

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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EDITORIAL

Court orders...and happy tigers!

The case of raising the height of the Mullaperiyar dam in Kerala has been one of continued controversy for the last few years. There were concerns about both, the safety of the dam if the height was increased and the impact of the submergence on the forests of the Periyar Tiger Reserve (see *PA Updates* 47, 40, 36, 34 & 30)

Now it appears the matter has been resolved with the Supreme Court (SC) finally allowing for the height increase, one count being that wildlife habitat will be improved and even that wildlife would be happy! No kidding. Here's the relevant extract of the February 27 order passed by a bench of the SC...“...The increase of water level will not affect the flora and fauna. In

fact, the reports placed on record show that there will be improvement in the environment. It is on record that the fauna, particularly, elephant herds and the tigers will be happier when the water level slowly rises to touch the forest line. In nature, all birds and animals love water spread and exhibit their exuberant pleasure with heavy rains filling the reservoir resulting in lot of greenery and ecological environment around.” Wonder what those studying wildlife behaviour have to say. The entire forest department and scientific establishment has not yet been able to establish a credible method of only ‘counting’ tigers and we have reports being presented in court that talk of ‘happy’ tigers and elephants.

Why is it that projects like dams, mining or a thermal power plants most often brook no opposition – not even questioning? Why is it that all of us go to any lengths, even absurd ones, to justify their existence and creation? Even the judiciary?

Here's a November 2004 instance from the Madras High Court dismissing a petition by the Coastal Action Network seeking a stay on Sethu Samudram Canal Project (SSCP) public hearings... “...we would like to mention that we should not obstruct the scientific and technical progress of the country in the name of environment protection.....the basic aim of our country (which) is to make India a powerful and modern industrial state. When the Chinese and Japanese were poor people they were derisively called ‘yellow’ races by the westerners, but today they are industrialized and powerful nations, and nobody dares call them that. Similarly, if we wish to get respect in the world community we must make our country highly industrialized and prosperous”.

What, might one ask, about the laws of the land; about piles of evidence of what dams and projects like the SSCP do / might do to wildlife and the environment; of the poisoned rivers, drowned forests and uprooted people? Is recognition from the world community our only benchmark of our value? Do those who don't benefit from this kind of development have the right to say that? Do we have the right to even think of, leave alone

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articulate, another notion of development? Natural habitats themselves have great value and provide a large number of services and benefits that remain largely unrecognized and unrespected. When will that get into the equations of development?

Will the judiciary please take cognizance? Nobody knows the language of a tiger's happiness! We're still struggling with just counting them!!

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Census held from January 18 to 28

A comprehensive tiger census was planned in Andhra Pradesh from January 18 to 28. It was to be carried out in the districts of Srisailam, Adilabad, East and West Godavari, Khammam, Bhadrachalam and Warangal.

Before the census began the officials said that remote sensing maps and geographical information system (GIS) data provided by the Hyderabad based National Remote Sensing Agency would be used for the counting. It was also decided to collect biological material like the animal's blood, hair, saliva, skin or faecal matter to find out their exact number. The samples were to be sent for DNA fingerprinting to the Hyderabad based Centre for Cellular and Molecular biology to identify individual animals and avoid repeat counts

Additionally, enumerators were to use the encounter method to track the animals along a straight line for about 5 km each day for three days. Photographs of the animals were also to be taken using infra-red cameras.

According to last year's census, there were about 120 tigers in AP – with 72 in Nagarjunsagar Srisailam TR alone and the rest in the Kavali and Papikonda Sanctuaries. The results for this year's census are awaited.

Source: 'AP to use satellite to count tigers', *Deccan Chronicle*, 18/01/06

Contact: **Field Director**, Nagarjunsagar - Srisailam Tiger Reserve, Srisailam Dam (East) –

512103, Andhra Pradesh, Tel: 08524-286089 / 286140(R). Fax: 08524-286071

Opposition to hotel project adjoining Kasu Brahmanand Reddy NP

Environmentalists and wildlife activists have expressed their opposition to the recent auction of about five acres of land adjoining the Kasu Brahmanand Reddy National Park (KBRNP) located in the heart of Hyderabad city. The land abuts the park near the Jubilee Hills Check Post area and was auctioned for an amount of Rs. 335 crores for a hotel project that will come up sans any height restrictions.

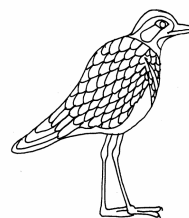
According to an initial plan the government had proposed to leave a part of the five-acre land as a buffer zone for the park and a walkway. Eventually, however, the entire land was allowed for the auction. Officials now say that the walkway and the buffer zone would now be provided within the boundaries of the park.

The land of the park has been a source of continued conflict with the state regularly wanting to use it for commercial purposes. (See *PA Updates* 44, 32, 30 & 26)

Source: ML Melly Maitreyi. 'Inclusion of buffer zone in auctioned land opposed', *The Hindu*, 22/02/06.

Contact: **DFO (WL)**, KB Reddy National Park, Hyderabad –500004. Tel: 040-23607663

Telugu Ganga Canal to be re-routed to protect Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary



The Andhra Pradesh Irrigation Department has taken a decision to re-route the Telugu Ganga Canal to protect the Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary (SLWLS) and important habitat of the critically endangered Jerdon's Courser. A recent study by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) had pointed

out that the canal project was posing a huge threat to the habitat of the courser that is found here (see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 1).

The decision of the state government has been welcomed by national and international organizations and bird experts.

Source: 'Decision brings hope for India's rarest bird', *Birdlife*, 01/02/06.

Contact: **P Jeganathan & Dr. Asad Rahmani**, BNHS, Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai 400023, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-22821811. Fax: 22837615. Email: bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in
DFO, Wildlife, Sri Lankamaleswara WLS, Cuddapah. Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08562-244480

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, (PCCF), Muzam Jahi Circle, Tuljaguda Complex, APHB Buildings, M J Market, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

Officers to be charge-sheeted for road construction inside Kinnerasani WLS

The Andhra Pradesh Wild Life Department recently booked cases against four officials of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) and three contractors for road construction work connecting two villages inside the Kinnerasani Wildlife Sanctuary. They were to be charge-sheeted with a request for the issue of arrest warrants in the Judicial Magistrate court at Kothagudem as well.

Work on the 12-kilometre long road connecting Regalla village and Markodu in Gundala forest pocket was taken up in September last year without the permission of the Forest Department (FD). The work was stopped on the request of the FD, but it was resumed subsequently without informing the department.

It has also been pointed out that drains formed on either side of the road and resulted in dividing the habitat of wild animals.

Source: 'Cases booked against 4 ITDA officials', *The Hindu*, 30/01/06.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer** (Wildlife Management), Kinnerasani WLS, Paloncha & Khammam, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08744-245125

Polavaram irrigation project referred to NBWL

The Union Ministry for Environment and Forests (MoEF) has forwarded the request for environmental clearance of the Polavaram Multi-purpose project to the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) as the project is going to impact significant parts of the Papikonda Wildlife Sanctuary (See *PA Update* Vol. XII, No. 1)

The Andhra Pradesh Government has also been asked to take permission from the Supreme Court as it has issued some guidelines on development activities inside the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

Source: Polavaram irrigation project proposal for wildlife board', *The Hindu*, 19/01/06.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Wildlife, Papikonda Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajahmundry. Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 0883-2478643. Fax: 0883-2476289
CWLW, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhavan, Saifabad, Hyderabad - 500004, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 040-23230561 / 23232668. Fax: 2337889

ASSAM

Conservation training program held at Manas

A week long conservation training programme starting February 22, 2006 was held at the Manas National Park. Titled "Conservation Beyond Boundaries" is was meant for young conservation workers and was organized jointly by the British High Commission, the British Council, Association of British Scholars (ABS) Guwahati Chapter and Aaranyak – a society for biodiversity conservation working in North East India. The Forest Department and Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) were the collaborating agencies for the programme.

