

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

When elephants cross borders

Following are some interesting cross-border news
nuggets gleaned over the last few months.

- Wild elephant migration from Karnataka to
Goa and Maharashtra is termed ‘unnatural’
and Goa seeks Maharashtra’s help to drive
the animals back. When Goa starts the
operation, it finds that its efforts to drive back
the elephants have been hampered by
trenches dug on the Maharashtra side to
prevent the entry of the animals into that
state. Goan authorities are asking Project
Elephant authorities to intervene and ask
Maharashtra to behave.
- Elephants that had ‘strayed’ from Orissa into
Andhra in late 2007 were termed ‘rogue’ and
huge efforts were made to force them to
return. Two of animals were even darted and
drugged and carried back to their home state.
One died almost immediately, most likely
because of an overdose of the drug used on it.
- Bangladesh authorities want India to ‘take
back’ her 100 odd elephants that have moved
across the international border from
Meghalaya. They have threatened that the
animals might otherwise be killed; and
- (As you will read below) The Nepalese
government is reinforcing the border with
India in North Bengal with low-voltage
electric wires to prevent herds of elephants
from crossing over along their traditional
migratory routes.

Reading news like this is to experience a tragic-
comic drama being played out across elephant
territory in the sub-continent. How else can one
explain a country asking another to take back ‘its’
elephants, or one minister complaining to a
counterpart in the neighbouring state that his
elephants are causing trouble.

No one will argue that the situation on
the ground is a simple one. The case of human-
elephant conflict is an extremely protracted and
complex one. Large populations of rural and
tribal people undoubtedly suffer huge

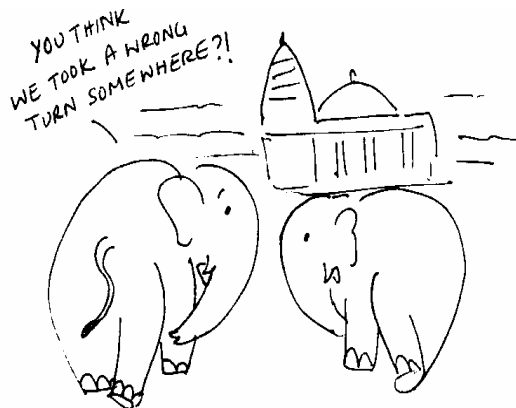
depredations because of elephants; and the pressure on administrators, politicians and forest staff to deal with the problem must be undeniably huge.

It needs to be remembered at the same time that elephants don't have it easy either. Increasing encroachments, dam construction, mining projects and infrastructure corridors have, over the years, ruthlessly destroyed elephant habitat and snapped traditional migratory routes. Not only are the elephants being denied what was traditionally and rightfully theirs, but terms like 'straying' herds, 'rogue' animals and 'unnatural' habitat are used without thought to hold them responsible for a problem they are not responsible for at all.

Borders created by human beings for their own kind are turning tragically problematic, even fatal for the pachyderms in ways that can only be considered bizarre.

The largest mammal on land deserves better than being shot, electrocuted or drugged for crossing our borders. The animal that is one of the most venerated in our cultures and histories can surely be treated with more respect and tolerance. We, humans, can at the same time, certainly do better than blaming neighbours and demanding that 'their' animals behave or be taken back, which would be the best way to ensure that a solution will not be found. A little common sense and pragmatism in dealing with the issue will certainly do no one any harm.

It might, in fact, be a good starting point to find some meaningful resolution and long lasting answers.



NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Opposition to sanctuary proposal in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram districts

The Andhra Pradesh State government recently initiated steps to declare a 117.86 sq. km area spanning three mandals in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts as a wildlife sanctuary. The move is an attempt by the authorities to deal with the regular problem of elephants migrating into the region from the Lakheri Wildlife Sanctuary in neighbouring Orissa. Elephant depredation here has caused 11 deaths and huge destruction to property in the last few months. The forests also support a wide range of other endangered animals and plants.

The proposal has however been opposed by tribal organizations and NGOs and a number of political parties including the TDP, the CPI (M), and the CPI. Some ruling party members too have opposed the move. The main reason for the opposition is that the government wants to relocate some 300 families (more than 1200 people) for the declaration of the sanctuary.

The government has said that those relocated will be given an attractive package. While they will be eligible to Rs. 10 lakh per family as per central guidelines, the state government will provide houses and civic infrastructure like roads, water and power.

Source: 'Wildlife sanctuary plan on,' *The Hindu*, 18/03/08

R. Jagadeeswara Rao, 'Wildlife sanctuary move stirs hornet's nest,' *The Hindu*, 20/03/08

ASSAM

Orang tigers to be camera trapped

A project has been recently launched in the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park for the documentation of the tigers here through camera trapping in tandem with other methods. The project is being executed by the NGO, Aaranyak, in collaboration with the park authorities. The

project's technical support is from the Wildlife Institute of India, while financial aid has been provided by the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation, Seaworld Busch Gardens' Conservation Fund and the US Fish and Wildlife Services.

The project hopes to identify existing or possible dispersal routes of tigers into and out of the park. It will first seek to identify individual tigers in the park and estimate the density of tiger and prey animals using camera trapping and line transect methods respectively. Subsequently, it would attempt to fill in considerable gaps on wild tiger research and monitoring in the region. Other spin offs from the project include the creation of a GIS database of the park and its fringe areas, along with a habitat stratification map prepared and correlated to tiger and prey density; and capacity building of local scientists and foresters for long-term monitoring of wildlife.

The forests of Orang are presently estimated to have about 20 tigers.



Source: 'Move to document Orang tigers through camera trapping', *The Assam Tribune*, 18/06/08.

Contact: **Aaranyak**, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati – 781028, Assam. Tel: 0361-636768 / 266087. Fax: 266087

Two elephants found dead within 24 hours

Poachers killed an elephant and sawed off its trunk in Raimona-Maktegaon forest in Assam's Kokrajhar district along the Indo-Bhutan border in the month of June. Forest officials said that though the elephant was probably poisoned, the cause of death would be ascertained only after a post-mortem examination.

Less than 24 hours before this incident, the carcass of an adult elephant was found on the banks of the River Sankosh in Assam. The radio collar on the elephant's neck identified it as one of the six tusked from Manas National Park that had been under observation by the forest departments of both West Bengal and Assam. While the cause of the death could not be immediately ascertained, it was suggested that the animal may have died of an infection.

Forest officials and a team from the Wildlife Trust of India that had radio-collared the elephants were looking into the matter.

Source: 'Elephant killed in Kokrajhar,' *The Telegraph*, 13/06/08

'Tusker dies in Assam,' *The Telegraph*, 14/06/08

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

Assam seeks tougher punishments for rhino poachers; army to help too

The Assam government has proposed tougher punishments for those involved in rhino poaching. The State Forest Minister has said that amendments to the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) 1972 are being contemplated for an increase in the prison term for poachers from three to ten years, and for doubling the quantum of fine to Rs.50,000. Life imprisonment is being sought for those poachers who are caught repeating the crime. The amendments also want poachers to be tried by a senior court.

The 2nd Mountain Brigade of the Indian Army is also slated to help in the protection of wildlife in the park and in the adjoining forests in the Jorhat and Sivasagar districts.

The moves are a response to the spate of rhino killings that have occurred in Assam in general and Kaziranga National Park in particular in the last few months. 18 rhinos were killed in Kaziranga alone in the year 2007 (see *PA Updates* Vol XIV, Nos 3 & 2 and Vol XIII, Nos. 6 & 5).

Source: 'Assam wants life terms for rhino poachers', *DNA*, 04/06/08.

'Army to fight poachers in Kaziranga', *Assam Tribune*, 25/06/08.

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

GOA

Gaur population up in Goa

The population of Goa's state animal, the gaur, increased to 1,521 in the last five years. There are 835 gaur in North Goa division and 96 (outside the sanctuary areas) in South Goa division. The total number in protected areas is 590 (180 in Cotigao WLS, 350 in Mollem WLS and 60 in Bondla.)

It has also been reported that not a single case of gaur poaching occurred in the state for the last three years.

