

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

An enduring vibrancy

That wildlife conservation and protection is low
down in the list of priorities for the country in
general and the political class in particular is a
well known and well accepted fact. Though the
community of those interested in conservation is
small, funds and resources are always a problem,
support is minimum and even those who support
the idea of conservation often disagree with each
other vehemently, those who follow the fate of
conservation will willingly point to the
enthusiasm of the conservation movement here.
In spite of the bleak prospects and endless trouble
there can be no denying that there is an enduring
vibrancy to conservation efforts being made
across the length and breadth of the landscape.

A cross section of the news reports in
this issue of the *PA Update* is perhaps a good
indicator of this interest and the eagerness. In
Assam the critically endangered pygmy hog is
being given a new lease of life in an important
and path breaking captive breeding and re-
introduction initiative. In Jammu & Kashmir the
Forest Department has taken up a program with
the Central Reserve Police Force to sensitise
troops stationed inside the Dachigam National
Park, while authorities in the Betla National Park
are, for the first time, involving local women in
the protection of the forests in the area. In
Lakshadweep and in Maharashtra researchers and
NGOs have worked with the local communities to
create conservation reserves in line with newer
thinking on protected area creation and
management and in other parts of the country, be
it Orissa, Assam or Maharashtra, there are more
proposals for setting aside areas for the benefit of
wildlife.

This is not to say that the problems are
not there. Poaching, habitat destruction,
encroachment, ingress of roads and other
infrastructure projects, diversion for commercial
and industrial activities...the list is long and one
can go on. Also the fact that in India we still cling
to the ways of the past; still invoke the legacy of a
long gone Prime Minister to argue for
conservation in a politically, socially and

economically new India; that we continue to show huge reluctance to learn from other experiences from around the world, of new methods and practices of co-managing along with communities; devolving power and ensuring stake and participation of a larger numbers of those negatively affected by the present exclusionary paradigm of conservation.

Even the initiatives mentioned above might have their own problems but in concentrating only on what's not right, we often tend to neglect and undervalue all the good intentions and the many efforts that are continually being made. Not to acknowledge these would be unfair because the picture that gets created then is only an incomplete one. These are as real as the problems and the threats faced by our wildlife and their habitats and it is as important to oppose and fight the threats as it is to recognize and support the initiatives and the successes.

There is a vibrancy to the conservation efforts here and it's only right that they be given their due.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Meeting on wildlife training in Tirupati

A national workshop on Wildlife Management was held in March at the Sri Padmavathi Mahila Viswa Vidyalayam in Tirupati. Over 150 delegates comprising forest officials, scientists, researchers and teachers drawn from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka attended the workshop.

The five point agenda of the UGC-sponsored meet included training personnel such as wildlife managers, biologists and extension specialists for conservation and management of wildlife resources and for protected area management; discussion of measures for conserving wild biodiversity through a network of protected areas and ex-situ conservation areas; launching of a special drive for protection and conservation of endangered species; ensuring participatory

planning and implementation of eco-development in and around protected areas and eliciting public support for conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitats through conservation awareness programmes.

Source: 'Wildlife meet focuses on training', *The Hindu*, 01/04/08.

ASSAM

Radio link between forest and railway officials to save elephants

The Assam Forest Department is likely to implement a project that connects forest guards and train drivers through walkie-talkies so as to prevent train accidents in forested regions involving elephants. The idea has been mooted by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) after the successful implementation of such an initiative in the Rajaji National Park, where, post-project, accidents involving elephants came down to zero.

Railway officials said that train drivers already carry walkie-talkies. All that would now need to be done is to synchronise these with the walkie-talkies carried by forest staff. Forest Department officials said that they have been in touch with the Railway Board on the matter; and that vulnerable spots had been identified with a request to the railways to regulate train speed on these particular routes.

Source: Pullock Dutta. 'Radio link to save jumbos from train hits', *The Telegraph*, 08/05/08.

Wildlife sanctuary proposed near Jatinga

The North Cachar Hills Autonomous District Council has proposed the creation of a wildlife sanctuary near the famous site of Jatinga where birds come in large numbers to supposedly commit suicide.

The sanctuary will cover an area of a little over 43 sq. kms and extend over parts of the Hatikhali, Panimur and Borail hills. The boundary of the proposed sanctuary is yet to be decided.

Tourism forms part of the rationale behind the sanctuary proposal - it is feared that the number of tourists visiting Jatinga might fall on account of the fact that the phenomenon of bird suicides is no more considered to be a

supernatural event. Researchers have pointed out that the birds are simply distracted by bonfires lit by the tribals here and then get caught. Local authorities hope that the creation of a sanctuary will help keep tourist interest alive in the region.

Source: 'Wildlife sanctuary planned near Jatinga',
The Telegraph, 29/04/08.

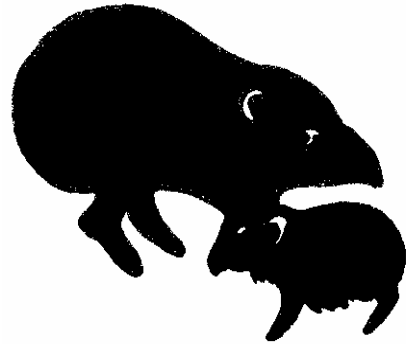
Seven hectares of Amchang WLS for NH 37 under East West Corridor Project

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is to acquire 7.021 hectares of land from the Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary for the four-laning of National Highway 37 under the East-West Corridor project. The forest land is needed to widen a 3.6 km stretch of the highway skirting the sanctuary. The NHAI has said that they have no alternative, as the highway is bound by the wildlife sanctuary on one side and by deep gorges on the other. The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and a central committee constituted by the Supreme Court have approved the proposal.

Nearly 4000 trees will be cut for the widening project. Highway authorities have said that they will take up afforestation on 14 hectares in the wildlife sanctuary to compensate for this loss. The NHAI will also construct a noise attenuation wall separating the sanctuary from the highway to ensure that vehicular traffic on the highway does not disturb the animals. Crash barriers are to be constructed on the roadsides and rumblers and warning signs will be put up along the entire 3.6-km stretch of the highway along the sanctuary. The NHAI will also take up slope stabilisation work and construct retaining walls to tackle the erosion problem. The authorities have further stated that no construction would be carried out during the night and only well-maintained equipment would be used to minimise noise.

Source: Pankaj Sarma. 'Highway to be upgraded with sanctuary land', *The Telegraph*, 28/03/08.

Pygmy hogs to be released in Sonai Rupai WLS



16 pygmy hogs raised in captivity in Guwahati as part of the Pygmy Hog Conservation Program are to be released into the wild in the Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary. Initiated 12 years ago, the program has been implemented by the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in collaboration with the Assam Forest Department. The hogs were first soft-released in an enclosure in the grasslands of the sanctuary; and are to be eventually let out completely into the wild.

The animal was considered to have gone extinct in the 1960s, but it is now believed that about 400 live in the Manas National Park. Six hogs were captured here in 1996 for the captive breeding program. Encroachments leading to the loss of grasslands in the regions inhabited by the pygmy hog are said to be the biggest threat to the survival of this endangered species.

Source: Subir Bhaumik. 'Rare pygmy hogs head for the wild',
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7408152.stm

Contact: Dr. **Goutam Narayan** Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme, Nr. O/o DFO Social Forestry, Indira Nagar, Basistha, Guwahati - 781029 Assam. Email: goutam.narayan@gmail.com
DFO, Sonai-Rupai WLS, Sonitpur West Division, P.O. Tezpur, Dist. Sonitpur - 784001, Assam. Tel: 03712-220093(O), 220091®

Tourism festival at Chakrashila WLS

A three day Chakrashila Conservation Tourism Festival was planned for the first week of April earlier this year. 12 houses in the area were

selected for tourist home stays based on criteria like the presence of clean toilets, a guest room, running water and accessibility.