23 trainees participated in the program that was inaugurated by Mr. Kampa Borgoyari, Executive Member – Forests and Tourism of the BTC. Those who spoke at the inaugural function included Dr. Bibhab

Talukdar of Aaranyak; Dr Rosie Trevelyan, Tropical Biology Association affiliated to the Cambridge University; Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury, DC Baksa; GC Basumatary, Council Head of Department, Forests BTC; Abhijit Rabha, Field Director Manas National Park; and Sanjay Sarkar of the British Council.

Source: Dr. Bibhab Talukdar, Email dated 24/02/06.

Contact: **Dr. Bibhab Talukdar**, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati - 781028, Assam. Tel: 0361-2266087 / 2228418.

Email: bibhab1@sancharnet.in

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

MoEF opposes quarrying at Mikir Chang near Kaziranga

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has written to the Assam State Government that no quarrying activity could be permitted at Mikir Chang near Kaziranga National Park, as that area was a “no development zone”. The Ministry letter quotes a notification issued on July 5, 1996, under which a “no development zone” has been created within a radius of 15 km around Kaziranga National Park. (The aerial distance from Mikir Chang stone quarry to the national park is 9 km). It also says that the state needs to submit a proposal to the ministry for vetting the mining activity as per the criteria under the Environment Protection Act.

The Forest Department had invited tenders for quarrying here a couple of months ago and this had been opposed by a number of wildlife groups who feared that it would adversely affect elephant migratory routes and other wildlife as well (*see PA Updates Vol XII, No. 1; Vol. XI - Nos. 5 & 4*).

Source: ‘Delhi brakes on quarry in Kaziranga’, *The Telegraph*, 24/01/06.

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

Proposal for eco-sensitive zone around Kaziranga

A proposal is being formulated for declaring a 10 kms circumference area around the Kaziranga National Park as an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ). The Director of the park has said that various inputs like existing land use, earmarking of the industrial estates, area development plans for places with a population of more than 5000 people and a tourism development plan for the area will be needed for the formulation of the proposal that will then be sent to the Centre.

Sites of unique natural heritage in the zone will also be identified and plans for their conservation will be developed for inclusion into the zonal development plan. Strict guidelines will be drawn up by the state government to discourage construction at or near these sites. Buildings of distinct historical or architectural importance will also be identified and plans for their conservation, particularly their exteriors, will be incorporated in the zonal development plan.

The Director also pointed out that the cooperation of the Karbi Anglong district administration would be needed for the successful creation of the ESZ.

It is hoped that creation of the this zone would prevent industrial activity from coming up around the park and also put a stop to the mining and quarrying activity that increased significantly in this region in recent times (see story above).

(Also see *PA Update 52* for edit on ESZ)

Source: ‘Eco zone in Kaziranga to block industry – move to protect park’, *The Statesman*, 10/02/06.

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga NP (see above)
Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam. Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386

CHATTISGARH

Project for wild buffalo conservation

The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the

Chattisgarh Forest Department (FD) to initiate a three-year plan for the conservation and revival of the small population of the wild buffalo in the state.



As part of the project wildlife sanctuaries and national parks covering a geographical area of about 4,200 sq. km will be studied to identify threats and conservation strategies. The project aims to push up the dwindling 'wild buffalo gene bank'. Genetic studies to determine the extent of hybridisation with domestic breed and in addition, relationships of different populations and individuals will also be established. The project will also record the present population of the buffalo in the state and attempt to address some of the problems linked to their habitats.

IUCN, the World Conservation Union, had estimated in 2004 that the total world population of the wild buffalo was certainly less than 4,000 and may well be less than 200. The possibility that no pure bred wild Asian Buffalo exists has also been suggested.

The bulk of India's wild buffalo population (about 90 %) is in Assam. Estimates by the Chhattisgarh Forest Department indicate that the Udanti WLS holds a maximum of 60 buffaloes, while Indravati NP has 49, Pamed WLS - 8, while in Sitanadi and Baihramgarh WLSs the buffalo is considered extinct.

Source: Bindu Shajan Perappadan. 'Project to conserve wild Asian buffaloes', *The Hindu*, 26/02/06.

Contact: **Principal Chief Conservator of Forests**, Chattisgarh State, Jail Road, Raipur. Tel: 0771-331121

KARNATAKA

Proposal for state wildlife crime prevention bureau

The Karnataka Forest Department (FD) has initiated a move to set up a State Wildlife Crime Prevention Bureau on lines similar to the one being set up at the Centre. The FD recently convened a meeting with officials of the Customs

department, Central Industrial Security Force, Forest Intelligence Cell, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences department and its own vigilance staff to discuss the idea. The support of the Police has also been sought to access the Forensic Science lab to ensure evidence gathering becomes more scientific.

An estimated two to three dozen crime cases related to animals in Schedule I and II of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 are booked every year in Karnataka and at least a 100 cases wildlife crime cases are presently pending before the courts in the state.

Source: 'State proposes bureau to prevent wildlife crime', *Decca Herald*, 23/02/06.

NHRC happy with rehabilitation of those displaced by Kabini reservoir and Bandipur NP

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has expressed satisfaction with government efforts for the rehabilitation of those displaced by the Kabini reservoir and the Bandipur National Park.

A status report filed before the commission by the Deputy Commissioner of Mysore on measures for 154 tribal families displaced by the Bandipur National Park shows that the Government has issued certificates of agricultural land and residential plots and beneficiaries' identity cards to them. The Government has taken steps to construct two residential layouts for them and deposited Rs. 11.80 lakhs for power connections in the layouts. The Mysore Zilla Panchayat has prepared an action plan to use state funds for implementing a drinking water supply scheme in the layouts.

A report on the situation here was recently prepared by Mr Chaman Lal, Special Rapporteur for the NHRC (see *PA Update* 52).

Source: 'NHRC happy with rehabilitation efforts', *The Hindu*, 04/02/06.

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

Nagarhole tribals not rehabilitated properly: HC committee

The committee appointed by the Karnataka High Court has reported that the 250 families relocated from the Nagarhole National Park have not been provided proper facilities at the relocation site of Nagapura. The interim report submitted by the committee says that Nagapura has no electricity supply, hospital, or proper infrastructure to create job opportunities for the tribals.

The three-member committee, headed by Prof Mussafar Asadi of Department of Political Science, Mysore University, was appointed in October 2004 to investigate the number of tribal families living in the park area and implementation of schemes to relocate and rehabilitate tribal families. The committee was constituted following a public interest litigation complaining government's laxity in rehabilitating tribals that was filed by the *Budakattu Krishikara Sangha*.

The committee reported the presence of 1738 tribal families in the park. 250 of these have been relocated at Nagapura.

(Also see *PA Updates* 34, 32, 27, 26, 23 & 22)

Source: '250 families denied facilities: HC', *Deccan Herald*, 04/02/06.

Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests**, Wildlife Division, Nagarhole NP, Hunsur, Dist. Mysore, Karnataka. Tel: 08222-252041(O), 252070(R)

Trekking route in 'Veerappan forests'

The Karnataka Forest Department has announced the starting of a trekking route called the 'Mystery Trail' that will take visitors through the dense forests that were once the stronghold of brigand Veerappan. Six places with varied levels of accessibility and mystery, varied landscape and wilderness have been identified as part of the trail. These six places fall under the forest divisions of Chamarajanagar, Kollegal and Kanakapura and include the Biligiri Ranganatha Temple and Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuaries.

The routes will be open from November to March. To start with only one group of six members will be allowed per day on a single identified route and it will be accompanied by

three guides and one armed guard. The trek will cost around Rs 435 — excluding food, travel to the starting point and accommodation. Trekkers can make their own arrangements for food or place early orders and pay for it separately. The maximum distance, 25 km, is covered by the trek from Elephant Camp to Muthathi near Kanakapura while the shortest, 7.5 km, is the one from Bheemeshwari to Chellur Hill.

The CF, Chamarajanagar Circle said that the reason for opening up new routes was to enable local tribal communities to earn a livelihood with their expertise. The routes will be run by the Eco-Development Committee or Village Forest Committee, comprising tribals. The FD hopes to deposit Rs 800 per week, which in turn would go towards the payment of the committee members

A website www.mysterytrails.com with details of initiative has also been launched recently.