Source: Abdul Rauf Beig. 'Bison population is up', *The Navhind Times*, 13/06/08.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Wildlife Wing, Junta House, Panaji 403001, Goa. Tel: 0832 – 224747 / 223508 / 278891. Fax: 224747

GUJARAT

Gir gets award for eco-tourism site

The Gir National Park and Sanctuary has been awarded as the best wildlife and eco-tourism site of 2008. The award follows a survey of frequent upwardly mobile travellers from 12 important cities in the country which was undertaken by a business television channel. The survey was supported and recognised by the central tourism department's Incredible India campaign.

Source: 'Gir sanctuary bags national award', *The Times of India*, 26/06/08.

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

Artificial water points in Gir for summer

Forest authorities constructed about 215 artificial waterholes in summer for animals in the Gir forests. The wildlife division sent in a number of tankers to replenish the water-holes, and also kept a watch on the movements of the lion prides in the forests. The NGO, Wildlife Conservation Trust is also said to have constructed 200 similar water points to help the wild animals tide over the dry period.

Seven rivers pass through Gir, but they generally dry up during summer. The forests here also have only about 250 watering points to cater to the needs of more than 390 lions, 350 leopards and 40,000 ungulates, including spotted deer, sambar, nilgai, chinkara, and wild boar.

Source: 'Water points for Asiatic lions in Sasan Gir' *Times Of India*, 21/05/08

Increased vigil after anthrax outbreak around Gir



The Gujarat Forest Department (FD) increased surveillance around Gir National Park in June following an outbreak of anthrax in a village in the neighbouring Bhavnagar district.

Anthrax was confirmed in Bagdna village after samples from some of the dead domestic animals tested positive for the disease. Concerned about the safety of the wild animals as cattle often stray into the park, the FD told forest guards to bring to the immediate notice of the department any incident of wild animals suffering from the disease.

Source: 'FD increases vigil around Gir', *The Times of India*, 16/06/08.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Demand to cancel approval for cement plant near Sundarnagar and Bandli WLS

The Paryavaran Sanrakshan Samiti (PSS), Sundarnagar has appealed to the Union Minister for Environment and Forests to cancel the environment and forest clearance given to Harish Cement Ltd for setting up a cement plant near Sundarnagar. The Samiti alleged that the clearance given was in violation of environmental laws and the orders of the Supreme Court.

The Samiti also alleged that the environment and forest clearance given to the project with regard to the Keran Lime Stones Mines in 2005 for setting up cement plant near Sundarnagar did not comply with the legal norms.

Earlier, environmental/forest clearance was denied for situating the project at Maloh-Nalani area because of the site's proximity to the Bandli Wildlife Sanctuary. The company then shifted the plant site to a thickly populated area (near Sundarnagar) but did nothing about the mining area site, which remained the same.

At present the sites of the proposed cement plant and mining are located close to the Bandli Wildlife Sanctuary and the Nature Awareness Centre, Trambri. In order to give clearance to the project, government field officials too have allegedly been involved in foul play by deliberately falsifying the actual distances between the plant/mining site and the sanctuary.

Source: 'Cancel cement plant approval: Samiti,' *The Tribune*, 29/05/08

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

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Dachigam NP opened to public after 60 years

The Dachigam National Park (DNP), famous for the Hangul, has been opened for tourists for the first time in 60 years. Admission to the park

was restricted till recently and only those with special passes were allowed in.

Tourists will be taken on a 3.5-km drive inside the park in a battery-operated car. The drive will include visits to trout-fish streams and areas rich in flora and fauna. The Tourism Department has lent three such cars to the Wildlife Department for the safari.

The state Tourism Department is reported to have spent Rs. 30 lakh for providing facilities for the tourists.

Source: Ishfaq-ul-Hassan. 'Dachigam National Park reopens to public after 60 yrs', *DNA*, 29/05/08.

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

JHARKHAND

Rs. 190 lakh Central assistance for wildlife protection to Jharkhand

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has approved a project worth Rs 190 lakh for the maintenance of the Singhbhum Elephant Reserve, the Palamau Tiger Project, and of wildlife sanctuaries in the state. The sanction has come in response to a proposal for the same that the state government had submitted in 2007.

The money is to be made available for patrolling in protected areas, improving animal habitats and other activities like digging ponds.

Source: Anupam Rana, 'Central Government approves project for wildlife,' *The Pioneer*, 14/05/08

Elephants flock to Dalma WLS during summer

An estimated 80 elephants, the largest number in many years, were reported to have moved to the forests of the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary in the hot summer month of May. The figure is based on a rough census carried out during the traditional tribal hunting festival *Sendra* or *Bishu Shikaar* on May 12.

The animals are said to come here in search of food and water that becomes scarce in other parts and forests of the region.

Elephants from the Bengal border, Dhalbhumgarh, Ghatshila, Chaibasa and Saranda start migrating to Dalma from the last week of January. By mid-summer, the herds reach the Dalma hilltop and stay there till July. Some of the herds arrive at Dalma via Dumaria, Nayagram, Dalapani and Kankrajhor, while others take the Patamda route. It is expected that the number of elephants here will come down to about 15 post summer.



Source: Saswati Mukherjee, 'Dalma summer retreat for tuskers,' *The Telegraph*, 16/05/08

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Dalma WLS Wildlife Division, Ranchi, Jharkhand. Tel: 0651-301861

Dalma WLS elephant and calf electrocuted

A female elephant and her one-year-old calf were recently electrocuted near Dimna lake when they came in contact with a low hanging live wire. This is said to be the first such incident in and around the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary.

The death was caused by long electric wires drawn illegally by villagers from electric poles for lighting their houses. Hanging at a height of about seven feet, the live wire snapped as soon as the elephants came in contact with it. As a result the three pachyderms that were following the female were saved.

Forest officials subsequently conducted a survey and found such live wires hanging at several villages. Directives were issued for their immediate removal.

Source: 'Female elephant and calf electrocuted', *DNA*, 03/06/08

Contact: **PCCF**, Jharkhand, At- Doranda, P.O. Doranda, Ranchi. Tel: 0651-2500455(O), 2500413(R) Fax: 0651-500413

KARNATAKA

Workshop held to sensitise judges and forest officers to provisions of the WLPA.

The Karnataka Judicial Academy, the Department of Forests, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) India and TRAFFIC-India jointly organized a two day orientation program in the first week of May to sensitise judicial officers and senior forest officers on issues wildlife conservation and provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA).

Those participating included senior judges of the Karnataka High Court.

Source: 'Judges should be sensitised to provisions of Wildlife Act,' *The Hindu*, 08/06/08.

Traffic management centre in Bannerghata NP

The Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has proposed the creation of a Traffic and Transit Management Centre (TTMC) in the Bannerghatta National Park. The BMTC has sought additional land for the centre, and a letter requesting the same has been sent to the Forest Department.

The TTMC at Bannerghata is one of the 10 centers planned as part of a transportation project under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). The locations for the other TTMCs are Shantinagar, Koramangala, Whitefield, Vijayanagar, Kengeri, Banashankari, Yeshwantpur and Domlur.

Source: 'BMTC seeks land for two TTMCs', *Times News Network*, 22/05/08.

Contact: **CF**, Bannerghatta NP, Bannerghatta, Dist. Bangalore – 560083, Karnataka. Tel: 080-28428540(O), 28428572(R). Fax: 28428540

World Heritage tag likely for 12 sites

Twelve spots in the Western Ghats, apart from Hampi and Patadkal, could soon enter the World Heritage Sites list. A tentative list of 20 such sites is being reviewed, 12 of which will be finalised and placed before UNESCO for declaration. Prepared by the State Forest Department and the Wildlife Institute of India, the list is an outcome of two years of research.

The selected spots include Kodchagiri, the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary, Devarakaadu and parts of Shimoga and north Karnataka.

Source: 'Heritage tag for 12 sites', *The New Indian Express*, 23/06/08.

KERALA

Newsletter on Vembanad

The Vembanad Team of the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) has initiated a newsletter 'Vembanad' that will be dedicated to various issues concerning the Vembanad Lake, one of the important Ramsar sites in Kerala.

Contact: Vembanad, ATREE, #659, 5th 'A' Main Road, Hebbal, Bangalore 560 024. Tel: 080-23638771, 23533942, 23530069.

Fax: 23530070. Email: vembanad@atree.org Web: www.vembanad.org

Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-2322217 / 2360452 / 2204896. Fax: 2360452 / 2322217

Malabar WLS proposed in Kozhikode

The Kerala government has decided to create the Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary at Kakkayam in Kozhikode. The announcement was made by State Forest Minister Benoy Viswom in Thiruvananthapuram recently.