Homes for tourist stays were selected at Jornagra (Rabha village), Siljan-Khagrikhola (Garo village), Ultapani (Nepali/Bodo village), Jharbari (Bodo /Nepali village) and Amguri (Santhal/Adivasi village).

The Forest Department agreed to pay an amount of Rs. 200-300 to the villagers for the home stays whereas the cost of food and travel was to be borne by the visitors.

Source: 'Add-ons to eco-tourism', *The Telegraph*, 21/03/08

Contact: **DFO, I/c Chakrashila WLS**, Dhubri
Division, PO Dhubri, Dist. Dhubri.
Assam. Tel: 03662 – 230967.

CBI to probe rhino poaching cases in Assam

The Assam State Government has decided to hand over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) the cases related to the poaching of rhinos in the Kaziranga and Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Parks. Nearly 16 rhinos were poached in Kaziranga in 2007 while a number of cases have also been reported in the first few months of 2008. These include six from Kaziranga and at least five in Orang.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIV, No. 2 and Vol XIII, Nos. 6 & 5)

Source: Aarti Dhar and Sushanta Talukdar. 'CBI to probe rising rhino poaching cases in Assam', *The Hindu*, 04/05/08.

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

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

GUJARAT

Gir Wildlife Sanctuary to be expanded

The Sasan Gir sanctuary is to be expanded by 180 sq kms. The decision was announced recently in Vadodara by the Additional Chief

Secretary of the Forest and Environmental Department of the state government

With a view to spread the message of lion safety, the Forest Department (FD) has been working with environmentalists on several occasions to organize the Lion Safety March, which encourages people to pledge to the cause of the Gir Lion.

Source: 'Sasan Gir to be extended further', *DNA*, 10/05/08

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/630051. Fax: 631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in

Wildlife Crime Cell begins work

The state level Wildlife Crime Cell (WCC) that was formed in the aftermath of a number of cases of lion poaching in and around Gir about a year ago (see *PA Updates* Vol. XIII, Nos. 5 & 4) is now said to have started functioning.

The Cell is in the process of creating a database of habitual wildlife offenders in the country. This is being done in co-ordination with Central and State agencies and also with police departments of other states as well as the Coast Guard.

The Cell that was created as per the Government Resolution (GR) dated August 10, 2007 includes Additional DGP, Home Department; Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) – Junagadh; and Conservator of Forests (Wildlife Crime), Gandhinagar.

Source: 'After lion deaths, Wildlife Crime Cell prepares database on offenders', *The Indian Express*, 13/05/08.

Rs. 830 crore proposal for 'development' of forests

The Gujarat State Government has submitted a Rs. 830 Crore proposal for the 'Development of Forests in Gujarat' to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). The project that will continue till 2014-15 to will be confined to the forest areas of the eastern tribal belt of the state, Reserve Grasslands in Rajkot District, Mangroves in Kori Creek, Kachch Coast, and the Marine National Park in the Jamnagar Division.

The project activities include Forest Development & Management, Wildlife Conservation & Development and Community/Tribal Development.

The state has proposed to contribute Rs. 135 crores towards the implementation of the project.

Source: 'Development of forests in Gujarat',
Press Release, Press Information Bureau,
Govt. of India,
<http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=38693>, 09/05/08

JAMMU & KASHMIR

CRPF personnel given wildlife related training in Dachigam NP

Personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force camping inside the Dachigam National Park were recently given training on various aspects of wildlife conservation. The troops were made aware of the importance of wildlife at the Nature Interpretation Centre and also instructed on various Dos and Don'ts while living inside a protected area.

Issues like garbage management, the threat of forest-fires, and the importance of maintaining the no-horn zone were brought to the notice of the troops. They were also *informed of the importance of the stream* flowing through the park to the Nishat Water Treatment Plant which supplies water to a majority of the Srinagar population.

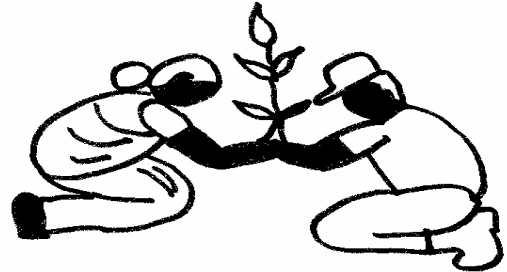
Two camps of CRPF, one near the Fishery Hatchery farm and another at Drapa Rest House have been present inside the DNP since 1992.

Source: Muddasir Ali. 'Troopers taught to live in Wildlife Park', *Greater Kashmir*, 25/Of4/08.

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

JHARKHAND

Local women, ex-servicemen for protection of Betla NP



The Forest Department has introduced a number of initiatives for the protection of the forests of the Betla National Park. A 15-member all-male team, trained to keep a round-the-clock vigil across the whole forest, has been created. In another innovative move, a group of five women from three neighbouring villages has been formed to undertake patrolling work, as women from these and other villages regularly access the forests to gather resources.

Further, 35 ex-servicemen have also been recruited, and are soon to be deployed in the Betla Range of Palamau Tiger Reserve in the first phase for protection work.

Source: 'Forest rangers hire women to protect wildlife', *The Statesman*, 11/04/08.

Contact: **Field Director**, Palamau Tiger Reserve, P.O. Daltonganj, Dist. Palamau - 822 101, Jharkhand. Tel: 06562-22650(O), 22684(R). Fax: 06562-22427, 22650

KERALA

Suspected viral infection kills wild elephants in Waynad forests

Two wild elephants have recently died in the Waynad forests on account of a suspected viral infection. A nine year old elephant and a nine month calf died in similar circumstances in the Chithalayam forest range that borders the Bandipur National Park.

No external injuries were found on either pachyderm, which has lead veterinarians to believe that the cause of death could have been a viral infection. It has also been suggested that elephants get stressed and become susceptible to diseases during summer when water and fodder are in short supply. Body parts of the dead

animals were sent for examination and the results are awaited.

Source: 'Suspected viral infection kills wild elephants in Waynad', *The Pioneer*, 29/04/08.

State wetlands to be mapped

The Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB) is to soon launch a project for mapping of all wetlands in the state. The project will take 10 months to complete and will be implemented by the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) and the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI).

The initial mapping will be carried out by a GIS system and this will then be verified by physical verification on the ground.

Source: 'Project to map wetlands', *The Hindu*, 07/05/08.

Air Deccan and Kerala FD to promote Periyar TR

Air Deccan has teamed up with the Kerala Forest Department and the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) to launch "Simplify Periyar", an initiative to promote the PTR. The idea has been conceptualized by the Deputy Director of Periyar Tiger Reserve, Ms Padma Mahanti.

The initiative will offer ten packages, including stays at specially crafted eco-lodges and carefully designed adventure activities. Travellers will be flown to Madurai or Kochi and the Forest Department will then drive them to Periyar Tiger Reserve.

Source: 'Initiative to save the tiger', *The Hindu*, 07/05/08.

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, Vazhudaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-2322217 / 2360452 / 2204896. Fax: 2360452 / 2322217

LAKSHADWEEP

Marine Conservation Reserve in Agatti

India's first Marine Conservation Reserve is to be set up in the Agatti Atoll in the Lakshadweep Islands. The local panchayat is reported to have formally forwarded a proposal to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests for the declaration.