Source: 'Now trek on Veerappan trail', *Deccan Herald*, 03/01/06.

Contact: **DCF – Wildlife**, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka. Tel: 08226-22059(O), 22156(R)

KERALA

Demand for 600 sq. kms buffer for Silent Valley NP

Four NGOs, the Bharathapuzha Protection Committee, Malampuzha Protection Committee, One Earth One Life and Jana Jagratha have demanded the creation of buffer zone for the Silent Valley National. A memorandum for the creation of the buffer that could spread over 600 sq. kms was recently presented by the NGOs to Mr. A Sujanpal, Kerala Minister for Forests and Environment

Areas proposed to be included in the buffer zone that was first mooted 20 years ago include forest ranges in Attappady and Mannarkkad. The Minister has said that the matter would be examined and would have to be discussed at various levels before a final decision could be taken.

Source: 'Government will consider plea for Silent Valley buffer zone: Minister', *The Hindu*, 09/01/06.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Silent Valley NP, FD, Mannarghat PO, Dist – Palakad, Kerala. Tel: 0492 – 2442056 / 2453225

Tiger Reserve status sought for Wayanad

The Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department is likely to seek Tiger Reserve status for the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary after a recent field survey suggested a good population of the big cats in the area.

Following the tiger census conducted here from February 20 to 27, the FD has estimated that the total tiger population in the area is between 20 and 25 animals.

The survey teams actually spotted six tigers including cubs in the Tholpetty and Muthanga Ranges of the sanctuary.

Source: 'Tiger reserve status sought', *The Hindu*, 03/03/06.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Wayanad Wildlife Division, P.O. Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad-673 592, Kerala. Tel: 0493-2620454

Eravikulam NP closed for calving season



The Eravikulam National Park (ENP) was closed from February 15 to March 30 for the calving season of the Nilgiri Tahr.

Last year, the park was closed on January 12. This year, the closure date was postponed to mid-February due to the late calving of the Tahrs. This has been attributed to the prolonged rains experienced in the region. 47 tahr births had been reported during the last calving season. The Tahr population in the park according to the Tahr census in May 2005 is 670.

Source: 'Eravikulam national park closed', *The Hindu*, 15/02/06.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Eravikulam NP, PO Munnar, Kerala. Tel: 04865-230487

Vembanad Bird Count 2006

The Vembanad water bird count 2006 was held on January 22 at ten selected sites in and around the Vembanad lake in Kerala that is a part of the Vembanad -Kole Ramsar site. This was the 6th waterbird count organized by the Kottayam Nature Society in this area with the help of the Department of Forests and Wildlife of the Government of Kerala.

72 participants and 18 forest officials participated in the count. Two members of the State Wildlife Board were also present. The program for the water bird count was inaugurated on January 21. Presentations were made on the Identification of Raptors and on the last five years of the waterbird count here.

For the count itself, participants were divided into 10 groups with a senior birdwatcher as leader. They were deployed to their respective sites before 6 am on the 22nd of January and the count was completed by 10 am. Respective group count reports were presented later in the day at the Regional Agriculture Research Station of Kerala Agriculture University at Kumarakom.

The major findings of the count are as follows: Total birds counted were 10496. This was 60% less than the figure of 28256 counted in 2005. Two new birds for the area - Montagu's Harrier and a Red winged Crested Cuckoo were also seen.

Contact: **Dr. B Sreekumar**, President, Kottayam Nature Society, Srinilayam, Near Union Club, Kottayam - 686 001, Kerala. Email: ktm_bskumar@sancharnet.in
Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-2322217 / 2360452 / 2204896. Fax: 2360452 / 2322217

MADHYA PRADESH

Aquatic animal survey in National Chambal WLS

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department conducted its annual Aquatic Animal Survey in the National Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary from February 11 to 25. It was conducted in

the stretch from Sheopur to Chaknagar in Etawah
All researchers of the sanctuary participated. The results are awaited.

Source: SR Taigor, Email dated 03/02/06.

Contact: **S.R. Taigor**, Zoology Department, Jiwaji University, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.
Email: srt_ju311@rediffmail.com
DFO, National Chambal WLS, Morena Division, Morena, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07532-226742. Fax: 07532-227367/234188.

Protests against displacement from Satpura NP and Bori & Pachmarhi WLSs

Thousands of tribals and forest dwellers gathered at Piparia in Hoshangabad to protest against their proposed displacement from the Satpura National Park and the Bori & Pachmarhi Wildlife Sanctuaries that also constitute the Satpura Tiger Reserve (see *PA Updates* 22 & 7). The demonstration that was held in the first week of February was organized by the Samajwadi Jan Parishad, Kisan Adivasi Sangathan and Shramik Adivasi Sangathan.

In defiance of restrictions imposed on them by the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (FD), those participating in the protest, publicly sold minor forest produce, the collection of which has been banned by the FD in the above mentioned areas.

Recently these PAs were also included in the Satpura Tiger Reserve. There are 75 villages in the Satpura Tiger Reserve, of which at least 50 are to be relocated. More than 100 other villages, inhabited mostly by tribals are also located around the STR.

The protesters were also agitating against the decision of STR authorities to ban fishing and draw-down cultivation in the Tawa Reservoir (see *PA Update* 44). The authorities argue that a large part of the Tawa reservoir is included in the Satpura National Park, and existing laws do not permit fishing and draw-down cultivation. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XI. No. 4)

Source: 'Tribals protest against displacement', *The Hindu*, 08/02/06.

Contact: **Director**, Satpura NP Pachmarhi, Dist. Hoshangabad – 461881, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07578-252130. Fax: 07578-252217

Sunil, Kisan Adivasi Sangathan AT/PO Kesla, via Itarsi, Dist. Hoshangabad 461111, Madhya Pradesh

MANIPUR

Manipur demand for Wildlife Crime Cell

The Manipur government is reported to have demanded the creation of a regional Wildlife Crime Cell in Imphal for the control of wildlife crime that is said to be booming in the region. The demand was put up at a conclave of Forest Secretaries and PCCFs that was held in New Delhi in January.

Manipur's contention is that the porous 398-km border it shares with Myanmar makes the presence of the crime-control office imperative in the state. It has also been pointed out that there was only one centre of the anti-poaching cell in Guwahati for the entire Northeast region. This too was heavily understaffed, making it difficult to monitor crime in a huge area.

The Centre is said to be considering the demand of the state favourably.

Source: 'Manipur plea for wildlife cell', *The Telegraph*, 14/01/06.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden** - Manipur, Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795001, Manipur. Tel: 03852 - 220854 / 285385

MIZORAM

Poaching inside Phawngpui NP

Cases of wildlife poaching were detected inside the Phawngpui NP in the month of January. Six Serows, one Sambhar and one monkey were reportedly killed by five people from one of the ten villages located in the fringes of the national park.

Even though the identities of the poachers is not yet known, forest officials have filed a case against the killing of animals.

Source: 'Poaching rampant inside Phawngpui National Park', *Zee News*, 23/02/06.

Contact: **DFO**, Phawngpui NP, Chhintuipui (E), Mizoram. Tel: 03835-232323. Fax: 0389-2322733.

ORISSA

Tiger census in Simlipal

A week-long census of the big cats in the Simlipal National Park was conducted from January 18. Forest and wildlife personnel, members of NGOs and students of the wildlife department of the North Orissa University participated in the exercise. They were split into different units that were assigned areas comprising 15-20 sq km for the counts.

An observer from the Wildlife Institute of India was also to join the census operations that was to collect varied data including direct sighting of the tigers, pug marks, excreta, left over meal, scratch marks and the prey population. All the collected data is to be analysed scientifically to arrive at the final number of tigers, details of which are awaited.

As per the census conducted last year employing the pugmark method, the tiger population in the park was 101.

Source: 'Tiger census begins in Simlipal national park', *The Hindu*, 19/01/06.