The Minister also announced the formation of a Forest Housing Development Corporation for employees of the FD.

Source: 'Viswom: wildlife sanctuary in a year,' *The Hindu*, 23/03/08

Diphtheria reported in Kani settlements in Peppara WLS

A seven year old girl from a Kani settlement inside the Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary was reported to have died of diphtheria in the first week of May.

A team of doctors immediately visited the 60-odd houses in the five Kani settlements inside the sanctuary to look for traces of the supposedly eradicated disease among other tribal children. Over 30 children in these settlements were tested and their throat swabs were taken for culture. None of them, however, showed any symptoms of the disease.

The team of doctors was told that the children here had all been immunized, and that even the expired child had been inoculated. It has however been pointed out that neither the SAT nor the nearest hospital, KIMS, had stock of the vaccine Diphtheria Immunoglobulin when the girl was admitted. She is reported to have died before the medicine could be purchased.

Source: 'Docs visit Kani settlements, find no trace of diphtheria', *The New Indian Express*, 08/05/08.

Contact: **Asst. Wildlife Warden**, Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary, P.O. Peppara Dam, (via) Vithura, Thiruvananthapuram – 695551, Kerala. Tel: 0471-360762

FD to set up three biodiversity parks

The Forest Department has proposed to set up three biodiversity parks in the state in the next three years at Chaliyam in Kozhikode, Nedumbassery in Kochi and Munnar in Kottayam and at the Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary at Kakkayam in Kozhikode.

The decision was announced in the last week of May by Forest Minister Binoy Viswam, who revealed that the first phase of the discussion on the biodiversity park in Nedumbassery has already been completed. The park is sited on the land the Forest Department had received as compensation for land used for the Nedumbassery International Airport.

At Kozhikode, the historical Chaliyam Timber Depot it is to be renovated into a biodiversity park, while the park at Munnar is to 'add value' to the popular tourist area.

Source: 'Forest Dept. to set up three biodiversity parks', *The New Indian Express*, 31/05/08.

MADHYA PRADESH

Wildlife sanctuary proposed in Alirajpur district

The Madhya Pradesh Government has proposed the creation of a wildlife sanctuary at Kasthivada in Alirajpur district. A detailed proposal in this regard was given clearance at a high level meeting held at the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) headquarters in July. The sanctuary recommended by the Wildlife Institute of India will cover an area of a little over 92 sq. kms.

A sanction was also granted for a survey of the changes that have taken place in the forest cover of the Dhar, Barwani and Jhabua districts due to afforestation and catchments area treatment work. That study is to be conducted by the Forest Survey of India.

Source: 'Wildlife sanctuary to come up in Alirajpur district', *The Pioneer*, 06/07/08.

MAHARASHTRA

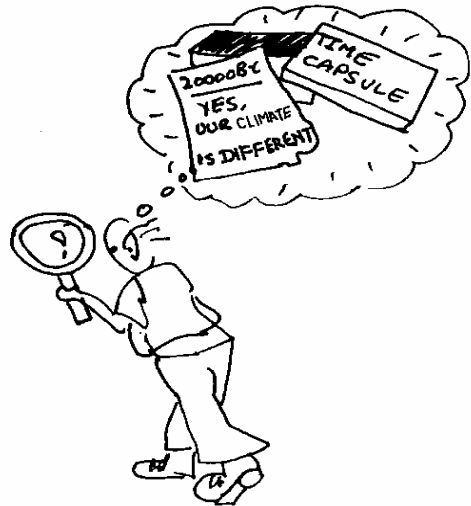
Lonar lake to tell the story of climate change

A group of scientists from India and Germany are studying meteor-lake Lonar, seeking clues to shifts in the patterns of environmental and climatic changes that have occurred over 500 centuries. The aim of the study is to evolve a model that would predict future climatic changes, and thereby address the increasing intensity of drought and flood cycles.

A team led by scientist Sushma Prasad from Germany's Geoscience Research Institute, Geo Forschungs Zentrum, and Professor N. Basavaiah from the Indian Institute of Geomagnetism, recently visited Lonar as part

of their project entitled, 'Himalayas: Modern and Past Climates.'

Six other German institutions are also part of the research project. Participating Indian organizations include the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune; the Birbal Sahani Institute, Lucknow; Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehra Dun; Agarkar Research Institute, Pune; IIT Roorkee and the Pune and Punjab Universities.



Over 50,000 years old, Lonar is the world's only salt-water basaltic lake formed by meteor impact. Its sediments are believed to hold clues to the various climatic changes that have occurred during this period, since sediment formation is a function of the environment.

The lake is a part of the Lonar Wildlife Sanctuary, and the team had to seek the permission of the forest department to undertake the project. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) B. Majumdar has said that the project would strengthen the Forest Department's case of maintaining the sanctuary here, in face of the objection that the place does not have any wildlife.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'The lake that holds the clue to climate change', *The Indian Express*, 03/06/08.

Contact: DCF, Buldhana Division, I/c Lonar Wildlife Sanctuary, Buldhana – 443001, Maharashtra. Tel: 07262- 242334 / 242356

Proposal to reduce Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary to 350 sq. kms

The Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary that is presently spread over 8500 sq. kms across the districts of Solapur and Ahmednagar is likely to be drastically reduced to an area of about 350 sq. kms. The Maharashtra Forest Department has recently submitted a proposal to this effect to the Supreme Court.

The demand for the reduction in the size of the sanctuary has been around for a long time, and there has been a broad agreement on this as well. The present sanctuary includes large inhabited areas and many big towns. Local people have been insisting on the size reduction, and recently the State Forest Minister too added his voice to the demand.

An expert panel headed by Mr. VB Savarkar, former Director of the Wildlife Institute of India, has however insisted that the state should retain at least 1,222 sq km area of the sanctuary to protect the rare bird. (Also see *PA Update* 29).

Source: 'Maha govt. to approach SC for reducing bird sanctuary area', *Economic Times*, 06/07/08.

Contact: **CF Wildlife**, Pune Division, Forest Colony, Near Salunke Vihar Bus Stop, Vanawdi Pune. Tel: 020-25124182 / 26855124

PAs in Vidarbha, Aurangabad to be promoted for tourism

Maharashtra's Vidarbha region and Aurangabad are among the 20 mega destination circuits the tourism ministry will promote under a new initiative. The destinations have been selected on the basis of their national importance, tourist footfall and potential arrivals. The Centre will provide Rs. 50 crore to the state for tourism promotion in Vidarbha and Rs. 25 crore for Aurangabad. The Lonar Crater (also a wildlife sanctuary) and the tiger reserves of Vidarbha are the major focus areas for the tourism development plans.

Source: Vineeta Pandey. 'Vidarbha set to take a big leap on tourism map', *DNA*, 22/05/08.

No support from police to demolish illegal ashram in Tungareshwar WLS: FD

Forest officials have alleged that the Thane (Rural) police has refused to give the Forest Department (FD) any assistance in demolishing an 'illegal' ashram inside the Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The FD had planned the demolition in the last week of May but could not go ahead because of lack of police support.

Trouble has been brewing in the sanctuary for a while now, and forest officials had been allegedly assaulted by the ashram office-bearers when they had gone there in early May to carry out the demolition (see *PA Update* Vol. XIV, No. 3).

The police, on the other hand, has said that help to the forest officials had never been denied. They have pointed out that since this was a religious issue, it could become a law and order problem, and would therefore have to be dealt with in a careful manner.

Source: 'Police refusing support to raze 'illegal' ashram: Forest department', www.expressindia.com/latest-news/Police-refusing-support-to-raze-illegal-ashram-Forest-department/316532/

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

ORISSA

FD files case against ZP member for blocking saline water ingress into Bhitarkanika NP

The Forest Department has filed a case against Zilla Parishad (ZP) member Guru Charan Parida under Section 27 of the Orissa Forest Act and Forest Conservation Act on the charge of instigating the tribal people to block saline water ingress at the Sasinipeta Protected Reserve Forest under Bhitarkanika National Park. A case was also lodged at the Mahakalpada police station

It has been alleged that the local people were constructing an embankment on the *nullah* inside the Sasinipeta forest to block flow of

saline water for the purpose of catching fish. This is the same area where the FD had helped regenerate mangrove saplings in 39 hectares of forest land in 2007. (Also see *PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 2).