The move is an outcome of a project initiated in 2005 by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) with support of the UK based Darwin Initiative.

Source: 'India's first Marine Conservation Reserve is soon going to come up around Lakshadweep Islands', <http://www.india-server.com/news/first-marine-reserve-lakshadweep-839.html>

Contact: **Dr. Deepak Apte**, BNHS, Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai - 400023 Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2821811.

Fax: 2837615.

Email: bnhs_conservation@vsnl.net

MADHYA PRADESH

Gaur to be translocated from Kanha NP to the Bandavgarh NP



The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department is putting in place a plan for the translocation of 20 gaur from the Kanha National Park to the Bandavgarh National Park to ensure long term survival of the

species. The project is to be implemented in collaboration with Conservation Corporation of Africa which has set up the Taj Safari Company in co-operation with the Taj Group. The group is providing financial as well as technical assistance for the translocation project.

A five-member team of Forest Department officers is to go on a study tour to South Africa to understand the process of the translocation. The team comprises the Director of Bandavgarh National Park; the Deputy Director

of Kanha Tiger Reserve; the Deputy Director of Panna National Park; a veterinarian and a member of the Wildlife Institute of India.

Source: 'Forest Dept's unique plan to save bison population', *The Pioneer*, 12/04/08.

Contact: **Director**, Bandavgarh TR, Umaria – 484661, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07653-22214(O). Fax: 07653-22214/22648

Tourism development plans in Madhya Pradesh

The Madhya Pradesh Eco-tourism Development Board (MPEDB) has approved a proposal seeking to develop eco-tourism infrastructure in the State. The Board has selected ten forest rest-houses for improvement, and eco-tourism activities are to be introduced in the forest area near the Samardha forest rest-house falling under the Bhopal forest circle. The Daulatpur forest rest-house under the Dewas forest circle is also to be developed as an ethnic eco-tourism site.

The State Eco-tourism Board will take up the work of eco-tourism infrastructure development with the cooperation of the State Rural Development and other departments. There is also a plan to produce a short film and launch a massive publicity campaign to promote eco-tourism in MP. FM radio channels will also be utilised for publicity purposes and special workshops are to be organised for radio jockeys to build up public awareness about various environment and conservation-related issues.

It has also been decided that the Ghughuya Fossil Park situated in Dindori district will be connected to the Kanha-Bandavgarh eco-tourism circuit. The Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation is to conduct a survey to explore the possibility of introducing houseboats and hovercrafts in the Tawa reservoir, part of which is inside the Satpura Tiger Reserve. The decisions were taken at the MPEDB's third general body meeting that was held recently.

Source: 'Madhya Pradesh to promote eco-tourism', *The Hindu*, 07/05/08.

Kanha guides threaten to strike work

The Madhya Pradesh Wildlife Tiger Reserve Guide Sangh (MPWTRGS), the parent body of guides in MP's tiger reserves, had threatened to strike work in the month of May if their demand to restructure the roster system was not met.

The Sangh was opposed to recruitment of new guides at the park, as it felt the move would eat into the already meager earnings of the existing guides here. There were reported to be 51 guides at Kisli and 30 at Mukki. The management added another 30 this season - 17 at Kisli and 13 at Mukki. Guides are presently paid Rs. 100 per trip and make an average monthly income of about Rs. 5000-5500.

With the induction of new guides this figure is likely to come down to Rs. 3000-4000. The Sangh had written to the Park Director in the matter who was reported to have said that the matter would only be sorted out in July.

The MPWTRGS has also demanded the regularisation of all guides and group insurance for the employees.



Source: 'Kanha guides to strike work', *The Times of India*, 30/04/08.

Contact: **Director**, Kanha Tiger Reserve, Mandla, 481661 Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07642-250760(O), 250761(R). Fax: 251266, 250830

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

MAHARASHTRA

Trouble in Tungreshwar WLS

Trouble has been brewing in the Tungreshwar Wildlife Sanctuary on account of the illegal construction of a temple inside the boundaries of the sanctuary.

The ashram trustees have been denied permission by the Central Government to construct the temple, and their bid to get the temple regularized was also turned down. They were asked to vacate the premises in the sanctuary by April 30. Work on the construction, however, has gone on, allegedly with high-level political patronage.

Apart from the illegal construction inside the sanctuary, the trustees of the ashram also violated the Wildlife Protection Act by keeping four peacocks at the ashram premises.

Things took a nasty turn on April 30th, when a team of forest officers attempted to raid the ashram, in order to confiscate the peacocks illegally domesticated there. In retaliation, the discontented devotees at the ashram locked up the forest officers and thrashed them with sticks, stones and iron rods.

The officers were released only after a team from the Virar police station reached the site three hours after the incident. The police is reported to have criticized the forest officials for initiating such a raid without police permission. The policemen initially made no attempt to arrest the culprits, but subsequently registered an offence under sections 143, 353, 332 and 345 of the IPC. Seven people were arrested for the assault but were later released on bail. The assaulted officials have still not been provided the police protection that they have been demanding.

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'Illegal temple coming up in wildlife sanctuary', *DNA*, 21/04/08

Ashwin Aghor. 'Forest officials beaten up, cops let culprits go', *DNA*, 02/05/08

Ashwin Aghor. 'Mob armed with sticks, rods thrashed us for 3 hours', *DNA*, 03/05/08

Ashwin Aghor. 'Apathy upsets forest officials', *DNA*, 08/05/08

Protected Area Status proposed for Sewree-Mahul Wetlands

The Mumbai based NGO, Srushti Dnyan has proposed the creation of a three sq. kms. wildlife sanctuary in the Sewree-Mahul coastal area for the protection of the coastal ecology and the large number of flamingoes that visit here regularly. The area will be seriously threatened if the proposed trans-harbour sea link project is approved.

The NGO has also proposed the creation of a permanent conservation and education centre, developing educational literature and teaching aids, mangrove trails, bird watching, and field study visits for conservation of avifauna here.

The Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) - Wildlife, Mumbai, has said that the suggestions by the NGO and the PA proposal will be forwarded to the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Source: Ashwin Aghor, 'Declare Sewree-Mahul wetland as protected area' *DNA*, 15/04/08

Illicit liquor dens in Sanjay Gandhi NP may be responsible for leopard deaths



It has been suggested that the mysterious deaths of leopards in Sanjay Gandhi National Park may be caused by illicit liquor dens that operate inside the forests of the park. The 25 illicit liquor dens that continue to operate here are set near waterholes and cause serious disturbance to the wildlife. Four of these are located near Goregaon and the other 20 are in Yeoor and Nagla.

It is believed that the liquor den operators are responsible for killing the leopards by either poisoning the waterholes that the animals visit or by poisoning the Black jaggery (navsagar) that is used in the brewing of liquor.

Forest officials have so far maintained that the five recent leopard deaths the Yeoor range were due to natural causes. It has been

pointed out, however, that none of the animals was estimated to be older than five years. Further, not a single forensic report has identified the exact cause of death.

Source: Ashwin Aghor, 'Blame leopard deaths on liquor mafia', *DNA*, 10/04/08

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

SC allows eviction from Sanjay Gandhi NP

The Supreme Court has recently permitted the Maharashtra government to remove the encroachments from the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP).

After the Bombay high court gave a final order on the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) petition in 1995, eight Special Leave Petitions (SLPs) were filed in the apex court challenging the eviction order. The SLPs came up for hearing in 2005 and the apex court ordered status quo on the SLP filed by Shabbir Siddiq Malik, who owns a house constructed on a plot of land bearing survey number 2391. The State Forest Department authorities interpreted the status quo order as applicable to all the petitions.