Contact: **Director**, Simlipal Tiger Reserve, P.O. Baripada, Dist. Mayurbhanj – 757002, Orissa. Tel: 06792-252593(O), 252773(R) Fax: 256705

1454 crocs in Bhitarkanika NP

At least 1,454 salt water crocodiles were sighted by Forest Division personnel in the annual census, which was recently concluded in the water bodies of the Bhitarkanika National Park. 657 of the crocodiles seen were hatchlings, 283 were yearlings, juveniles (three-year-olds) were 196, sub-adults 121 and adults 197. 54 nests were also sighted. About 100 eggs were collected from the nests in order to hatch them in the crocodile breeding and research centre at Dangamal.

The count was conducted under the supervision of wildlife personnel, crocodile

researchers and experts. The enumerators, assisted by the trained local forest staff, covered the Bhitarkanika river system, besides a large number of creeks, water inlets and nullahs. The Forest Department had also imposed a week-long ban on tourist entry into the park from January 3 to 10 in view of the annual census.

The earlier counts are as follows: 1,449 in 2005, 1,358 in 2004, 1,308 in 2003, 1,330 in 2002 and 1,192 in 2000.

Source: Rajesh Behera. 'Salt water croc population rises to 1,454', *The Pioneer*, 02/02/06.

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

Fall in migratory birds in Chilka; 1700 bird deaths in February

A survey conducted in the last week of January by the Chilka Development Authority (CDA) and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has reported a drastic fall in the number of migratory birds visiting Chilka this season. Fewer birds were reported at Nalabana Island too.

While earlier about 60 to 75 per cent of the birds visiting the lagoon could be found at Nalabana, this figure has come down to 37% this time. Of the estimated seven lakh birds of 102 species seen in the lagoon, only about 2.58 lakh were seen at Nalabana. Last season, in comparison, about 9.48 lakh birds of 97 species had visited the lake

A more recent report revealed that nearly 1700 migratory birds died at Nalabana in January and February. Tests were conducted in three laboratories including the Animal Diseases Laboratory in Bhopal and the Veterinary College at Orissa's University of Agriculture and it has been confirmed that Bird Flu was not the cause of the bird deaths. The cause is said to be pastaeurellosis, a bacterial infection.

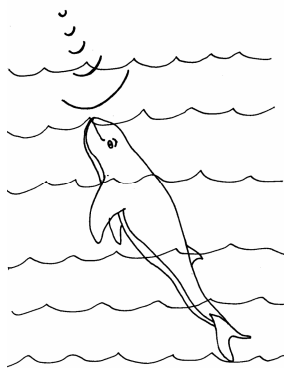
Source: 'Fall in migratory birds visiting Chilika lake', *The Hindu*, 30/01/2006.

‘1700 Chilika birds die, but it’s not flu’,
The Indian Express, 24/02/06.

Contact: **DFO (WL)**, Chilka, 1865/66 Nuasahi
Nayapalli (near Sub PO), Bhubaneswar –
751012. Orissa. Email:
bravo_123@satyam.net.in
AK Patnaik. CDA, BJ-45, BJB Nagar,
Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 –
434485. Email: ajitpatnaik@hotmail.com
Website: www.chilika.com

Acoustic technology to study Dolphins in Chilka

A seven-member Japanese team, led by Prof. Tamaki Ora from University of Tokyo, recently conducted a pilot application of an acoustic technology to observe the behaviour and ecosystem of the Irrawady Dolphins in Chilka Lake. The study was carried out with the involvement of the Chilka Development Authority (CDA), and experts from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, and the World Wide Fund for Nature – India. It was supported by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology.



It was also pointed out that the Chilka system was a major step for introducing and testing a day and night automated acoustic survey system for different species of endangered marine mammals.

The study revealed the presence of the Irrawady Dolphins at selected five pockets of the Chilka Lagoon and indicated that the Dolphin moves at two meters per second. The other information is to be analysed shortly in Tokyo.

It has also been suggested that a more ambitious survey of the Ganges River Dolphin would be soon carried out using the same technology.

Source: ‘Acoustic technology by Japanese team to study Dolphins in Chilka’,

<http://news.webindia123.com/news/showdetails.asp?id=227146&cat=India>,
22/01/06.

Rise in Irrawady Dolphin population in Chilka

A census of the Irrawady Dolphins in the Chilka lake conducted by the Chilka Development Authority (CDA) in February has revealed that their population has gone up to 130 from the last year’s figure of 111.

Nearly 70 persons, including scientists and experts from the Wildlife Institute of India, various Government agencies and NGOs participated in the survey.

One of the main reasons for the decline of the dolphin population here was the deaths being caused by motorized tourist boats (see *PA Updates* 56, 54, 52, 49, 41, 36 & 29). A total of 38 were reported to have died in the period from 2002 –to 2005. Strict restrictions have now been imposed on the motorized boats used for ferrying tourists here.

Source: ‘Dolphin population on the rise’, *The Hindu*, 18/02/06.

Dogs attack nesting Olive Ridleys at Gahirmatha

Strays dogs have reportedly been attacking the nesting Olive Ridley turtles along Nasi-2 beach of Gahirmatha coast and also digging up and destroying eggs from freshly laid nests. The nesting ground is close to a DRDO defence installation on Wheeler’s Island and unmanned areas under the defence project have become home to stray dogs.

The Forest Department has requested the DRDO to launch measures to stop dogs from reaching the turtle nesting grounds. A protective fencing of fishing nets had been erected to prevent the dogs from entering the nesting ground, but that did not work.

Source: ‘Dogs attack nesting Olive Ridleys’, *The Statesman*, 04/03/06.

PUNJAB

Punjab allows hunting of nilgai, wild boar

The Punjab government recently issued a notification allowing for the hunting of nilgai and wild boar. The permit for hunting would be issued by the respective SDMs after receiving a resolution from the village panchayat, stating that the animals had been damaging their crops. The Forest and Wildlife Departments will not be involved in the process of issuing the hunting permits that would be valid for two months.

A recent census conducted by the Wildlife Department has put the number of nilgai and wild boar in the state at 8000, and 14000 respectively. However, some members of the wildlife advisory board have contested the figures saying that these were exaggerated.

(Also see *PA Updates* 50 & 46)

Source: 'Punjab allows hunting of nilgai, boars', *The Statesman*, 09/03/06.

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

RAJASTHAN

Keoladeo NP huge lake 26000 years ago

Recent research conducted by palaeobotanist, Dr. Chhaya Sharma of the Lucknow based Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany has revealed the existence 26000 years ago, of a huge lake at the site of the marshes of the present day Keoladeo National Park (KNP).

In those days the Bharatpur region was receiving enough rainfall to feed the lake. This changed in subsequent years with climatic change, less rainfall, silting of the lake and it eventually becoming shallow. The study has also revealed that there was corresponding change in the local vegetation scenario in the region where the wetland was situated.

The outcomes are based on the Palynological (study of pollen and spores) analysis of the soil samples collected from a 15 feet deep trench from different levels in chronological order some three years ago.

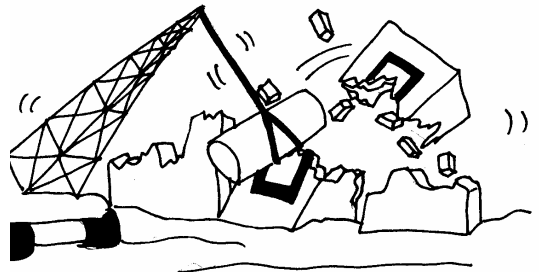
Another study conducted at the nearby Moti Jheel (presently under cultivation) corroborates Dr. Sharma's findings. Radiocarbon dating of soil samples of the lake have indicated that there was a lake here about 9000 years ago.

It has been suggested that further studies undertaken on these lakes are likely to throw more light on the origin, development, past vegetation, climatic fluctuations and advent of desert conditions in Rajasthan.

Source: Venugopal Pillai. 'Bharatpur saga lies in womb of remote past', *The Hindustan Times*, 11/02/06.

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

Demolition drive near Ranthambore



25 hotels in the vicinity of the Ranthambore NP were brought down in the first such demolition drive here in January. The state government has said that the buildings were standing on agricultural land and were being used for commercial gains that is violative of the Rajasthan Land Revenue Act (LRA).