When the forest officials tried to stop the locals, they were threatened and informed that the ZP member had given them directions to build the embankments.

Source: Rajesh Behera. 'Forest Dept. files case against ZP member', *The Pioneer*, 01/07/08.

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

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

PUNJAB

Effort to develop Harike as a tourism site

The World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature (WWF) India, in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industries – Punjab, has proposed to develop the Harike wetland as a tourism site. A meeting for this was held in Chandigarh in the first week of July, and was attended by representatives from NGOs, the scientific community, industry and government.

A six-member core committee has been formed to take up related projects. The committee comprises Anish Dua, Convener, Basanta Raj Kumar, Chandra Prakash, Gunbir Singh and Sandeep Behera.

Source: 'Six member team to protect dolphins, develop Harike as tourism site', *The Pioneer*, 06/07/08.

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

Nokia – WWF India project for Ranthambhor



Mobile communications company Nokia recently announced its partnership with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India to be involved in the WWF-India's Tiger conservation programme. The announcement was made jointly by the Mr. Ravi Singh, Secretary General and CEO, WWF-India, and Mr. D Shivakumar, VP and Managing Director, Nokia India.

As part of the association, Nokia and WWF-India will work towards educating villagers for sustainable development, increasing awareness on tiger conservation, and identifying alternative livelihood programmes for the villagers around protected areas such as the Ranthambore National Park.

Source: 'Nokia India joins hand with WWF-India', http://wwfindia.org/news_facts/index.cfm?uNewsID=2540, 18/05/08.

Contact: **Ravi Singh**, WWF – India, 172-B, Lodi Estate, New Delhi - 110 003

Tigers re-introduced to Sariska

Two tigers have recently being relocated to Sariska from the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve as part of a Rs. 1.5 crore project to re-establish the tiger here. The entire exercise is being executed jointly by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Rajasthan Forest Department (FD).

The first tiger, a male, was flown to Sariska in the last week of June in an MI-17 IAF helicopter. Here it was released in a 100m x 100m enclosure at Narayanpani, an area that was once known for the most tiger sightings at Sariska. The enclosure was surrounded by a 20 ft. high fence draped in a bright yellow sheet to minimize the

homing instinct of the animal back to Ranthambore. Specially constructed to get its guest acclimatized to the new environs, and featuring a fine prey base along with a waterhole fed by a perennial spring, the enclosure was supposed to provide the 'right' natural environment for the tiger, who seemed to have adapted easily to his new surroundings.

The second animal, a tigress, moved to Sariska in the first week of July. She was housed in a separate adjoining enclosure to prevent territorial spats with the male. Initial reports indicated that she was not doing very well and showed clear signs of unease post-relocation. Though the enclosure had peafowl, goats and even sedated deer let in by the officials to provide her soft-target prey, the 170 kg. tigress had not eaten for four days after her arrival at Sariska. Alternately listless and ferocious, the tigress remained behind thickets and rarely came out in the open; and nor did she care to venture out of her enclosure even when the gates were left open all day.

The project has fitted both the big cats with radio collars and is thus constantly monitoring their movements and behaviour by a satellite operated by the Argos system (which is supported by NASA, NOAA, and the French space agency, CNES). Procured at Rs. 8 lakhs each from Canada-based firm Lotek, the collars will send out information in short pulses. The satellite will pick up the signals and retransmit them to the Argos centres for processing. Results can be retrieved from anywhere in the world by public data networks within 20 minutes of transmission.

Buoyed by the so-far successful relocation of the two tigers, authorities have now cut the time for the introduction of the next three tigers into Sariska. According to the original plan, five tigers - two male and three female - were to be relocated in a span of two years. Now the repopulation will take place within the next six months. The authorities are looking at a target of 21 animals in the coming years. Ranthambore has 40 - 45 tigers, including 14 newly born cubs, and has been facing a problem of plenty with reports of territorial fights, and of older tiger chasing the younger ones out to the periphery of the forest.

According to the 2005 WII report, Sariska had lost all of its 16 - 18 tigers counted

in the official 2004 wildlife census. Poaching, fed by a complete breakdown in the internal management system of the park, and of the relationships between the Sariska villagers and the park management, were cited by the report as the major factors responsible for the debacle. The 400 sq. km key tiger habitat and natal area inside Sariska, designated Core-I, is also home to 11 villages, earmarked for relocation since long. So far only one has been shifted. The 21 families of Bhagani in the Tehla forest range were relocated last year to a site near Behor in Alwar district and each were provided a two-room house, 6.25 bighas of land and Rs. 84,000. In all, there are 28 villages within Sariska's 881 sq. km. spread, and nearly 200 villages exist in the vicinity of the park.

As of now, the NTCA has sanctioned Rs 26 crore for the relocation of the Umri and Kankwadi villages in the core area of STR to Bardod Rundh and Mojpur respectively. The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) had also given its nod for the conversion of 141 hectares of forest land to agriculture land at Mojpur village in Alwar district for the rehabilitation of Umri. According to FD officials, bank accounts have been opened for the families, money is being transferred and their identity cards are also being made. Each family is likely to be offered a package of two hectares of land, a constructed house and Rs. 1 lakh as compensation.

Meanwhile, a proposed ban on movement of heavy vehicles on the state highway No 13 - which passes right through the core of the reserve - has been met with much protest by the villagers here. The residents of Thanagazi staged a *bandh* on June 29th to object the halting of traffic on the Alwar-Thanaganzi-Jaipur highway, holding that the ban would make a dent in their livelihood. On an average, around 2000 vehicles ply through this route everyday. The 3.5 crore alternative road constructed in 2001 to bypass the highway remains unused.

With the reintroduction of tigers at the onset of the monsoons, when poaching is at its peak, security has been beefed up at Sariska. Besides intelligence inputs from local villagers, the number of security personnel has been increased by 50, in addition to the recruitment of 100 ex-Army men who are part of the 120-member squad for night patrolling. Dummy traps

have been laid at various sectors of the forest for the patrolling parties to hunt out in an exercise to whet their surveillance skills. The 23 poachers on the state FD list are still at large.

STR authorities have also introduced a new system for controlling devotees visiting Pandupole, an ancient temple located in the heart of the reserve. They are to be allowed inside in a strictly monitored group of 10 vehicles. Government buses will also be introduced shortly for transporting people from the gate of the reserve to Pandupole. About 50,000 people make way inside the park free of cost on Saturdays and Fridays to worship at the Hanuman temple, contributing to heavy traffic inside STR.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol XIII, No. 6 & 3, Vol XII, No 4 and Nos. 57, 56, 55 & 50)

Source: Anindo Dey, 'Tiger relocation started,' TNN 09/06/08
'Satellite to keep eye on tiger cubs,' PTI, 23/06/08
'Tiger doing fine, tigress not quite,' *The Hindu*, 09/07/08
Neha Sinha, 'Now, tigress from Ranthambore airlifted to Sariska,' *The Indian Express*, 05/07/08
Neha Sinha, 'Relocated Sariska tiger likely to be released soon,' *The Indian Express*, 03/06/08
'Sariska villagers protest blocking of highway,' TNN 26/06/08
Anindo Dey, 'Firing range near Sariska to be closed,' TNN 07/07/08
'Controlled movement in Sariska temple,' TNN 09/07/08

Contact: **Director**, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Sariska, Alwar – 301022, Rajasthan. Tel: 0144-41333 (O)

TAMIL NADU

Elephant poached in Mudumalai after six years

A case of elephant poaching has been reported in the Mudumalai forests after a gap of six years. The animal, estimated to be 12 years old, was shot dead near Thorapalli about three kms from the boundary of the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

An anti-poaching team patrolling the area located the dead animal following its blood trail an hour-and-half after hearing a gun shot. Officials said that the elephant had run for more than 500 metres in search of water after it was shot in its chest, probably with a musket. The animal's tusks and tail had been hacked off by the poachers when the body was found.

Sniffer dogs were brought in, but since more than six hours had already passed, they made little progress in tracking down the poachers. A Special Task Force (STF) team from Sathyamangalam was also part of the patrol. Eight teams were formed to nab the poachers and all check posts across the state border were put on alert.

Source: 'Poachers back in action in Mudumalai', *The Times of India*, 06/07/08.