The apex court has now made it clear that the status quo order should remain in force only in relation to one petition filed by Malik and that all other encroachments should be demolished.

(Also see *PA Updates* 47, 45, 43, 41 & 39)

Source: Ashwin Aghor, 'Evict squatters from national park, says SC', *DNA*, 03/05/08.

Bhorkada (Bhorgad) Conservation Reserve in Nashik District

The Maharashtra government recently announced the creation of the Bhorkada (Bhorgad) Conservation Reserve in the Reserved Forest Compartment 622 of the Dindori Forest Range of the East Nashik Forest Division. The Reserve that was created via notification No WLP 10-07/CR 255/F-1, dated 5th March 2008, covers an area of 3.49 sq. kms

and will be under the territorial wing of the Nashik Forest Division.

Mr. B. Raha, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Nashik District and Mr. V.K. Mohan, Conservator Forests played a key role in the process of the creation of the reserve.

Contact: **B Raha - Nashik** Nature Conservation Society, Nasik Hemant Vihar, Plot 13, V Savarkar Nagar, Gangapur Rd. Nasik - 5 Maharashtra. 0253 – 2341309

Villagers inside Tadoba Andhari threaten mass suicide if forced to relocate

110 families from the village Kolsa, located within the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, have threatened to commit collective suicide if forced to relocate without proper facilities. Some 49 landless households from the village had relocated to the village Tolewahi outside the reserve in March 2007 under a relocation drive by the Forest and Revenue Departments. The village of Botezari was also relocated at the same time.

The villagers are of the opinion that the 49 who had agreed to relocate had done so on the promise of land. They are now facing problems because the land they received is not fit for cultivation and the irrigation tank that had been promised has also not been constructed. The land used for resettlement was forest land and its status has still not been changed to revenue.

The villagers who are refusing to move say that the forest and revenue officials have been harassing them by halting all development work in the village, by shutting down the ration shop, and by threatening to cut off of the village's electric supply.

Source: Mohan Kothekar, Kolsa villagers threaten mass suicide if forced to relocate'. Email dated 27/04/08 on

forestrights@yahoogroups.com

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

Proposal for Muniya Conservation Reserve 15 kms from Nagpur

Nagpur-based NGO Nisarga Vigyan Mandal (NVM) has proposed the creation of the Muniya Conservation Reserve about 15 kms from the city for the protection of the area's wildlife and biodiversity. A proposal for the same has been submitted to the Forest Department by NVM in September 2007.

The proposed reserve will comprise 10 compartments and is to be spread over 1700 hectares of protected forests and about 710 hectares of reserve forests in the North Umrer Range in the Nagpur Forest Division. A site-specific study conducted by NVM over the past four years has recorded a large diversity of wildlife there, including threatened species like the leopard, blackbucks, and the Great Indian Bustard.

The Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) of the state is reported to have written to the Chief Conservator of Forests (Territorial), Nagpur circle, requesting him to examine the proposal. If found fit, a self-contained draft notification with a description of the boundaries along with a map and a resolution of gram panchayat is to be sent to the CWLW for further action.

There are 18 villages on the fringes of Muniya, and NVM has been working to convince the villagers, mostly tribals, about the benefits of setting up the conservation reserve. The NGO also proposes to look after their livelihood needs and to support them financially by setting up agro-based units and self-help groups through their newly set up Nature Education Training Research Academy.

Source: Vinay Pinjarkar. 'Muniya backed as conservation reserve', *The Times of India*, 22/04/08.

Contact: **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

MEGHALAYA

Nokrek BR nominated for UNESCO Biosphere Reserve program

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has forwarded the nomination of the Nokrek Biosphere Reserve located in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya for recognition under UNESCO's network of biosphere reserves. The Nokrek BR is spread over an area of 800 sq kms and includes the 48 sq. kms Nokrek National Park.

The nomination was made following a research project carried out here by the Botanical Survey of India. Nokrek is particularly famous for the discovery of the mother germplasm of *Citrus-indica*, considered to be the progenitor of all other varieties of citrus plants in the world.

Source: 'Native land of oranges awaits UNESCO tag', *The Statesman*, 21/04/08

Contact: **DFO I/c Nokrek NP**, East & West Garo Hills Wildlife Division, Dakopgiri, Tura, Meghalaya. Tel: 03651-242225. Fax: 03651-242926

ORISSA

Demand for new tiger reserve, six new wildlife sanctuaries



Participants in a symposium held in April on the 'Conservation of Wild Tigers in Orissa' have asked for the inclusion of the Sunabeda Sanctuary under Project Tiger. It was pointed out that Sunabeda has the second highest number of tigers in the state after Simlipal, and that the forests here are contiguous with the Udanti-Sitanadi sanctuaries in Chhattisgarh through the Khariar forests. Udanti-Sitanadi has been recently cleared for inclusion under Project Tiger, and there was

therefore an urgent need to consider the same status for Sunabeda.

The symposium emphasized the need for better coordination among various Government agencies for protection and development of both tiger habitats and human communities in and around the Simlipal Tiger Reserve. The necessity of accelerating the relocation of remaining villages in Simlipal and of instituting a livelihoods program for the relocated families was also highlighted.

Organized by Wild Orissa, the symposium further suggested the immediate constitution and convening of the State Wildlife Board, and underscored the need to establish a forensic laboratory in Orissa for wildlife crimes; to create a dedicated and well-trained Forest Protection Force; to grant magisterial powers to Wildlife Wardens and ACFs; to cancel all arms licenses within 10 km of protected areas and to declare the forests of Narayanpatna, Gupteswar, Gandhamardhan, Kapilash, Malayagiri and Chandrapur as wildlife sanctuaries.

Source: 'Wildlife experts demand new tiger reserve', *The Pioneer*, 23/04/08.

Contact: **Wild Orissa**, Plot 3A, Janpath, Satyanagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674-512044. Email: wildorissa@hotmail.com

Two elephants electrocuted near Badrama

Two elephants were recently electrocuted by high tension wires near the Badrama Wildlife Sanctuary. The incident is said to have occurred when five elephants were returning to the sanctuary they had moved out of in search of water.

The high tension power lines which killed the elephants ran only two meters above the ground when the rule says that these should be at least 4.6 metres above ground level.

Source: 'Open wire kills two', *The Telegraph*, 05/05/08.

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

Steps to increase forest protection

In April, the Orissa Government announced a number of steps it intends to take to strengthen the protection of forests in the state. The decisions, taken at a high level meeting presided over by the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, included setting up a Special Strike Force with adequate staff, vehicles and arms at 50 locations to deal with the problem of poaching and illegal cutting and smuggling of timber.

A special package was announced for forest officials. For those working in Maoist affected areas, the insurance cover enjoyed by the police force will now be extended to forest staff as well. Forest personnel will also be entitled to a 'compassionate grant' in the case of death and injury, and also to a special pension at par with the police.

Various other allowances are also to be increased. Henceforth, a motor cycle allowance of Rs 350 per month will be given to Forest Rangers, Deputy Rangers and Foresters. A special diet allowance of Rs 350 and a cycle allowance of Rs 75 per month is to be given to the Forest Guards.

The demand of the Forest Rangers that they be elevated to Class -II rank, and that of the Forest Deputy Rangers, Foresters and Forest Guards for parity with Sub-Inspectors, ASIs and constables respectively are also to be considered by the Fitment Committee to be formed following the recommendations of the 6th Pay Commission.

There is to be a reorganizing of the Forest Cadre to rationalize its structure. Various vacancies are to be filled up and the sanctioned strength of Deputy Rangers has been increased from 62 to 168 as an interim measure.