Sources in the administration said preparations had been on for a month on the listing of the illegal structures along the road leading to the park. 32 properties were listed for violation of Section 90 (a) of the LRA. The section prohibits commercial activities on agricultural land unless a change of land use is first obtained from competent authorities.

The state administration had decided to undertake a survey about two months ago to establish which properties were in violation of the LRA and also conducting commercial

activity within 500 meters of the boundary of the park. In December 2002, the state had passed a directive banning the change of land use for properties falling within 500 metres of the forest boundary, but this was being openly flouted.

The survey conducted by a committee headed by the Naib-Tehsildar of the revenue department revealed numerous violations and notices were issued to 88 properties in December 2005. Owners who had obtained land use change submitted their papers, following which demolition notices were issued to 32 properties. Another 34 properties are also said to have been issued notices in the 2nd round of the process.

Source: 'Demolitions in Rajasthan spark row', *NDTV*, 20/01/06.
'Demolition drive around Ranthambhor Park', *The Hindu*, 20/01/06.
Kushal Yadav. 'Demolished - Illegal structures around the Ranthambore national park', *Down to Earth*, 15/02/06.

Contact: **Director**, Ranthambore TR,
Sawai Madhopur – 322001, Rajasthan. Tel:
07462-220223 / 222004 / 221139 / 221142
CWLW Government of Rajasthan, Van
Bhavan, Vaniki Path, Jaipur – 302005,
Rajasthan. Tel: 0141-2380832 / 2540531.
Fax: 2380496/ 2380832

SIKKIM

Workshop on eco-tourism

A workshop on ecotourism was organized in Gangtok in the last week of January by the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE). It was attended by officials of the Sikkim Forest Department, the Eco Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS), various NGOs and the state tourism department.

The workshop was part of the four-state eco-tourism study being conducted by ATREE to synthesize the experience of eco-tourism in Sikkim, West Bengal, Kerala and Karnataka. The workshop in Sikkim was the 3rd in the series, while the 4th one will be in Darjeeling.

The basic purpose of the project is to formulate guidelines covering economic, ecological, social and cultural parameters for evaluating and implementing eco-tourism.

Source: 'Workshop mulls eco-tourism', *The Statesman*, 26/01/06.

UTTAR PRADESH

Migratory birds flock to Sursarovar Sanctuary (Kitham lake)

More than an estimated one lakh migratory birds have been reported from the Sursarovar WLS (Kitham lake) near Agra. This is the first time that such a large number of birds have been seen here in the last decade, the reason for which is the clearing of water hyacinth that had choked the water body.

Nearly 55 species of birds including pelicans, Bar Headed Geese and storks were reported from the lake.

Source: 'Winged visitors grace Kitham lake after a decade',
<http://www.newkerala.com/news2.php?action=fullnews&id=1706>

47 birds found dead in Okhla WLS

Forty-seven birds were found dead in the first week of February at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary located on the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border. Members of Delhi Bird Group, Wildlife Protection Society of India and Wildlife SOS along with the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department immediately helped collect the dead birds that included 40 Shovellers, three Common Teals, two Black-Headed Gulls, one Little Egret, one Medium Cormorant, and one Little Cormorant, and also three large fish

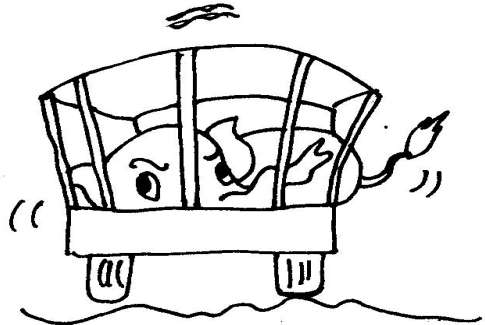
Autopsies carried out showed that many of the shovellers had fresh fish inside their digestive tract indicating that death was sudden. Some of the carcasses were also sent for testing to the Animal Disease Investigation Laboratory, Bhopal and its satellite centre Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory, Jalandhar and the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly. The exact cause of deaths is not yet known.

Source: Belinda Wright. '47 birds found dead at Okhla'. Email dated 04/02/06.
Amlan Dutta. Email dated 12/02/06.

Contact: **DFO**, WL, National Chambal Wildlife Division (I/c Okhla WLS), Mau Van Block, Agra, UP. Tel: 0562-2320091.
Belinda Wright, WPSI, S-25 Panchsheel Park, New Delhi – 110017. Tel: 011-41635920 / 4163.5921. Fax: 41635924.
Email: wpsi@vsnl.com Website: www.wpsi-india.org
Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow – 226001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-206584(O), 2237715 & 2223015(R). Fax 0522-222061/ 206188

Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3211750. Fax: 3211529
Email: atanu_raha@hotmail.com

Problem elephant translocated from Midnapore to Mahananda



WEST BENGAL

Tiger Census held in the Sundarban

The first phase of the tiger census in the Sundarban was conducted from January 5. The entire expanse of the Sundarban Reserve Forest was divided into 51 census units, with each spanning an average area of 60 to 80 sq km. The survey teams, comprising of four members each, included three forest officials and a NGO member. 22 NGOs participated in the count.

Mr. Rajesh Gopal, Director, Project Tiger, and Dr. Qamar Kureshi, Wildlife Institute of India also visited the area for the census. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has also recruited Kamal Naidu, former Principal Chief Conservator Forest, Andhra Pradesh and A S Negi, former, Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttaranchal, as observers for the process.

Apart from making an estimate of the tiger population, this phase of the census here also involved the counting of fishing cats, otters, crocodiles and water monitors. A significant initial observation was related to the large number of otters that were seen during the surveys along the river banks. The survey teams were also reported to have come across a large number of tiger pugmarks and large numbers of spotted deer too.

The final results of the census are awaited.

Source: Suchetna Haldar. 'Tiger census brings good news for otters', *The Indian Express*, 09/01/06.

Contact: **Director**, Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve, Bikash Bhavan, 3rd Floor, North Block,

In what is being considered one of the longest trans-locations of a wild elephant in West Bengal, a 10-foot tall lone tusker, responsible for the death of seven persons and the destruction of hutments in West Midnapore district over the past eight months, was transported over a distance of 860 km to the Mahananda forest range in north Bengal. Here it was released in the wild.

There have been occasional trans-locations of elephants in the state but such exercises had involved sub-adult elephants. Never has a wild tusker of this size been transported over such a long distance. A radio-collar acquired from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, has been fastened to the tusker to track its movements.

Forest officials said they had the option of shooting the elephant, but decided against it after the advice of the Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee.

Source: 'A troublesome tusker is moved', *The Hindu*, 09/02/06.

Contact: **DFO, Wildlife Division - I**- Mahananda WLS, Old Secretariat Campus, P.O. & Dist. Darjeeling – 734101, West Bengal. Tel: 0354-254308(O) / 256524(R). Fax: 256524.
Email: dfowl1@dte.vsnl.net.in

Birth control for captive elephants in West Bengal

The West Bengal wildlife authorities have launched a birth control program for captive elephants at three elephant camps in the north of the state. There are about 80 captive elephants in the camps in the wildlife sanctuaries and national parks in north Bengal, where on an average five to six calves are born each year.

Some of the camp elephants get impregnated when they go out to the forests to graze. Their growing population had become a matter of concern for the authorities who find it difficult to provide requisite fodder. There is also the problem of space and employing additional mahouts and grass-cutters in the camps. Since there is a ban on gifting or sale of elephants to other organizations and the growing number of calves, juveniles and sub-adult elephants are become a cause of concern for the FD.

Recently a team of experts from the Assam Agriculture University, accompanied by a specialist from the USA visited the camps and came up with a list of prospective elephants for the birth control program. It is proposed to inject the female elephants with 'immuno-contraceptives', - a procedure developed in the US and which has been successfully tried out on wild elephants in South Africa.

The permission of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is being sought for the program.

Source: Marcus Dam. 'Contraceptives for elephants', *The Hindu*, 07/03/06.