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

Protest against declaration of Mudumalai WLS as a Critical Tiger Habitat

Communities living around the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary observed a bandh on July 3 to protest against the declaration of the sanctuary as a critical tiger habitat (CTH), and the resultant harassment and continued intimidation of the local people. Those protesting termed the declaration of the CTH as illegal and in violation of the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, and of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (STOFDRFRA). More than a thousand people went on a one day hunger strike in Masanagudi, the town at the entrance of the sanctuary.

The protesters demanded the immediate cancellation of the "critical tiger habitat" notification made allegedly made in violation of the law and without any dialogue or consultation with the local communities; immediate implementation of the STOFDRFRA; and an immediate reply to the issues raised by the Masanagudi panchayat in its letter dated 19th March, where it had specifically pointed out the violations of the WLPA and STOFDRFRA.

The protestors also passed a resolution condemning the restrictions on collection of

stones and housing material, minor forest produce, firewood and grazing. They have also opposed the ban on vehicular traffic after 8 pm and condemned the bar on provision of basic amenities like electricity in the area.

The protestors have threatened to blockade the roads in the area and undertake further actions in protest if their demands were not met by the 15th of July.

Source: Email dated 04/07/08 sent by the Campaign for Survival and Dignity.

Contact: Campaign for Survival and Dignity.

Email: forestcampaignnews@gmail.com

Tribals in Kalakad Mundunthurai TR face eviction for failing to stop forest fire.

Authorities of the Kalakad Mundunthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) have issued eviction notices to members of the Kani tribe living inside the reserve for allegedly not helping the Forest Department (FD) in preventing fires in the forest. The notice says that the tribe members are 'required' to help in such matters under the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Forest Act (TNFA). The notice also blames them for not providing any 'useful information,' and further says that only those who respect the law and assist the FD are eligible to live inside the forests and obtain forest rights.

The Kani, now a scheduled tribe, were reportedly brought to the forests here under the colonial rule in 1910 to work on plantations. Some of them now live in four hamlets in the heart of what is now the KMTR.

In response to the notice received, the members of the tribe have accused the reserve's Deputy Director of mala-fide intent, pointing out that TNFA did not apply in the region because it was a tiger reserve. They have alleged that the official had criminally threatened them before sending the notice; that the notice had been sent to the entire Kani community, and this violated the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, and other Acts as well.

They also pointed out that the trouble for them started when they protested against the reserve being declared a critical tiger habitat as that would mean their relocation.

Source: Nitin Sethi. 'Tribe faces eviction for failing to stop forest fire', *The Times of India*, 06/07/08.

Contact: **Field Director KMTR**, NGO 'A' Colony, Palayam Kottai, Tirunelveli - 627 007. Tel: 0462-273075, 2552663(O), 2580115(R). Fax: 0462-2580115

Rs. 50 lakh project for Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve

The Department of Forests will carry out a Centre-sponsored project for the conservation and management of Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve with an estimated outlay of Rs. 50 lakh during this financial year.

The project is aimed at augmenting infrastructure and income-generating activities along the coastal villages of the district; and to thereby reduce the dependency of fishermen on the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere for their livelihood. The project will also involve the creation of shelterbelt plantations comprising casuarinas, *amla* and *neem* on 100 hectares of coastal *patta* land situated within 10 km from the High Tide Line (HTL). The project is also to establish three horticulture gardens at Udangudi, Vilathikulam and Tharuvaikulam areas, and to dibble 60,000 palmyrah nuts along the coast.

The entire revenue from these cultivations is to be pooled into the resources of eco-development committees (EDC) functioning in the village panchayats covered under the scheme. It would then be used by the EDCs for community development programmes and for creation of employment for the villagers.

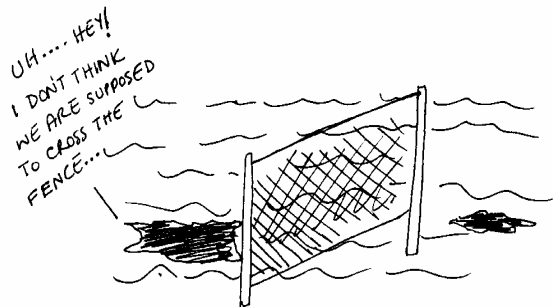
Two 'anti-poaching' sheds would be set up at Tiruchendur and Vembar to curtail poaching as well as to educate people of the importance of avian fauna and preservation of endangered species like shark, corals and sea cucumbers.

A total of 12 veterinary camps have also been planned in villages where cattle population was high to help farmers engaged in rearing.

Source: R. Vimal Kumar, 'Project to conserve Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve,' *The Hindu*, 20/05/08.

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

Exotic algae invades Gulf of Mannar NP



The fast-growing *Kappaphycus alvarezii*, an algae native of the Philippines, is reported to be invading the coral reefs of the Gulf of Mannar National Park and Biosphere Reserve. The species, which is a source of carrageenan, a gel-forming agent widely used in the pharmaceutical and food industries, was being cultivated in the open sea by beverage giant PepsiCo's subsidiary Pepsi Foods Limited (PFL) with the help of fishermen with whom the company has a "buy back" agreement. Scientists have said that the algae is smothering the coral reefs and no part of the reef was visible in the invaded sites.

The Central Salt and Marine Chemical Research Institute (CSMCRI) in Bhavnagar, which imported the alien species in 1997 for experiments in confined waters, says it transferred the material and sold the technology to PepsiCo only after ensuring that its cultivation would be ecologically safe.

Both PepsiCo and CSMCRI agree that patches of drifted *K. alvarezii* are growing on corals in Kurusadai, but differ on how the algae entered these waters. The company has said that their cultivation was confined to Palk Bay, north of the reserve and that they had never gone to the Gulf of Mannar at all.

The CSMCRI says, however, that twigs of algae could have drifted from PepsiCo's cultivation sites in Palk Bay into the navigation channel flowing towards the Gulf of Mannar, as the current flows from Palk Bay towards the Gulf of Mannar during the northeast monsoon.

Both have however said that banning the cultivation was not the solution, as farming this algae provides a monthly income of Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 5,000 each to nearly 600 poor families.

Scientists and researchers have pointed out that measures like physically removing the algae from the corals would be ineffective as the algae re-grows within one year. The alternative suggestion of biological control also was not feasible as fish do not graze on *K. alvarezii* as it is not a native algae.

Introduction of the exotic algae in the waters had been opposed when the project was being initiated, and suggestions had been made for the farming of native species of red algae that also yielded the necessary carrageenans. (see *PA Update* 43).

Source: 'Indian corals under attack by alien weed', *DNA*, 11/06/08.

UTTAR PRADESH

Bird sanctuary proposed in Noida

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department has identified a 330-hectare area adjoining a reserve forest in Surajpur in the Greater Noida region to develop it into a 'prime' bird habitat and wildlife sanctuary. As estimated Rs. 5.6 crore has been raised for the project.

A lake in the area that covers about 108 hectares of land is to be cleaned up as part of the project. Other parts of the proposal include construction of small islands in the lake, taking up tree plantation, construction of a watchtower and a bird information centre, creation of a communication facility and introduction of pedal boats for tourists.

Source: 'Noida to get a bird sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 10/07/08.

Tigers pushing out leopards from Katarniaghat WLS, Dudhwa NP

A recent study by the Wildlife Institute of India has suggested that an increase in tiger numbers in the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary and Dudhwa National Park is pushing out the leopard from these protected areas. Four to five tigresses reproduce here every year, as is evidenced by cub

sightings. While tigers were a rare sight earlier for forest personnel, they are now being sighted even by visiting tourists.

Forest officials claim that the leopard population in these forests has also gone up.

Source: Rising tiger population pushes leopard to periphery', *The New Indian Express*, 25/06/08.

Contact: **Director**, Dudhwa National Park, Dist. Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 05872-252106. Fax: 05872-252106

Rhinos from Bardia and ShuklaPhanta move to Katerniaghat WLS, Lagga Bagga forests

At least five one-horned rhinos are reported to have crossed the Indo-Nepal Border to move from the grasslands in the Bardia and Shukla Phanta Wildlife Reserves to the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary and the Lagga Bagga forests in Uttar Pradesh. Two rhinos were found in Katerniaghat while the other three were in the forests of Pilibhit district. More recently a sixth rhino from Nepal was found in Haldwani in Uttarakhand.

NGOs and experts have expressed the need to monitor the situation to ensure the security of these animals. They also feel that greater co-operation between India and Nepal would help create a more effective corridor for this highly endangered animal.