Source: 'Special Strike Force to protect forests at 50 posts', *The Pioneer*, 03/04/08.

Water shortage threatens elephants, other wildlife

The onset of summer and the resultant dearth of water has increased threats to elephants and other wild animals in Orissa. These have been spotted foraging out of their natural habitats in the Keonjhar, Koraput, Nabarangpur, Dhenkanal, Sambalpur, Nayagarh and Kalahandi forests in search of drinking water.

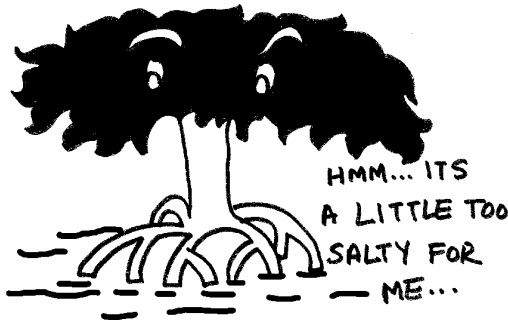
The recent case of the death of three tuskers under Athgarh forest division of Cuttack district, and the reports of increased poaching of other wild animals were related to the scarcity of water. Wildlife experts have pointed out that the elephant corridor of Keonjhar, Narasinghpur, Athmalik, Dhenkanal, Satkosia and Pallalhara needs special attention and steps need to be taken to augment water availability for wild animals inside the forest areas.

Source: 'Wildlife experts sound alarm', *The Hindu*, 29/04/08.

Contact: Biswajit Mohanty, Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack – 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671 – 334625.

Fax: 610980. Email: biswajit@cal.vsnl.net.in

Increased salinity threatens Bhitarkanika mangroves



A study jointly taken up by the Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology and Spatial Planning and Analysis Research Centre Pvt. Ltd. has revealed that the mangroves of the Bhitarkanika National Park are under increased threat due to a rise in the salinity levels of the water in the region. The increase in salinity is in turn directly related to the reduced water flows through the Brahmani-Baitarani river system that brings fresh water to the Bhitarkanika mangroves.

The study assessed the impacts of the changes in the water flow in the region before and after the construction of the Rengali dam in 1985. The pre-Rengali dam flow at the delta head was a little over 19,000 million cubic metres, while the current flow has come down to about 17,000 million cubic metres without any irrigation diversion in the Rengali

command area. However, the flow is likely to reduce further to 14,000 million cubic metres by 2025, when the full irrigation potential of Rengali will be utilised.

This is bound to effect a serious negative impact on the mangroves as levels of salinity increase even further. Desirable salinity levels for sustenance and healthy growth of most mangrove species is said to be 10 to 20 parts per thousand (ppt). The study has found that the outer estuarine zone at Habelikati and Gahirmatha has 20-30 ppt salinity, a level which favours certain species such as *Avicenia marina* and *Sonnerata alaba*. The study has reported that the coastal region, with very high salinity, has salt bushes and that the situation at Dangamal and further downstream is also changing slowly towards higher salinity.

It has been estimated that the Rengali dam needs to release at least 500 million cubic metres of freshwater exclusively for sustaining mangrove forests even during worst drought years. (Also see *PA Update* 50)

Source: 'Threat to mangrove forest worries scientists', *The Pioneer*, 01/05/08.

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

Villagers around Bhitarkanika NP allegedly harassed

People's Watch, a human rights NGO has alleged that there has been a rapid escalation of human rights violation in the fringe villages of the Bhitarkanika National Park. They have said that forest and police personnel, armed with stringent forest protection laws are harassing locals and have even unleashed a reign of terror here.

The NGO conducted a public hearing in the villages and found that the residents of Dangmal, Talchua, Gupti, Rangani, Iswarpur and Satabhaya along the border of the park were living in a state of constant panic and fear. The NGO has said that they have also come across cases of sexual exploitation of women and girl children by the enforcement agencies.

Source: 'Reign of terror in Bhitarkanika national park', *The Statesman*, 16/04/08.

Crocodile attacks in and around Bhitarkanika NP

There have been a number of cases of humans being attacked by crocodiles in and around the forests of Bhitarkanika National Park. One man was killed and about a dozen were injured in attacks in the months of April and May. This is the breeding season of the reptile when it is known to become aggressive. Such attacks are reported every year here, particularly in the monsoon season (see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 5)

Panic was reported to have gripped more than a dozen riverside villages of Kendrapara district's Mahakalpada and Rajnagar blocks following official reports of straying of saltwater crocodiles from the Bhitarkanika wildlife sanctuary's water-bodies to connected river systems like those of the Khola and Petshala rivulets.

The officials of Rajnagar and Jamboo forest range have sounded an alert asking the villagers not to enter certain water-bodies as a precautionary measure. The residents of Gojiabandha, Subala, Mangalpur, Kumbharpada, Gadaramita and six other villages were also warned to remain alert.

Prawn seed collection, which is a major source of livelihood for more than 500 families here, has also come to a complete stop.

There were other reports that agitated locals in villages of the Rajkanika and Rajnagar tehsil had attacked crocodiles in retaliation though there has been no official confirmation that the animals were injured.

Source: 'Crocodiles attack fishermen at Bhitarkanika', *The Statesman*, 06/05/08
'Crocodile attack, forest dept sounds alert', *The Statesman*, 19/05/08.

Ferry ghats in Bhitarkanika sealed to prevent poaching, intrusion

The Forest Department has sealed a number of ferry ghats inside the Bhitarkanika National Park and has also imposed a prohibition on the sailing of boats in the Bhitarkanika River system. The move is aimed at checking wildlife offences and human interference in the protected area. Poaching, particularly of spotted

deer, is reported to have increased significantly in Bhitarkanika, and ghats like those at Gupti and Kothighat are used as major exit points by the poachers.

The closure of the ghats will adversely affect residents of Talchua, Rangani, Dangmal and Iswarpur, since the river route is the easier one for them to reach the Rajnagar block headquarters. The ghats inside the park had been similarly sealed in October 2005. (see *PA Update* Vol XI, No. 6)

Source: 'Ferry ghats sealed to prevent intrusion',
The Statesman, 17/05/08

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

RAJASTHAN

Water, fodder scarcity in Tal Chappar WLS

Continued salt extraction activities in the watershed areas near Tal Chappar Wildlife Sanctuary have effected an acute shortage of water and fodder for the wild animals in the sanctuary. The flow of water into the sanctuary is impeded in the adjoining 46 plots of land given to salt producers.

The increasing blackbuck population, which has gone up to 2000, is also reported to be exerting additional pressure on the resources. To deal with the problem, the State Forest Department has been trying to increase the area covered by the sanctuary, and has initiated proceedings for the acquisition of an unused 50 hectare plot of land.

Source: 'Deer in sanctuary facing fodder and water paucity', *The Times of India*, 03/05/08.

Contact: **I/c Tal Chappar WLS**. Dist. Churu,
Rajasthan. Tel 0291-2544371 / 2433656.
Fax: 0291-2629038

TAMIL NADU

Artificial salt licks for de-worming wildlife in Coimbatore Division

In a bid to combat crossover infections contracted by wildlife from cattle, the Coimbatore Division of the Forest Department (FD) commenced a preventive exercise in May to de-worm wildlife at the Sirumugai Range of reserve forests.

Following five instances of wildlife casualty at the range, FD officials initiated a causal investigation wherein post-mortem reports of three elephants revealed the presence of heavy parasitic load. Dung samples from both wildlife and cattle also showed a parasitic load, thus indicating that the infection might have crossed over.