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

Fire in Singalila NP

Nearly 75 hectares of the Singalila National Park were affected by fire in the first week of March. The fire broke out in the higher reaches of the park. It was reportedly confined to the ground-level and therefore the damage was limited. It took place in different patches and was confined mostly to areas with bamboo. There was no report of any wildlife casualty.

The fire fighting was done jointly by the staff of the Territorial and the Wildlife divisions of the Forest Department. Nearly 90 people, 70 of whom were labourers from the nearby forest villages of Gurdung and Beechgoan were deployed to put out the fire.

The Forest Department was put on high alert for further fires due to the prevailing dry weather conditions in the region. Fire fighting teams have been set up in every forest block. Fire lines were being created and controlled burning was also being undertaken in some places

Source: 'Singalila fire put out', *The Statesman*, 09/03/06.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Singalila NP, Bengal Natural History Museum, Near Old Secretariat Building, P.O. & Dist. Darjeeling - 734 101. West Bengal. Tel: 0354-254308(O) / 256524(R). Fax: 0354-256524

Rs 3.9 cr for forest village development in Darjeeling Territorial Division

The Central Government has sanctioned a sum of Rs 3.90 crore for development of forest villages under the Darjeeling Territorial Division. The money is to be used through the Forest Protection Committees and Eco-Development Committees.

Micro-plans have been devised for each of the 28 villages where the development work is to be taken up. This would include laying of GI pipes to provide water, paving of roads to make them motorable, laying of foot tracks where they don't exist, and the construction of community halls, school buildings, teacher's quarters and toilets.

The Wildlife (I) Division has been separately sanctioned Rs 1.19 crore for undertaking development in the 20 odd forest villages located in the fringes of sanctuaries and national parks. The total fund, that was released last December, is to be spent over two years. The money for Wildlife Division, however, is meant only for this year

Source: 'Rs. 3.9 cr for forest villages', *The Statesman*, 11/03/06.

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

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

India to join the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking

India has agreed to become a partner in the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT) that was launched by the United States of America in September 2005. The CAWT will focus political and public attention on wildlife trafficking and improve regional / international cooperation on wildlife law enforcement. As a member of CAWT the Indian government will be part of a global team that will promote:

Regional law enforcement cooperation to disrupt the flow of illegally traded animals and animal parts from suppliers to distributors; Education and public awareness campaigns with a view to reducing consumer demand for endangered wildlife; Technical exchanges to strengthen the Government of India's Bureau of Wildlife Crime Prevention and make the Wildlife Institute of India a center of excellence.; Strengthening capacity of local officials to apprehend and prosecute traffickers.

Initially, the coalition consisted of the United States and seven internationally known conservation organizations – Conservation International, TRAFFIC International, WildAid, Save the Tiger Fund, Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Smithsonian Institution, as well as the American Forest and Paper Association.

Since CAWT's formation, UK, International Tropical Timber Organization, Cheetah Conservation Fund, International Fund for Animal Welfare and Humane Society International have also joined as partners.

Additionally, India and the US have also agreed to pursue several new initiatives to promote wildlife conservation. This includes:

- Strengthening capacity of park rangers and related officials to manage parks and reserves,
- Fostering economic incentives, such as

ecotourism, to give those living near wildlife a stake in conservation. & c) Cooperating to gain better scientific understanding human wildlife conflicts.

Source: 'India and United States Agree to bold new steps to save wildlife', Fact Sheet, Bureau of Oceans, Environment and Science, US,
<http://www.state.gov/p/sca/r/ls/fs/2006/62490.htm> 02/03/06.

Directory of Environment and Wildlife Film makers and Audio-Visual resources

The Centre for Media Studies (CMS) is putting together two directories, one on Environment and Wildlife Film makers and another on Audio-Visual Resources.

The first one would have profiles, list of films and contact details of film makers, while the 2nd would provide details of documentary films and public service messages on the environment, wildlife and other forest related issues. CMS is seeking inputs, including for listing of filmmakers in the directories.

Contact: **Rohit Singh**, Programme Officer, CMS
Saket Community Centre, New Delhi -
110 017. Tel: 011-2499 2597 /
26522255. Fax: 2696 8282.

Email: rohit@cmsindia.org; cmsenvis@cmsindia.org;

SOUTH ASIA

Biological Corridors planned along the Indo-Nepal-Bhutan border

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) has proposed a Rs. 24 crore project for the creation of three biological corridors across the Indo-Nepal-Bhutan international border. These will connect forests in Darjeeling and Sikkim in India, eastern Nepal and western Bhutan.

The first of the corridors will connect Singalila NP with Senchal WLS. The 2nd one

will link Senchal WLS to the Mahananda WLS and the last one will be between Mahananda WLS and Neora Valley NP. Funding support is presently being sort for the project.

Source: Bappaditya Paul. 'Green corridors across borders', *The Statesman*, 01/03/06.

BANGLADESH

Villagers, forest staff from Bangladesh PAs visit West Bengal

The Bangladesh Forest Department's Nishorgo Program organized an exposure visit for the local stakeholders and forest staff from protected areas in Bangladesh to PAs in West Bengal. The group had 29 villagers including women and nine foresters from the Lawachara NP, RemaKalenga WLS, Satchari NP, Chunati WLS and the Teknaf Game Reserve. The trip was conducted from February 22 to March 1 and the participants visited the Mahananda, Senchal and Jaldapara WLSs and the Buxa Tiger Reserve.

The main purpose of the visit was to expose the visitors from Bangladesh to the participatory management approaches in the PA management in West Bengal.

Source: 'Forest Dept. Nishorgo program for participative management practice', *Nation*, 03/03/06.

Contact: **Mehrin Ahmed Mahbub**, NSP, IRG/ USAID, House 68, Road 1, Block I, Banani, Dhaka 1213, Bangladesh. Tel: 9873229 / 9871553.

E-mail: mehrin@irgbd.com Website: www.nishorgo.org

UPCOMING

International Conference on Conservation in Conflict

An International Conference on Conservation in Conflict is being held in Kathmandu from April 25 - 29, 2006. It has been organised jointly by the Wildlife Watch Group, the Embassy of Finland in Kathmandu, the WWF Nepal Program and The Mountain Institute.

The overall objective of conference is to identify and raise awareness about the negative impacts of armed conflict on the environment, and to develop strategies to mitigate impacts during and after conflict.

The more specific objectives are to:

a) to bring together experiences of conservation management in areas affected by armed conflict from various parts of the world to better understand the challenges, b) to review negative impacts of armed conflict on conservation organizations and their efforts, c) to analyze a wide range of practical experiences in reducing these impacts during and after conflict & d) to come up with resolutions to strengthen the international legal framework and improve enforcement of existing international conventions in protecting the environment.

Contact: **Mangal Man Shakya**, Conference Director, GPO Box 8975, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: +977 1 5550452, 5553870, 5524188, 5011010. Fax: +977-1-5011006. E-mail: wwg@citesnepal.org; info@citesnepal.org

Training course on Participatory management of protected areas

RECOFTC has organized a training course on participatory management of protected areas in Bangkok from September 11-23, 2006.

This course is designed to provide forestry, natural resource, and conservation professionals a deeper understanding of why it is important to include local communities in the management of PAs and to better understand how this can be done. It will also help participants gain the analytical skills needed to enable them to better conceptualize and overcome problems in the application of participatory protected area management within their own specific situations.

The objectives of the course are to:

- Introduce key concepts and issues in participatory management of protected areas;
- Increase understanding on important approaches in implementing protected area management; and

- Build basic skills in participatory planning and design of conservation initiatives.

The course is divided into three modules:

- 1) Principles and concepts in participatory management of protected areas;
- 2) Participatory approaches, tools and methods; &
- 3) Participatory planning, monitoring, evaluation.

Those who apply should currently have direct responsibility in a PA program or be scheduled to work in PA management on completion of the course.

