andhari. Report suggested that all 24 villages inside the three reserves would be relocated. (<i>Source: DNA India</i>)</p> <p>2. <b>Kerala:</b> Jan 7, 2008 <u>Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary:</u> 1,150 sq km was notified as CTH by adding 958 sq km from the Annaimalai side of Tamil Nadu. 50 sq km of the Parambikulam WLS that includes 8 hamlets, reservoirs of 3 dams and various ecotourism activities has been excluded. <u>Periyar Tiger Reserve:</u> 881 sq km was also notified as CTH. 44 sq km which is frequently used for ecotourism has been excluded. Forest Department stated that relocation of hamlets was not expected to occur. (<i>Source: The Hindu</i>)</p> <p>3. <b>West Bengal:</b> Jan 9, 2008 1,700 sq km of the Sunderbans and 500 sq of Buxa Tiger Reserve declared as CTH. PCCF, Atanu Raha claimed that no Sunderbans village would be affected by the notification and no further relocation would take place from Buxa. <b>Important to note that local communities have protested that this area was also declared a CWH. The implications of CWH declaration are diverse, as additional procedures need to be followed under STOTFDA.</b></p> <p>4. <b>Andhra Pradesh:</b> Jan 15, 2008 2, 527 sq km of Nagarjunasagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve declared as CTH. 1000 sq km of the PA has been excluded. (<i>Source: Times of India</i>)</p>	<p>1. <b>Karnataka:</b> Jan 19, 2008 The PCCF has requested the State Government to notify the State Expert CWH Committee. He said there were 27 critical wildlife habitats in the State (6 NPs and 21 WLS) of which some have to be declared inviolate because they are breeding grounds for endangered animals. The committee would identify such sensitive areas, process claims for land rights and initiate the rehabilitation procedure if necessary. (<i>Source: The Hindu</i>)</p> <p>2. <b>Andhra Pradesh:</b> Jan 15, 2008 AP govt plans are under way to declare CWH in its 4 national parks and 21 sanctuaries. Of these, Nagarjunasagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve has been identified as a potential CWH. (<i>Source: Times of India</i>)</p>

### **Clarifications Needed:**

Given that all states have reportedly notified CTH, it is necessary to enquire whether these notifications are in keeping with the WLPA. Some key clarifications needed are as follows:

- a. Was the required Expert Committee consulted?

In those cases, where a modification of forest rights is reported, the clarification needed is:

- b. what is the source of the scientific evidence that concluded that human activities were threatening the tiger and that coexistence was not possible?

- c. Was the input of an ecologist, social scientist and informed consent of forest-dwellers obtained to establish that local livelihoods were causing irreversible damage and coexistence was not possible?
- d. Have forest rights been recognized *before* the decision to modify rights was taken?
- e. Were resettlement packages and facilities ready? Was the informed consent of the Gram Sabha and forest-dwellers obtained?
- f. Are the details for resettlement to be drawn from the national Resettlement and Rehabilitation policy or is the MoEF to prepare a new policy?

With respect to CWH, news reports suggest that State govts are currently in the process of identifying and notifying such areas. In fact, MoEF recommends that most states complete this by March 2008. Given that the process to declare CTH and CWH are almost identical, the above procedural questions hold true for STOTFDA as well. However, one key provision is that STOTFDA requires the recognition and subsequent settlement of previously unrecorded rights. This provision is mandatory for the creation of all CWH. Finally, the sequence of events in notifying a CWH is of utmost significance. Currently, this is left to the interpretation of State govts.

Both the WLPA and STOTFDA legally provide for a rigorous scientific and democratic process through which to establish critical wildlife and critical tiger habitats. However, whether the laws' provisions will be optimised to serve both conservation and livelihoods security remains to be seen.

*(This Status Report has been prepared by Arshiya Urveeja Bose as part of a project to 'Track the Social and Ecological Impacts of the STOTFDA' (see PA Update Vol. XIII, No. 5))*

Contact: **Arshiya Urveeja Bose**, C/o Kalpavriksh, Editorial address. Email: arshiyabose.research@gmail.com

## READERS WRITE

### **Award those working for wildlife and the environment**

On the occasion of the Republic Day, the UPA Government announced 119 Padma awards, the highest civilian awards in the country to people who working in various fields. While this is welcome, it needs to be asked why the Government did not consider anyone working in the field of environment and wildlife conservation.

Many honorable and dedicated people are working in this sector but in the eyes of the government it not even a field to be considered.

I would, therefore, like to request the Central Government to certainly consider people working in field of conservation for these Awards in future.

- **Raghuram.R.** Himagiri Conservation Society, # 525, Behind Old A.E.O Office, Prasad Complex Road, Gundlupet – 571111, Chamarajanagar District Karnataka.

### **Clarification:**

With reference to the news item 'Golden Gecko sighted in Papikonda WLS (PA Update Vol XIII, No. 6, December 2007) it has been brought to our notice that the team that sighted the gecko was led by the Andhra Pradesh State Office of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

The omission occurred on account of the fact that the news report that was quoted did not mention WWF. The PA Update does however express regret over the inadvertent omission of the WWF.

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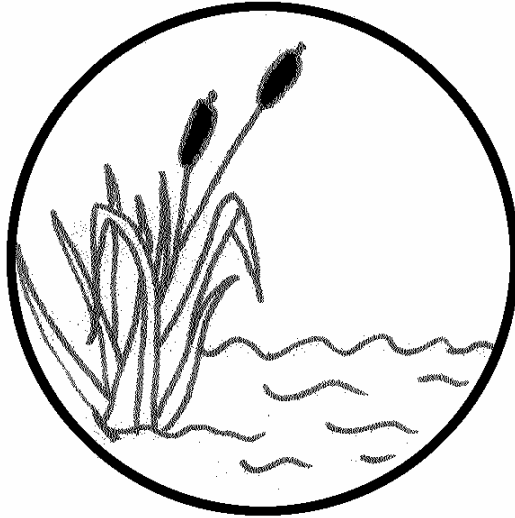
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