The officials then decided to adopt the practice of providing artificial salt licks for wild animals, a measure that was first introduced by the Indian Immunological and National Dairy Development Board. Anthelmintic containing minerals and salts were mixed in the lick dosage administered in the Pethikuttai section of the Sirumugai range, where wild animals had died due to infection. De-wormer feed pellets with Anthelmintic were also placed at water holes and congregation points.

Not a single death of wild animals was reported after the experiment. Dung samples collected ten days after the test have been sent for laboratory examination.

The FD found the salt lick method both efficient and cost effective, as ½ kg of feed pellets is priced only at about Rs. 50. The FD staff is now also exploring the possibilities of resorting to naturopathy by using powdered neem seeds and dry leaves in the Anthelmintic.

Source: VS Palaniappan. 'De-worming of wildlife begins', *The Hindu*, 03/05/08.

Coral diseases to be investigated in the Gulf of Mannar BR

The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust has appointed a team of marine scientists to study the diseases affecting the corals there. The attempt is directed at discovering both, the causes of disease, and the remedial measures that need to be taken against them.

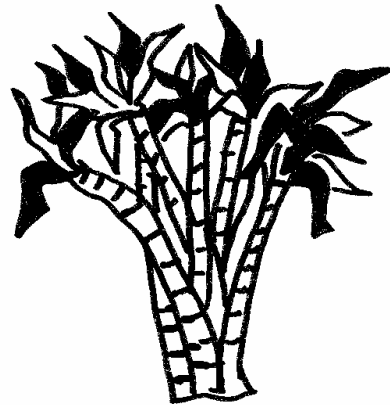
Forest officials have identified the black, white, red and yellow band diseases as among the most prominent ailments affecting the coral reef system. The corals are also being subjected to biological stresses such as bacteria, fungi and viruses, and to non-biological stresses such as pollutants and ultraviolet radiation. It has been suggested that the coral diseases could have been caused by deteriorating water quality associated with increasing pollution of the water and increased sea surface temperatures.

Source: C Jaishankar. 'Team to find out diseases affecting corals', *The Hindu*, 24/04/08.

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

UTTARAKHAND

Bamboo cover being increased to reduce human-elephant conflict in Shivaliks



The Uttarakhand Forest Department has launched an initiative to increase the bamboo cover in the Shivalik Forest Circle to help reduce human-elephant conflict in the region. Called 'Operation Bamboo Culture,' the project covers 27,500 hectares out of the 43,500 hectares of forest land in the Shivalik division, and is being implemented in the Kotdwar, Duggada and Laldhang ranges.

The Shivalik forest circle has highest density of elephants in Uttarakhand with 181 elephants recorded here in the latest census. It is hoped that increasing the bamboo cover will help increase fodder availability for elephants and thereby reduce the animal's inclination to stray into agriculture fields and adjoining settlements.

Source: Jotirmay Thapliyal. 'Operation Bamboo Culture helps curb man-elephant conflicts', *The Pioneer*, 01/05/08.

Now, weekly off for domestic elephants in Corbett NP

The five domestic elephants used for ferrying tourists in the Corbett National Park will now get a weekly off. They will be taken off their duty on Mondays as the tourist traffic is thinnest on that day. The elephant safari here is extremely popular and believed to be one of the park's biggest revenue earners.

Increased number of visitors to Corbett has meant the animals have had to work without a break for long. This is said to have caused them immense stress and strain. The decision for the weekly off was taken by the Park Director following consultations with a team of elephant experts who were called in to look at the animals.

During the October-April peak season, some 150-200 tourists take the elephant safari every day and the authorities have requisitioned five more elephants to meet this rush.

Source: Tapas Chakraborty. 'Just chill! Corbett jumbos get a weekly off', *The Telegraph*, 05/04/08.

Contact: **Field Director**, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar -244715, Nainital, Uttaranchal. Tel: 05947 - 285489. Fax: 285376

Fires affect Corbett TR, Rajaji NP

At least 58 hectares of forest in the Corbett Tiger Reserve were destroyed by fires that started in the last week of April 2008. The worst-affected areas included the Bijrani, Delta, Binsar, Adnala and Sarpaduli ranges. The fire is reported to have started along the northern boundary known as Durgadevi gate and spread across the Mandal Valley.

Around 120 firefighters were deployed on the Ramganga's banks between the northern part of the forest and the park to bring the fire under control. Forest Department officials however said that they faced a severe resource crunch and a lack of fire-fighting equipment to deal with the fire. Many tourists too were

reported to have cut short their visit to the reserve on account of the fire.

The Forest Department has launched a campaign asking farmers not to burn crop residue in harvested fields as this could further increase the intensity of the problem.

Other reports indicated that about 100 hectares of forest in the Rajaji National Park were also badly affected by fires. Nearly 1500 hectares of forest are said to have been affected all over the state with forests around Rudraprayag being amongst the worst hit.

Fires were also reported in the early part of April from forest areas in the forest divisions of Narendra Nagar, Tehri, Uttarkashi, Dehradun, Hardwar, Chakrata and Mussoorie in Garhwal; Almora, Bageshwar, Nainital in Kumaon. Parts of the Rajaji National Park and the Kedarnath WLS were also affected. These had however been controlled thanks to rainfall that was experienced in these parts during that period.

Source: Tapas Chakraborty. 'Raging forest fire scorches Corbett core', *The Telegraph*, 04/05/08

Forest fires hit Uttarakhand, *The Hindu*, 06/05/08.

Jotirmay Thapliyal. 'Rain quenches forest fires', *The Pioneer*, 05/04/08.

Van Gujjars allowed passage to Govind Pashu Vihar National Park

The nomadic communities of the Van Gujjars from the Shivaliks in Uttar Pradesh were recently allowed to migrate to their summer home in the higher reaches of the Uttarkashi District of Uttarakhand, including to areas in the Govind Pashu Vihar National Park.

The group of 12 families along with their cattle had been detained near the Yamuna Bridge in Vikasnagar for nearly a month. Officials argued that these families were not from Uttarakhand and were coming from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh. However, as in previous years, public pressure including a sit-in by local politicians including Rajya Sabha member Harish Rawat forced the State Government to let the Gujjars proceed along their traditional route.

The Van Gujjars have pointed out that they had been



using this route for centuries but were being harassed ever since the new state of Uttarakhand came into being.

Source: SMA Kazmi. 'Finally, UP Van Gujjars can head for Uttarkashi', *Indian Express*, 28/04/08.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Govind National Park, Purola, Dist. Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0137-22244

Delhi Dehradun highway through Rajaji NP to have six lanes

The Delhi-Dehradun stretch of National Highway (NH) 58 & 72 has been identified for 4/6-laning under the National Highway Development Project (NHDP) Phase III on Build, Operate & Transfer (BOT) mode, based on the criteria of high density of traffic and connectivity of State capitals with corridors of NHDP Phase I & II.

Four laning of the Delhi-Meerut section of NH-58 has already been completed and preparation for six-laning is in progress. Similarly the four-laning of the Meerut-Muzaffarnagar section of NH-58 on BOT basis is targeted for completion by March 2009.

A section of the Muzaffarnagar Haridwar part passes through the Rajaji National Park and special permissions are being sought for the same. It has also been pointed out that the work on the four-laning of this section has not been awarded yet as only a single bid was received and then cancelled. Fresh bids are to be called under a new Model Concession Agreement.

Source: 'Six Laning of Delhi-Dehradun Highway', *Travel Impact Newswire*, 23/04/08.