For other details including costs of the course
 Contact: **Ronnakorn Triraganon**. Tel: (66-2) 940 5700 Ext. 1234. Email: contact@recoftc.org

International Seminar on Protected Area Management

The 2006 International Seminar on Protected Area Management is being held from August 2 to 19 at the University of Montana, USA. The program is initiated and organized by the USDA Forest Service Office of International Programs and the Universities of Montana, Idaho and Colorado State.

The Seminar is a technical and professional course designed for mid-career planners and managers of nationally significant protected areas worldwide. Participants will evaluate policies and institutional arrangements that sustain both people and natural resources. They will also develop action plans tailored to interests and demands within their own countries. Participants will also travel to several types of protected areas including the Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks, the National Bison Range, Lubrecht Experimental Forest, as well as wildlife refuges, tribal lands and National Forests.

Particular attention will be directed toward collaborative planning, sustainable tourism development and ways to incorporate community interests with visitor management.

Contact: **Paul Lachapelle**. College of Forestry and Conservation, 32 Campus Drive, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812 USA. Tel: (406) 243-6657. Email: pam@cfc.umt.edu

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

OPPURTUNITIES

Opportunities at the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust

The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT) has advertised for two openings:

- a) Education Officer:** The Education Officer (EO) will be responsible for developing and co-ordinating the overall education program for the MCBT. The main focus of the education program is the village schools along the East Coast Road where the MCBT is located. Structured programs and field visits will have to be developed and organized for other schools and colleges as well. The EO is also required to raise funds by writing proposals for the various education programs.
- b) Projects Co-ordinator cum Office Manager:** The Projects Co-ordinator (PC) will be involved with overall office management and control and would be responsible for coordinating all project activities of the MCBT

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

Director General – ICIMOD

The Board of Governors of the Kathmandu based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is seeking applications for the position of Director General following the completion of the current Director General's second term in 2007.

The position requires a highly experienced professional who has:

- an established reputation and experience in senior management including managing scientific research and development programmes
- a broad understanding of the biological, environmental and social sciences

underlying sustainable mountain development

- a PhD in a relevant discipline or equivalent experience
- working experience in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region
- in-depth knowledge of the main development and policy issues in the region
- demonstrated success in raising international funds

Contact: Bourrier International Consultants Inc:

Email: bici@sympatico.ca. For further information on ICIMOD and a full job description, visit

<http://www.icimod.org/vacancy/dg.html>

Field researcher needed in Sariska

A field researcher is required for a three-year field study on the effects of anthropogenic disturbance on tropical dry forest bird communities in and around Sariska Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan.

The project that begins in May 2006 is funded by the research grant scheme of the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF).

Candidates should possess a Master's degree in a related field of biology and demonstrate commitment to sustained field-based work. Prior field experience in bird identification and quantitative ecology will be preferred.

Contact: **Dr. Ghazala Shahabuddin**, Environmental Studies Group, Council for Social Development, 53, Lodi Estate, New Delhi-110003. Tel: 011-24616061 / 24611700 / 24615383 / 24693065. Current contact: 977-1-4422455 (Nepal) Email: ghazalafarzin@yahoo.com; ghazalafarzin@rediffmail.com

READERS WRITE

Tigers at Namdapha

The reports and assertion in the media recently and in the *Protected Area Update* (Vol. XII, No.1, February 2006) that Namdapha NP in Arunachal

Pradesh had been completely stripped of tigers due to poaching is not wholly correct.

Namdapha is a vast area, which had never been thoroughly surveyed and as such exact population of any wildlife, including tigers, can never be ascertained with exact accuracy. That, however, does not indicate that the tiger or any other wildlife had completely vanished from the area.

I and my team have been constantly moving about the whole of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh, including many interior parts of Namdapha, for wildlife survey works, specially as part of our Hoolock Gibbon conservation project in Eastern Arunachal. In my many field trips I have often got reports of the presence of tigers existence and have recorded evidence as well. This includes pug marks, scats, and scratch marks. This surely indicates that tigers do exist in Namdapha and other parts of Eastern Arunachal.

Nevertheless, poaching, specially by Lisu and others are a constant threat. The Lisu tribesmen are already under very close scrutiny of the Forest Department and they may not be very prone to carry on poaching activity for too long in the future. But it is absolutely needed that authorities be very vigilant against cross border poaching syndicates. Across the border, Hukwang Valley in Myanmar is well known for its poachers. The FD needs to be further strengthened to check poaching and for better management of Namdapha.

Contact : **Asif Ahmed Hazarika**, Wild Survey North East – USFWS, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh, Tel: 0373-2300558, E-mail – asifhazarika@yahoo.com
Field Director, Namdapha National Park, P.O. Miao, Arunachal Pradesh – 792122. Tel: 03807-222249

Lots of information...

Thanks a lot for the latest issue of *PA Update* (Vol XII, No. 1, February, 2006) that, as always, makes interesting reading. I am greatly rewarded from the tons of information in these issues. Hearty congratulations for carrying on the fine work.

Contact: **Prasun Dasgupta**. Email: prasun01ind@yahoo.com

Statement of the Consultation on The Future of Conservation in India

4-5 February, 2006, Delhi

organized by

Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, Bombay Natural History Society, Foundation for Ecological Security, Kalpavriksh, Nature Conservation Foundation, People's Alliance in Central East India, Samrakshan, Wildlife Trust of India, WWF – India

Background

This Statement has emanated from a two day Consultation on *The Future of Conservation in India*, in which ecological and social scientists, activists, academics, government officers, journalists, and other interested individuals participated. The Consultation was an attempt to move out of the deadlock that the conservation debate seems to have gotten into, especially in the last few months over the tiger crisis and the tribal forest rights bill. It was put together by the above mentioned conservation and social action organizations, with the objective of discussing the increasing threats that both wildlife/biodiversity and people's livelihoods and cultures face. Participants ranged across a wide spectrum of conservation and human rights approaches. With such a range, it was inevitable that there were significant areas of both agreement and disagreement, and the Statement provides a glimpse of both.

This Statement is not an end in itself, but a basis for continued engagement in the complex issues it raises. This includes joint action on areas of agreement, in particular against threats faced by wildlife/biodiversity and communities. It also includes attempts at evolving common understanding and agreement on issues where there is currently a difference or where there remain unanswered questions.

While the rough text of this Statement was prepared at the Consultation, it was finalized through several rounds of circulation to all participants (and invitees who could not attend). A more detailed report of the Consultation is being prepared as a separate document.

28 February, 2006

STATEMENT

As participants of the *Consultation on The Future of Conservation in India*, we note with anguish and concern the continued loss of biodiversity and wildlife across India, as also the continued unjust dispossession and displacement of local communities.

Fundamental Principles

We recognise the following fundamental and inter-linked principles:

1. The need for conservation of biodiversity and other natural resources, with particular focus on threatened/sensitive species and ecosystems, for ethical reasons and as common shared heritage, and the need to achieve this in a manner that is socially just, includes limits to resource use, and at times requires strict nature protection;
2. The need to secure the right of communities to access resources for survival and livelihoods, and their right to human dignity and cultural diversity, in consonance with conservation requirements;
3. The need for democratic governance, to achieve both conservation and livelihood security, through a variety of strategies;
4. The need to fundamentally challenge the currently dominant, unsustainable model of development and commercialization, and the unsustainable consumerism by the privileged, both of which are destructive of nature as also people's livelihoods

Key Strategies

Based on the above principles, we stress the following strategies (not meant to be exhaustive, but only indicative):

1. Harmonising development with conservation and livelihood security

- Making more stringent the processes and norms of environment impact assessment and clearance of development projects; challenging the serious subversion of existing EIA and clearance procedures which has led to unjustified clearing of several destructive development projects threatening ecologically sensitive areas and peoples' livelihoods; opposing the ongoing EIA "re-engineering" (including the 2005 draft EIA notification) which seeks to dilute rather than strengthen current processes, and demanding in its place a notification developed after widespread consultations

and expert environmental inputs; ensuring transparency, accountability, and civil society participation in all environmental decision-making; seeking a policy to evaluate not only individual projects but entire economic or developmental sectors like energy, infrastructure, mining, irrigation, and so on; and building civil society capacity to monitor official processes as also independently carry out such processes.