Source: Neha Sinha. 'Some infiltrators from across border, no one is complaining', *The Indian Express*, 13/06/08.

UTTARAKHAND

Rescue centres for big cats, tuskers in Almora, Haridwar

The Uttarakhand State Wildlife Department has sanctioned Rs. One crore for the construction of two wildlife rescue centres for leopards and elephants in Almora and Haridwar.

The centres will concentrate especially on the problem of man-eating wild animals, the threat from which has increased in the hilly areas of the state in the past few years.

Two years ago, the departmental strategy to deal with man-eaters was to cage and later release the animals in another region. The method, however, proved ineffective as the animals then resumed killing humans in the very area they were released. The department hopes that the problem will be effectively addressed by the state-sanctioned wildlife rescue centres.

Source: Nihi Sharma, 'Rescue centres for big cats, tuskers,' *The Tribune*, 23/06/08

Two conservation reserves for Musk deer in Pithoragarh

The Uttarakhand State Government has proposed the creation of two conservation reserves in Pithoragarh district, aimed specially towards the protection and conservation of the endangered musk deer. The reserves are to be created at Martoli and Burfu and will cover an area of 225 and 80 hectares each.

The new additions will take the number of conservation reserves in Uttarakhand to four. The State already has a conservation reserve in Jhilmil, Haridwar for the swamp deer, and the Asan Conservation Reserve in Dehradun, known for migratory birds (see *PA Update Vol XII*, No. 1).

Source: Jotirmay Thapliyal. 'Musk deers to get two reserves in Pithoragarh', *The Pioneer*, 28/06/08.

Severe staff shortage at Corbett

The Corbett Tiger Reserve is said to be facing a severe staff shortage. According to the Director of the reserve, nearly 40% of the posts here are yet to be filled. Spread over nearly 1300 sq. kms, the tiger reserve has a sanctioned staff strength of 300 people. Even this is considered to be grossly inadequate for the proper management of the reserve.

Presently 102 of the sanctioned 226 posts for forest guards are lying vacant. Problems compounded when 36 forest guards left the state en masse during the recent re-organisation of the State Forest Department. Similarly, of 72 posts for foresters, 27 are yet to be filled. Further, a deputy forest officer, nine range-level officers and

three deputy rangers have not joined the department.

Source: 'Severe staff shortage at Corbett', *The Times of India*, 16/06/08.

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

Record earnings from tourism in Corbett

Corbett Tiger Reserve netted record earnings from tourism for the 2007-08 tourist season. The period from October 2007 to June 2008 brought in Rs. 2.85 crores from the 1.76 lakh people that visited the reserve. The corresponding figures for the preceding year were Rs. 2.35 crores and 1.25 lakh visitors respectively. This marks a 17% increase in number of tourists and a 21% increasing in the revenue. The number of foreign visitors also increased marginally from 7997 last year to 8328 this year.

The figures for 2005-06 were as follows: Domestic tourists - 1,26,714. Foreign tourists - 8,889 and Revenue - Rs 2.10 crores.

Source: Jotirmay Thapliyal. 'Record earnings from tourism in Corbett TR', *The Pioneer*, 30/06/08.

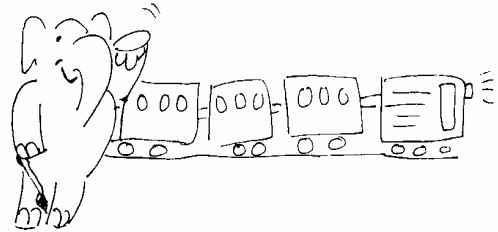
Uttarakhand, UP to work together to curb poaching in Corbett TR

Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh Forest authorities have decided to work together to check poaching and other anti-wildlife activities in the Corbett Tiger Reserve. The southern boundary of the park is in close proximity to Bijnore Forest Division of Uttar Pradesh, where a lot of anti-wildlife activities have been witnessed in recent years.

The Chief Wildlife Warden of Uttar Pradesh has also suggested that the Amangarh forest range of the Bijnore Forest Division be included in the buffer zone of the Corbett TR.

Source: 'State, UP forest authorities' synergy to curb poaching', *The Pioneer*, 20/05/08.

No more elephant deaths by trains in Rajaji



Joint efforts by the State Forest Department and the Indian Railways have ensured that not a single elephant has been killed in a train accident in Rajaji National Park in the last six years. The success is attributed to the 'Railway Patrol Unit' that has been meticulously monitoring the movement of elephants on the railway tracks in Rajaji since it was set up in 2002.

The unit includes forest officials connected with a wireless system, keeping a round-the-clock watch on both sides of the 18 km railway track passing through the park. The moment the team spots an elephant approaching the tracks, a message is flashed to the Muradabad control station officials, who in turn, inform the train driver on the Dehradun-Haridwar route. The drivers either stop the train or slow it down to allow elephants to safely cross the track. Vigilant railway drivers and patrolling staff are rewarded as an incentive.

As many as 35 trains pass through the park everyday, and 20 pachyderms had fallen prey to speeding trains between 1986 and 2001 (see *PA Updates* 40, 36, 34 & 32).

Source: 'Train hits no longer take toll on elephants,' *PTI*, 10/06/08.

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

Rajaji tusker tramples nine, shot dead

A tusker from the Rajaji National Park that strayed into the fields of Khuddaheri Village trampled nine people, resulting in the death of seven in the last week of May. The elephant was later shot dead by the Forest Department in an operation that lasted six hours.

Villagers held that delays caused by the police as well as the FD were largely responsible for the incident. They said that the police did not open fire soon enough, and though the FD has

been informed immediately after the animal had entered the village, the officials arrived only three hours later.

Forest officials said that though this was not the mating season, the pachyderm might have been in musth, a time when tuskers get aggressive.

Source: Deepak Gidwani. 'Rouge tusker tramples sever, shot dead', *DNA*, 31/05/08.

Rajaji NP grassland to be handed over for temple construction

The Uttarakhand Government is reportedly keen to hand over the 546-hectare Kunao Chor grassland of the Gori range of Rajaji National Park for constructing a temple. Forest officials admit that one of the top Central BJP leaders had visited Kunao Chor a few months ago and wanted a temple to be constructed there on the lines of the Akshardham temple. The Chief Minister's Office is now keenly pursuing the case and CM Mr. BC Khanduri has himself directed that the case be taken up at the earliest.

The grassland that lies along the River Ganga is an ideal habitat for wildlife and is frequently used by elephants to cross the river here. Tigers and other endangered species of wildlife are also seen here regularly.

The Uttarakhand Forest Department is not believed to be in favour of the project, and has pointed to the various difficulties that would arise if the grassland was handed over for the construction of the temple.

Source: Jotirmay Thapliyal. 'For Govt., Rajaji grass is greener for non-forestry', *The Pioneer*, 28/05/08.

WEST BENGAL

Increasing human-elephant conflict along the Bengal-Nepal border

There have been a number of reports of a serious escalation in human-elephant conflict along the North Bengal – Nepal border. Elephants regularly cross the border into Nepal and cause considerable damage to life, property and crops there. Villages like Bamandangi, Bahadurganj, Debiganj and Tiring in eastern

Nepal's Jhapa district have become particularly vulnerable areas for both resident and wild elephant in the past few years. Traversing the Mechi-Sankosh elephant corridor in north Bengal every year, elephant herds crossing the Mechi river often stray into the Jhapa district, where they are attacked by residents apprehensive of depredation.

In a period of less than one week in mid-June, residents of the Nepali border village of Bamandangi allegedly killed two wild elephants. Both the animals belonged to a herd of 50-odd pachyderms that have been roaming the Kalabari forest that is part of the Mechi-Sankosh elephant corridor.

On June 18th, the body of an electrocuted female elephant calf was found on the dry riverbed of the Mechi. Foresters alleged that residents of Bamandangi had hooked power illegally from a high-tension wire and laid it either on the ground or a fence to prevent elephants from entering their villages.

A 15-member special investigation team – comprising representatives from the forest, police and power departments, and from forest protection and eco-development committees – had already been formed in the Kodal Basti range in the Cooch Behar forest division to inform the electricity department of illegal hooking, and to inform the villagers that illegal tapping can result in the filing of non-bailable cases against both the landowner and the power provider.