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

Peacock deaths in close vicinity of Rajaji NP

Rajaji National Park authorities increased vigil in the fringe areas of the park following the recovery of 18 dead peacocks from neighbouring Fatehpur village of Uttar Pradesh bordering Uttarakhand. The incident occurred in the month of April and was attributed to the usage of concentrated pesticides in the orchards. It was one of the highest casualties of peafowl in the region in the recent times.

Source: Jotirmay Thapliyal. 'Peacocks' death in UP keeps Rajaji staff on toes', *The Pioneer*, 09/04/08.

WEST BENGAL

Restrictions on tourism establishments around forests, PAs

The West Bengal government has recently issued instructions imposing restrictions on tourism establishments in and around forests and protected areas. The move is directed towards restricting the uncontrolled growth of tourism activities, particularly in the North Bengal region.

Destinations like Lataguri, situated near the Gorumara National Park, and Lava, one of the entry points to the Neora Valley National Park, are experiencing a rapid increase in tourist activity. There are, for instance, 24 resorts that operate around Gorumara NP, and another 12 are under construction in the area.

Resorts are also coming up in Jayanti near the Buxa Tiger Reserve and Sandakphu located some 65 kms from Darjeeling. NGOs have pointed out that wildlife in the area sustains serious adverse impacts due to tourist activities such as trespassing on corridors for wild animals, irregular dumping of waste and growing traffic.

As per the new directives, all hotels, resorts and even tents for tourists within a kilometre of forest area will have to apply afresh for the State Pollution Control Board's consent to continue operations. The PCB will grant permission only after consultation with the tourism department. Those within the forest area will have to get the forest department's approval first.

Source: Jayanta Basu. 'Green eye on forest resorts', *The Telegraph*, 22/04/08

Avijit Sinha. 'Green brakes on tourist hotspots', *The Telegraph*, 23/04/08.

Contact: **DFO, Wildlife**, West Bengal Forest Dept. Aranya Bhawan (Near Court) Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-224907(O) / 230383 (R). E-mail: wild2@zte.vsnl.net.in

Chief Wildlife Warden, Vikas Bhawan, North Block, Salt Lake, Calcutta - 700091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3346900/3583208. Fax: 3345946. Email: wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Privilege motion against forest secretary

The Rajya Sabha recently accepted a breach of privilege motion against Ms Meena Gupta, Secretary, Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for "the arbitrary manner in which the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) was going ahead with the identification of Critical Wildlife Habitats and Critical Tiger Habitats". The motion had been moved in November 2007 by Rajya Sabha member and CPI(M) leader, Ms. Brinda Karat.

The specific act of the MoEF that Ms Karat had taken objection to was the issuing of the October 2007 Guidelines for notifying Critical Wildlife Habitats under the Scheduled Tribes and Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006.

The MP said that the MoEF did not have the right to implement any portion of the law before it was notified and said implementing it in parts was against the spirit of the Act. She said the ministry had bypassed the scientific process mentioned in the FRA while identifying the critical habitats.

Sources in the MoEF have however pointed out that the General Clauses Act of 1897 enables the ministry to issue the guidelines in advance of any notification. The Act empowers the government to draw strategies, such as issuing guidelines, under certain provisions of an act even before it is notified.

Source: Kirtiman Awasthi. 'Privilege motion against forest secretary', *Down to Earth*, 30/04/08

Total number of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks in India

No	State/UT	NP	WLS
1	Andh. Pradesh	4	22
2	Arun. Pradesh	2	11
3	Assam	5	20
4	Bihar	1	11
5	Chhatisgarh	3	10
6	Goa	1	7
7	Gujarat	4	21
8	Haryana	2	10
9	HP	2	32
10	J & K	4	16
11	Jharkhand	1	10
12	Karnataka	5	21
13	Kerala	6	14
14	MP	9	25
15	Maharashtra	6	35
16	Manipur	2	5
17	Meghalaya	2	3
18	Mizoram	2	7
19	Nagaland	1	3
20	Orissa	2	18
21	Punjab	Nil	10
22	Rajasthan	5	23
23	Sikkim	1	6
24	Tamil Nadu	5	20
25	Tripura	Nil	4
26	Uttar Pradesh	1	23
27	Uttaranchal	5	6
28	West Bengal	6	15
29	A & N	9	96
30	Chandigarh	Nil	2
31	Dadar & Nagar Haweli	Nil	1
32	Lakshadweep	Nil	1
33	Daman & Diu	Nil	1
34	Delhi	Nil	1
	TOTAL	96	510

Grand Total - 606

Source:

<http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=39212>

2007-08 Funds allocation for different conservation related work in the North Eastern States. (Rs. in lakhs)

State	NPs/ WLS	Project Elephant	Project Tiger
Arunachal Pradesh	125.05	54.50	110.25
Assam	81.775	144.00	95.61
Manipur	105.89	0	0
Meghalaya	64.88	68.39	0
Mizoram	169.46	1.33	82.90
Nagaland	19.11	26.60	0
Sikkim	159.22	0	0
Tripura	36.00	12.00	0
Total	761.385	306.82	288.76

Source: 'National Parks and Sanctuaries in North East', Press Information Bureau, Govt of India, Press Release, 24/04/08

SOUTH ASIA

BHUTAN

Tiger presence in Jigme Dorji NP overlaps with snow leopard habitat

Recent pictures and pugmark based evidence from the Jigme Dorji National Park has shown tigers at altitudes never seen before. The studies have found tigers here at altitudes between 3,700 and 4,300 metres and in habitat also being used by snow leopards.

The study which has revealed this information was started in April 2008 and is using 38 strategically placed GPS-marked and infrared-trigger cameras to find out the total number of tigers in the country. It is presently focused in the Jigme Dorji National Park and will eventually move to other parks in the country. It is also hoped that the study will get a photographic record of the total number of snow leopards in the country that are presently estimated to be about 100 in number.

The project also hopes to get data of how the overlapping of territory of the tiger and snow leopard affects both the big cats. An interesting fact emerging from the study is that tigers and snow leopards are following the migration pattern of domestic yaks and cattle. Between 2003 and 2006, there were 424

confirmed tiger kills of yaks, cows, horses, bull, mules and sheep.

The last study in Bhutan was done in the Jigme Singye Wangchuck Park where cameras were used in 2006 to get data of tigers there. Old data shows that there are 115 to 150 tigers in Bhutan which have been seen in Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary, Thrumshingla National Park and also in Manas and Sarpang.

Source: Tenzing Lamsang. 'Tigers in Snow leopard land', <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/may2008/2008-05-09-02.asp>

NEPAL

Vulture breeding centre set up in Chitwan



Nepal's first vulture breeding centre was recently set up inside the Chitwan National Park. 14 pairs of white-backed vultures captured from Pokhara have been kept at the centre, which is spread over a hectare at Kasara inside the park.

The centre has been established by the National Nature Conservation Trust in collaboration with Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation and the Zoological Society of London at a cost of Rs 12 lakh.

Source: 'Nepal's first vulture breeding centre established', *The Hindu*, 30/04/08

OPPORTUNITIES

ATREE Small Grants Programme

The ATREE Small Grants Programme (supported by the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust) seeks to increase the understanding of the current state of ecosystems and evolve mechanisms to conserve these ecosystems.

Proposals have been invited that will

- Fill a critical gap in information or understanding and would help to achieve biodiversity conservation
- Generate awareness, localised action or research on the conservation of ecosystems, sustenance of ecological processes and maintenance of livelihoods.