- Evolving land and water use and landscape/seascape level planning, including appropriate zoning in and around protected areas, conservation in the entire landscape beyond protected areas, and the use of agroecological and ecoregional approaches that encompass multiple land/water uses.
- Evolving and supporting ecologically and socially sensitive development strategies that meet the needs of communities, while opposing/resisting development processes and projects that are not so; for this, working on joint advocacy, action research, and engagement on the ground.
- Assessing and challenging the consumerism of the urban and rural rich; using tools such as the “ecological footprint” to assess the full impacts of such consumerism, and developing product prices to reflect their ecological impact.
- Critically examining claims of corporate social responsibility, many of which appear to be more ‘greenwashing’ and superficial than genuine attempts to become more environmentally and socially sensitive.

2. Achieving effective conservation

- Learning from working models where conservation has been successful, in particular where it has managed to integrate the security of ecosystems and species with the livelihood security of local people.
- Examining the basis on which the current protected area system is set up, and the need for rationalization (including of protected area boundaries, categories, representative sites, corridors, inviolate and multiple use sites), leading to appropriate additions/deletions and changes in categories, with the end result of a much more scientifically and socially robust system of protected areas that ensures conservation while also protecting livelihood security and community rights .

- Recognizing and supporting community conserved areas as an equally important component of the conservation system, providing legal and other backing to such areas while respecting their diverse community institutions and arrangements, and learning from them for the participatory governance of current official protected areas.
- Considering, reviewing and re-examining the possibilities of a range of governance arrangements for conservation, from government to co-management to community-based, based on principles of conservation, sustainable use, and livelihood rights.
- Ensuring that natural areas currently uninhabited and un-used by people, remain inviolate.
- Re-examining current laws (including the Wild Life Protection Act, Indian Forest Act, panchayat laws, and the Scheduled Tribes Recognition of Forest Rights Bill) from conservation science and social perspectives.
- Making conservation part of the larger political and planning process, and influencing political constituencies to pay more attention to it.
- Establishing the right of bonafide researchers to carry out research in wildlife areas, including in protected areas, which may require critically examining the current guidelines and process of decision-making relating to such research.
- Using laws other than the Wild Life (Protection) Act (WLPA) for conservation, including the Coastal Regulation Zones (CRZ) notification, the Biological Diversity Act (BDA), the Environment Protection Act (EPA), the Fisheries Act (FA), panchayat laws including the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), and others.

3. Moving towards democratic governance

- Empowering panchayat raj and other self-initiated or elected community institutions (including informal customary ones such as fisherfolk federations and village forest protection committees) with the authority to manage ecosystems and resources (akin to the authority of the Forest Department),

while tackling issues of community-level inequities, lack of capacity, and others.

- Using existing (or creating new) institutions for landscape level planning and conservation, including strengthening the conservation and livelihoods work of district planning committees empowered under the 74th Constitutional amendment, and learning lessons from innovative examples across the country.
- Creating institutions of democratic governance, with power-sharing between local communities and wildlife authorities, for all protected areas which have local community presence; in the short-term, urgently implementing the WLPA provision for setting up Sanctuary Advisory Committees in all states.
- Encouraging federations of local institutions to participate in government-level decision-making, including the making of management plans and working plans, and the implementation of schemes.
- Empowering Biodiversity Management Committees being set up under the Biological Diversity Act to manage ecosystems and species in and around villages and towns, building on their own knowledge and practices, mandating that they are directly under gram sabhas or tribal councils or other appropriate constitutional bodies of local self-governance.
- Ensuring implementation of India's obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Programme of Work on Protected Areas, which provides clear direction on conservation efficiency, governance, rights, and benefit-sharing aspects.

4. Establishing rights and responsibilities

- Encouraging identification and establishment of rights of various kinds, across the landscape, addressing issues of whose rights, where, and to what resources/areas; as a specific subset, considering and developing specific steps for this within the ongoing processes of settlement of rights in protected areas.
- Linking rights to conservation responsibilities, ensuring that rights are not misused for unsustainable use of resources for local or non-local demands.
- Considering the needs and impacts of pastoral and non-pastoral nomadic and trans-humant communities, whose rights and need to be involved in decision-making processes are not recognized in law and policy, and whose role as

conservers of indigenous animal breeds is not adequately recognized.

- Considering the special case of traditional hunting communities, and in particular facilitating employment where their traditional or newly adopted skills and/or knowledge could be used, and providing appropriate rehabilitation and livelihood options.
- Distinguishing between 'genuine' rights-holders and other claimants and vested interests that have encroached on ecosystems for commercial interests.
- Evolving a process that decides on conservation requirements ('public purpose'), delineates what restrictions and alternative prescriptions are needed to achieve the conservation goals (identifying species and ecosystems that need different kinds of restrictions), based on best available knowledge and the participation and consent of all concerned; such a process needs to recognize the larger economic and political context, and ensure that costs are not being borne disproportionately by local communities but are being shared by society at large.
- Scientifically assessing and monitoring the ecological impacts of exercising rights, including the intensity and regimes of use, across the landscape.
- Formulating and advocating appropriate amendments to laws that are highly restrictive or violative of rights, such as the Wild Life Protection Act and the Indian Forest Act.
- Reviewing the Scheduled Tribes Recognition of Forest Rights Bill, to ensure more effective establishment of rights of forest-dependent communities, as also more effective achievement of conservation.
- Opposing current and ongoing displacement from protected areas which has happened or is happening in undemocratic, unscientific contexts and has meant disproportionate bearing of costs by local communities; and seeking a full independent review to all current/ongoing proposals for displacement including those from tiger reserves.
- Carrying out an assessment of the net ecological and social impact of displacement from protected areas,

including the ecological impact of people where they are relocated.

- Safeguarding the commons through reviving and strengthening common property regimes; opposing privatization of ‘degraded’ forest and other common lands, and opposing ‘encroachment’ by and allocation of commons to private land-holders/users

Areas for Further Dialogue

We also believe that on the following points, there is a need for further dialogue and information, to work towards a common position in the near future:

- Questioning emerging models of ecological ‘compensation’, including environmental offsets, carbon trading, Net Present Value, Clean Development Mechanism, payment for ecosystem services, public-private partnerships, Compensatory Afforestation fund (CAMPA), and so on, in recognition of the fact that these are extremely controversial and are built on certain mindset of looking at nature as being ‘compensable’ and saleable, and therefore need to be better understood, taken through widespread consultations, and decided upon only after arriving at a broad consensus on whether these are acceptable or not.
- Reforming (especially through power-sharing, democratic functioning, and subsuming under constitutionally or self-initiated village institutions), several current institutions of collaborative management for resources outside protected areas, eg Joint Forest Management committees, Ecodevelopment Committees, and others.
- Fundamentally changing the forest and other government departments from a purely “command and control” role to other roles including those of facilitation, as required in different ecological and social conditions, and bringing in radical structural changes to increase accountability, transparency and scope for public participation.
- Considering situations where people are voluntarily requesting relocation, and developing guidelines to determine situations where/if relocation is necessary, and act on these.
- Re-examining the socio-economic and scientific rationale behind keeping some areas inviolate and incorporating this rationale into future conservation policy.

Joint Actions

While we recognize the wide diversity of opinions, ideologies, and experiences that we represent, and the need to frankly state both areas of commonality and areas of continued difference, we commit to work jointly on:

- Action against repressive, arbitrary, or otherwise unacceptable state action against those working on conservation and/or livelihood security, including communities, NGOs, individual government officials, researchers, and activists.
- Providing critical comments on a range of laws and policies to the relevant official forums and platforms.
- Continued dialogue on the issues mentioned above, with a view to achieving a common position for further action.
- Continued networking and information exchange, to strengthen our collective understanding of conservation and livelihood issues, and to respond collectively to threats to wildlife and biodiversity and to the livelihoods security and rights of local communities.

Endorsed by (in alphabetical order):

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(Note: Two officials of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Anmol Kumar and J.V. Sharma also participated for a part of the Consultation)

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