On June 22nd, the body of a bullet-ridden adult female elephant was found at Bamandangi in Nepal, shot dead by the residents while chasing an elephant herd away from the village. Members of Naxalbari Science and Adventure Association, who first spotted the carcass, showed video footage of the body riddled with bullet injuries to the Border Security Force that guards the border.

The continued fatalities have prompted forest officers on the India side of the border to chalk out a strategy to prevent the pachyderms from moving into Nepal. Four trained elephants — two each from Gorumara National Park and Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary have been brought in to prevent the wild herds from crossing the border and to guide them towards the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary through Lohagarh.

The elephants generally move towards Lohagarh from the Kalabari forests of Naxalbari, and then journey through Nepaniabusti and

Bamanpokhri to reach Mahananda. All these places are located along the elephant corridor stretching from Mechi on one side and Sankosh on the Bengal-Assam border on the other.

NGOs like the Himalayan Nature and Adventure Foundation and People for Ethical Treatment to Animals have expressed serious concern about the elephant deaths along the border, and have written to senior authorities in both countries to take urgent action to resolve the problem. The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee was also to request the Central Government to take up the matter with Nepal. Members of the Nepali NGO, Biodiversity Conservation Society, participated in the operation to keep the elephants from entering Nepal, and have also been campaigning in some of the border villages to stop the attack on elephants.

The Nepalese government, meanwhile, has decided to fence the border villages to prevent elephant deaths and loss of life and property of residents. Work is expected to start soon on the Rs. 7 – 8 lakh project for erecting low-voltage electric fences along the border to keep the elephants from crossing over.

The matter has been of concern for some time now. At a meeting held in 1997, India and Nepal had decided to adopt a number of steps to protect wildlife. These included monitoring of the trans-boundary movement of wild animals and the establishment of a local system for early exchange of information. The meeting had also resolved that a complementary anti-poaching mechanism should be in place and illegal wildlife trade and encroachment on forest land ought to be contained.

The fact that 11 elephants have died on the border in the last five-six years seems to indicate, however, that none of the agreed measures have been effective, or even implemented.

Source: 'Calf dies as power cell takes charge,' *The Telegraph*, 18/06/08
'Bid to confine jumbo herd,' *The Telegraph*, 20/06/08
'Bullet ridden carcass found,' *The Telegraph*, 22/06/08

'Buddha to help save elephants,' *The Telegraph* 23/06/08

'Fence to save man & elephant,' *The Telegraph* 25/06/08

Monkeys to prevent poaching, tree smuggling in the Sunderbans



The West Bengal Forest Department (FD) has proposed to set up a squad of trained monkeys to protect the forests and the wildlife in the Sunderbans.

The idea came up after one of the FD's wildlife experts deployed a trained monkey in Raidighi in the Sunderbans. After a few days it was noticed that poachers and wood smugglers were avoiding the area. Those involved in timber smuggling also pointed out that they could not match the speed of the monkeys who harassed them and interrupted their activities.

Source: Sumanta Ray Chaudhuri. 'Now, simians to save the Sunderbans', *DNA*, 26/06/08.

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

Workshop on Community Forest Governance in North Bengal

A two-day workshop on Community Forest Governance was recently co-organized in the Himalayan Darjeeling village of Takdah by the National Forum of Forest Peoples and Forest Workers (NFFPFW), the North Bengal Regional Committee, the Himalayan Forest Villagers Organisation and the North Eastern Society for the Protection of Nature (NESPON).

Forest dwellers from all over North Bengal attended the workshop and discussed the possibility of establishing community control over all natural resources in their forest areas as provided in the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (STODRFRA).

The workshop discussed the possible contours and theoretical boundaries of a Community Forest Governance (CFG) process and outlined a set of simple tasks to initiate it in North Bengal. These include: demarcation of CFRs at landscape level including agricultural areas, grazing lands and water bodies, preparing a resource map of the CFR, publicly proclaiming control of the area, preparing a Management Plan of the CFR and initiating the governance process, forming necessary committees and other institutions.

After analyzing and assessing the strength of the ongoing forest movement in the area and other variables like the amount of and type of natural forests left in the CFR, six forest areas were selected for immediate practice of CFG: These are

Darjeeling: A cluster of four gramsabhas adjoining/inside Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS).

Kalimpong: A Cluster of five gramsabhas adjoining the Neora Valley National Park (NP).

Kurseong: A cluster of five gramsabhas adjoining/inside Mahanada WLS.

Jalpiguri: A cluster of five gramsabhas adjoining Gorumara NP.

Coochbehar: A cluster of two gramsabhas inside Jaldapara WLS.

Buxa: A cluster of two gramsabhas inside the Buxa Tiger Reserve.

Source: Soumitro Ghosh. Email dated 29/05/08 and Note issued at the end of the workshop on Community Forest Governance.

Contact: **Soumitro Ghosh.** Email: soumitrag@gmail.com

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

Wildlife Bureau hit by staff shortage

The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) is grappling with an acute staff shortage, caused partly by the absence of any recruitment policy.

70% of the total 110 sanctioned posts are yet to be filled. Set up last year by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Bureau is mandated to develop infrastructure and capacity for scientific and professional investigation into wildlife crimes and assist State Governments in prosecutions related to wildlife crime. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIV, No. 2, Vol XIII, No. 5 and Vol XII. No. 4).

Source: 'Wildlife Bureau grappling with staff shortage,' *The Hindu*, 02/06/08

Corridors to alleviate elephant crisis in Eastern Indian states

Senior wildlife officials from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and Bengal met in the first week of June to work out an inter-state co-ordination strategy, and to resolve the long standing issue of human-elephant conflict. Organised by the wildlife wing of the Orissa Forest Department, the workshop titled "Man-Elephant interface for the eastern regional states of India" focussed on conflicts arising due to spatial and food-related problems.

The issues that were discussed during the meeting included habitat and corridor fragmentation, poaching, retaliatory killing, deaths in train mishaps and electrocution, upkeep and registration of captured animals, the skewed sex ratio (1:2.7) according to the last elephant census, timely payment of compensation, uniform rules for ex-gratia and crop insurance.

About 2,000 villages spread over 24 districts in Orissa are affected on a day-to-day basis by residing or migrating elephants. Human-elephant conflict in Orissa resulted in 49 human deaths last year, and a total of 228 deaths between 1998 – 2004, during which there were eight

instances of retaliatory animal killing resorted to by villagers.

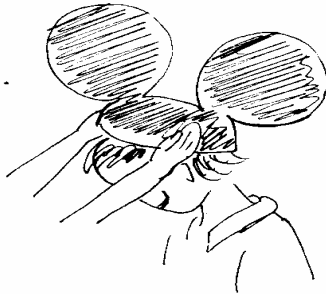
2,888 instances of damages due to elephants were reported between 1994 – 2004, during which about 18000 acres of paddy fields were destroyed. Compassionate payment made between 1992 – 2003 was a little more than Rs. 25 lakhs. (see *PA Updates* Vol XIII, No. 6 & 3 & 1; Vol XI, No. 4; and Nos. 49, 46, 41, 39, 34, 32 & 29.)

Similar situations have also been reported from three other states - Assam, Bengal and Jharkhand — with human deaths last year being 67, 85 and 91, respectively.

Source: 'Corridors to end tusker crisis,'
The Telegraph, 04/06/08

Disney Conservation Award to Shailendra Singh of the MCBT

AND THE
DISNEY
AWARD
GOES TO



Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund (DWCF) has selected Shailendra Singh from India as Disney Worldwide's Conservation Hero. He is the first Indian to receive this prestigious award.

Singh presently spearheads the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust/Turtle Survival Alliance's (MCBT/TSA) Fresh-water Turtle Conservation Programme to ensure the future of wild turtles in their natural habitat. He helped develop a small turtle head-starting facility, the Garhaita Turtle Rehabilitation Centre, near Etawah, and a second similar facility at Deori. He also oversaw the production of *Batagur kachuga* hatchlings and *Batagur dhongoka* hatchlings from in-situ riverside hatcheries within the National Chambal Sanctuary. The majority of the hatchlings were released into the Chambal River while some were reared at the head-starting facilities.

The Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund (DWCF) was established in 1995 by Walt Disney Attractions. It works to enable global wildlife conservation through partnerships with qualified scientists, educators and organizations committed to preserving the earth's biodiversity. Through the DWCF, annual cash awards are distributed to non-profit organizations to protect and study endangered and threatened animals and their habitats.