Approximately 12 grants will be made this year, averaging Rs 50,000 per grant. Proposed work in the Western Ghats or Eastern Himalayas will be given preference. Proposals must follow the prescribed format and be accompanied by contact details of one referee. The form can be downloaded from http://atree.org/small_grants.html

Proposals should be sent preferably in electronic form to grants@atree.org

Contact: **Sreetama Gupta Bhaya**, c/o ATREE, 659 5th A Main, Hebbal, Bangalore, 560024.

For implementing watershed and livelihood projects in Samrakshan's MP office

Samrakshan Trust has advertised an opening for planning and implementation of its watershed and livelihood projects in Vijaypur tehsil, District Sheopur in Madhya Pradesh. The project area is in and around the Kuno – Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary. Applicants should have a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture or Civil Engineering.

Contact: Merajuddin, Samrakshan Trust, Agraa, Tehsil: Vijaypur, District: Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh – 476336. Tel: 07528-280040, 9981176501. Email: merajuddinsyed@gmail.com. Website: www.samrakshan.org

UPCOMING

World Conservation Congress

The World Conservation Congress is to be held from 5 to 14 October, 2008, in Barcelona, Spain. More than 8,000 leaders from governments, the public sector, non-governmental organizations, business, UN agencies and social organizations are expected to participate.

The Congress will start with a four-day Forum run by IUCN members and partners discussing cutting edge ideas, thinking and practices related to conservation. This will then lead into the four-day IUCN Members' Assembly, a unique global environmental parliament of governments and NGOs.

The Congress intends to showcase a range of innovations for conservation. These will include community and local initiatives, policy and governance reforms, solutions based on traditional and indigenous knowledge, more sustainable business models and investment opportunities, initiatives inspiring ethical behavior and youth, innovative methods for integrating gender equity into conservation work, the latest technologies and emerging multi-sector partnerships.

A major focus will be the role of economic tools and markets in supporting the transition to sustainability by stimulating new production practices and consumption patterns. Alternative market models, governance reforms, partnerships and political alliances will also be considered.

Challenges, opportunities and potential solutions will be addressed at the Congress through three streams: A new climate for change, Healthy environments - healthy people, and Safeguarding the diversity of life.

For more details check <http://www.iucn.org/congress>

IN THE SUPREME COURT

PA related matters in the Supreme Court in March and April 2008

- Regarding permission for widening and improvement of Jauljibi-Tawaghat section of the Pithoragarh-Tawaghat Road by Ministry of Defence, Uttarakhand and its impact on the Askote Wildlife Sanctuary
- Use of land in the Nagru Wildlife Sanctuary by the Milestone power company for construction of a 1.5 MW power plant

In the Supreme Court' is based on the Forest Case Update, which is a web-based initiative to provide information and updates on developments related to forests and wildlife in the Supreme Court. Contact: **Ritwick Dutta & Kanchi Kohli**. Forest Case Update Editors, E-180, Greater Kailash 2, New Delhi-110048. Email: forestcase@yahoo.com Web: www.forestcaseindia.org

Contact: **MK Jiwrajka**, Member Secretary, Central Empowered Committee, Room No. 106, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110003. Tel: 011- 4361297

Details of Funds Released under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Project Tiger" 2002-2006 (Rs. In lakhs)

No	State/UT	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
1	Andhra Pradesh	21.10	22.89	15.00	68.7926
2	Arunachal Pradesh	35.875	68.75	35.00	172.418
3	Assam	65.70	79.95	-	86.4896
4	Bihar	25.00	50.00	85.00	6.4918
5	Chhatisgarh	32.48	80.25	27.75	24.3343
6	Karnataka	289.56	269.32	486.292	453.2246
7	Kerala	63.75	120.68	105.75	116.1708
8	Jharkhand	18.00	35.9915	72.505	164.1784
9	Madhya Pradesh	786.44	1103.414	609.93	777.2676
10	Maharashtra	621.79	228.45	255.953	334.19
11	Mizoram	98.32	67.56	94.34	65.156
12	Orissa	32.88	151.91	116.4395	1.7.0024
13	Rajasthan	294.92	158.330	79.00	381.2458
14	Tamil Nadu	125.00	35.00	80.00	136.9528
15	Tripura	-	-		0.50
16	Uttaranchal	168.00	200.91	200.12	159.9212
17	Uttar Pradesh	32.75	173.585	175.215	162.8782
18	West Bengal	168.33	225.17	325.79	228.29358
	TOTAL	2879.895	3067.2105	2763.78	3345.50768

Source: <http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=39214>

Statement showing release of Funds to Tiger reserves under the Project Tiger Scheme during the last three years
(Rs. In lakhs)

Name of Tiger Reserve	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
1. Bandhavgarh	85.00	142.50	170.39
2. Bandipur	367.095	321.925	175.00
3. Bhadra	119.197	105.83	44.067
4. Buxa	50.75	87.50	60.00
5. Corbett	200.12	147.182	160.295
6. Dampa	94.34	61.00	78.16
7. Dudhwa	175.215	152.687	75.00
8. Indravati	27.75	1.2175	10.00
9. Kalakad Mundanthurai	80.00	90.00	85.165
10. Kanha	197.50	241.00	211.34
11. Manas	0	80.00	30.00
12. Melghat	93.183	165.00	134.51
13. Nagarjunsagar	15.00	45.923	35.00
14. Namdapha	-	75.00	75.00
15. Nameri	-	-	35.00
16. Pakke	35.00	74.10	135.4725
17. Palamau	72.5005	153.00	100.00
18. Panna	60.00	97.00	150.00
19. Pench (MP)	97.43	128.63	75.85
20. Pench(Mah.)	87.77	75.00	45.00
21. Periyar	105.75	105.00	109.00
22. Ranthambore	-	142.053	100.876
23. Sariska	79.00	127.00	-
24. Satpura	170.00	100.00	134.97
25. Similipal	116.4395	80.00	150.25
26. Sunderban	274.74	129.68638	117.30
27. Tadoba- Andhari	75.00	63.07	50.00
28. Valmiki	85.00	3.475	37.1454
Total	2763.78	2994.77888	2584.7909

Source: <http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=37777>

**Forest occupancy and population estimates of tiger as per the refined methodology
(2008)**

State	Tiger Area km ²	Tiger Numbers		
		No.	Lower limit	Upper limit
Shivalik-Gangetic Plain Landscape Complex				
Uttarakhand	1901	178	161	195
Uttar Pradesh	2766	109	91	127
Bihar	510	10	7	13
Shivalik-Gangetic	5177	297	259	335
Central Indian Landscape Complex and Eastern Ghats Landscape Complex				
Andhra Pradesh	14126	95	84	107
Chattisgarh	3609	26	23	28
Madhya Pradesh	15614	300	236	364
Maharashtra	4273	103	76	131
Orissa	9144	45	37	53
Rajasthan	356	32	30	35
Jharkhand**	1488	Not Assessed		
Central Indian	48610	601	486	718
Western Ghats Landscape Complex				
Karnataka	18715	290	241	339
Kerala	6168	46	39	53
Tamil Nadu	9211	76	56	95
Western Ghats	34094	412	336	487
North East Hills and Brahmaputra Flood Plains				
Assam*	1164	70	60	80
Arunachal Pradesh*	1685	14	12	18
Mizoram*	785	6	4	8
Northern West Bengal*	596	10	8	12
North East Hills, and Brahmaputra	4230	100	84	118
Sunderbans	1586	Not Assessed		
Total Tiger Population		1411	1165	1657

* Population estimates are based on possible density of tiger occupied landscape in the area, not assessed by double sampling.

** Data was not amenable to population estimation of tiger. However, available information about the landscape indicates low densities of tiger in the area ranging from 0.5 to 1.5 per 100 km².

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

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