Contact: Centre for Herpetology, MCBT, Post bag No.4, Mamallapuram-603 104, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044 - 27472447 & 2747 2953. Email: mcbtindia@vsnl.net OR mcbtindia@gmail.com

Whitley Award for Dr. Deepak Apte

Dr. Deepak Apte of the Bombay Natural History Society was recently awarded the Whitley Conservation Award for his project of Marine conservation and local livelihoods in the Lakshadweep Islands.

The project involves harnessing the islanders' expertise to make the marine environment healthier and to improve fish stocks and local livelihoods at the same time. It was focused on the globally endangered giant clam, a species that is also highly sensitive and therefore an important indicator of how climate change or other marine pressures are affecting the reefs in the islands.

The project also resulted in the creation of India's first Marine Conservation Reserve in Agatti (see *PA Update* Vol. XIV, No. 3).

Contact: **Dr. Deepak Apte**, BNHS, Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai 400 023 Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2821811. Fax: 2837615. Email: bnhs_conservation@vsnl.net

SOUTH ASIA

Steps to combat illegal wildlife trade in South Asia

The South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) issued its 'Jaipur

Declaration' in May, recommending the creation of a South Asia Experts Group by member countries to check illegal trade in wildlife. The occasion was the 11th meeting of SACEP that was attended by environment ministers of four South Asian Countries.

The Experts Group will be entrusted with the task of developing a detailed programme for implementing the South Asia Regional Strategic Plan on Illegal Wildlife Trade with assistance of SACEP and other partners. It was also decided that periodic group meets would provide a forum for the development of regional wildlife programmes through networking, sharing and effective dissemination of knowledge and information.

The SACEP meeting further decided to support the South Asia Initiative for combating illegal trade in wildlife; and also recommended the formation of South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN) in the next two years.

Source: 'SACEP to combat illegal trade in wildlife in South Asia,' *Times Of India*, 23/05/08

BANGLADESH

Tiger attacks on the rise in the Sundarbans

At least 11 people, including two from a single family, were killed in June by tigers in the Sunderbans forests in the Munsiganj area of Satkhira district adjoining India's West Bengal. Locals believe that even this casualty figure was a conservative one as there is no way to keep count of the woodcutters and fisher folk who fall victim to the big cats. A tiger was also recently trapped and beaten to death after it killed three people in a village.

Villagers in this region now stand guard in groups at night, light night long fires, let off fireworks, beat drums and shout in chorus on sighting a tiger. Announcements are also made on microphones from village mosques to keep people on guard, particularly at night.

An escalating human population, the encroachment of forestland and natural calamities in region are reported to be the main causes for the increased human-animal conflict.

It has been suggested, for instance, that the recent Cyclone Sidr that hit the region causing nearly 4000 human deaths has also affected the forests and its wild inhabitants.

Source: 'Sundarbans' tiger stalks humans', *The Times of India*, 06/07/08.

NEPAL

Sherpa community creates the Khumbu Community Conserved Area

Sherpa leaders and interested community members of Khumbu declared the Khumbu a Community Conserved Area (CCA) in a meeting held on May 25, 2008.

The CCA includes both Khumbu and Pharak (also known as lower Khumbu) and hence encompasses all of Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone – an area of 1,500 sq. kms inhabited by approximately 6,000 Sherpas and other residents.

Sherpa leaders also decided at the meeting to request the Director Generals of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and the Department of Archaeology to nominate Sagarmatha National Park as a cultural landscape World Heritage Site. It has been a natural World Heritage Site since 1979. (For the full declaration of the creation of the Khumbu CCA please see page 23)

Source: Stan Stevens. Email dated 30/05/08.

Contact: **Stan Stevens**. Email: sstevens.2008@hotmail.com

UPCOMING

29th Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation

The 29th Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation is to be held in Brisbane, Australia from February 17-19, 2009. 'Creating Community Collaboration' is to be the theme of the symposium.

Contact: Colin Limpus, International Sea Turtle Society, C/o Queensland Environmental Protection Agency, Brisbane, Australia.
Email: brisbane2009@seaturtle.org;
col.limpus@epa.qld.gov.au

READERS WRITE

Scientifically flawed...

The news report 'Artificial salt licks for deworming wildlife in Coimbatore district (PA Update Vol XIV, No. 3, June 2008) was interesting, but scientifically flawed. Without knowing the species of parasites (many of which are host specific), there can be no real evidence of cross over of infection. It is just that conditions (possibly mainly environmental) favourable for parasites are present in both wildlife and domestic stock. The premise of cross over, as described, is

flawed. Treatment with anthelmintics will have an immediate but probably short lived effect. Once they have been withdrawn it is likely things will return to their previous state unless environmental conditions are no longer favourable. Anthelmintics have to be used strategically to have any long term benefit.

Note also that it is common to find "heavy" parasitic burdens in animals that are apparently normal. Finding them at a post mortem is easier than finding and isolating the other potential causes of death. Internal parasites are often blamed for deaths when their presence is unrelated. It is easy to see a worm but not so easy to see a virus.....

So though it may be an interesting article that makes good press, we should be cautious of something with so few details and no presentation of the science.

Dr. Nick Honhold
Email: Nick.Honhold@fao.org

Declaration of the Khumbu Community Conserved Area

May 25, 2008
Khumjung, Khumbu

On behalf of the Sherpas of Khumbu, we today declare our Khumbu homeland to be the Khumbu Community Conserved Area – in our Sherpa language (Khumbu Yulwi Tholenkau Densa and Khumbu Samudayik Samrakchan Chetra in Nepali).

The Khumbu Community Conserved Area includes all of what today is also Sagarmatha National Park and Buffer Zone and Sagarmatha National Park World Heritage Site. This is the first Community Conserved Area to be publicly declared by any of the many peoples of Nepal.

Community Conserved Areas are places which communities govern and in which they conserve nature through customary and new cultural values, institutions, and practices. Many thousands of CCAs worldwide have been created by Indigenous peoples and other local communities. Many peoples and communities in Nepal, including many indigenous peoples (adivasi janajati) and other local communities, have traditions of managing their lands as CCAs.

Sherpas have carried out conservation stewardship throughout Khumbu for many generations through our values, community and regional institutions and practices, our ownership and governance of Khumbu as an Indigenous territory, and our collective ownership and management of village lands.

We Sherpas managed Khumbu as a CCA long before this was recognized as a national park, a World Heritage Site, and a national park buffer zone. We and our ancestors through our culture, our institutions, and our practices have maintained this place as a natural environment and a cultural landscape of national and world importance. We are responsible for much of the conservation and cultural landscape practices and achievements which make our homeland a world famous national park and World Heritage Site today.

For Sherpas Khumbu has been a sacred, protected place for centuries. We believe that Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) declared Khumbu a sacred valley (beyul) 1,200 years ago after meditating in Akha Cave on our sacred

mountain Khumbu Yul Lha. We believe that Khumbu is a special place because Guru Rinpoche watches over and cares for it, as does Khumbu Yul Lha, the guardian god of Khumbu and its people, livestock, wildlife, and nature who lives on our most sacred mountain. And Khumbu is special because this is the home of Miyolangsangma, the goddess of Chomolungma (Mt. Everest/Sagarmatha), who is a provider of sustenance to humans.

Sherpas believe that an important part of being Sherpa is respecting all life and not harming other beings. Some think this is especially important because Khumbu is a beyul, a hidden, sacred valley. This honoring of Buddhist values has made Khumbu a wildlife sanctuary for centuries.

Sherpa communities maintain traditions of respecting sacred mountains and sacred forests. We also maintain our community management of forests, grasslands, and alpine areas through regulations and enforcement by village officials called nauwa and through the policies and programs of our buffer zone institutions and our local NGOs such as KACC

(Khumbu Alpine Conservation Council) and SPCC (Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee). We integrate traditional values, institutions, and practices with new institutions and programs which oversee trail and base camp clean-ups, alpine conservation and restoration programs, anti-poaching patrols, solid waste and water treatment, alternative energy development, and a Khumbu-wide firewood collection management system.

Community Conserved Areas have been recognized and endorsed by IUCN (the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) and by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, both of which call on governments to recognize and support Community Conserved Areas. We hope that the government of Nepal will legally recognize and support Community Conserved Areas and that the people of Nepal will join us in celebrating the Khumbu Community Conserved Area.

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