

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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EDITORIAL

Himachal Pradesh Riddles

Perhaps the most interesting set of news items in this issue of the *PA Update* comes from Himachal Pradesh. They represent varied issues and present an intriguing snapshot of the complexities of our protected area network.

The proposal for the interstate tiger reserve that would have included the Simbalbara and Kalesar WLSs in HP and Haryana respectively is now being opposed by the State Forest Department (FD).

Protected Area Update

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This is the same FD that had enthusiastically welcomed the proposal when it was first made by the Wildlife Institute of India in 2003. The department that had identified additional land for inclusion now says that there is no justification for the tiger reserve as there were no tigers here and that creation of the reserve would lead to large scale displacement of people. Are these the real reasons for the volte face? Was this not known when the suggestion first came? What is probably more worrisome than the opposition itself is how it has come to be and why?

A similar concern is bound to be raised about the other proposal of the FD for the full denotification of four PAs and the rationalization of the boundaries of 15 others. It is perhaps the outcome of a process initiated by the MoEF to look at PA boundaries and make suggestions for their re-alignment. The State FD has said that this will ensure that 100s of villages presently within PA boundaries will now be left out and the difficulties people were facing because of being inside will be eliminated. To compensate for the loss of this area from the PA network other good wildlife areas are to be included. 850 sq. kms, for instance will be added to the Kibber WLS in Spiti. The magnitude of the surgery is so huge that it immediately brings into question the initial process whereby the PAs were created in the first place. Was it not known that there were so many villages inside the protected areas? Why was such good wildlife habitat also left out in the first place? There can be no doubt that similar issues will exist in other parts of the country as well. While some of these corrective steps have been long in the pipeline, one needs to proceed with extreme care. Only a few years ago, over 10 sq. kms of the Great Himalayan National Park were denotified on the plea that people's rights were being denied. The real reason was that the park notification was coming in the way of the Parvati Hydroelectric project.

And there is a 3rd news item about Himachal where the territorial wing of the

Forest Department is refusing to hand over five wildlife sanctuaries to the wildlife wing. The Centre has now decided to deny the State money for these particular PAs.

Why are matters like these allowed to fester, leading in turn to conflicts or then the need for extensive surgeries. Surely, it can't be so difficult to create systems that will prevent matters from reaching such a head. Why, in fact, are these not already in place? That's a question now, that might not have an easy answer.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

Andhra Pradesh

Construction work affecting golden gecko in Tirumala Hills, Sri Venkateshwara NP

Reports indicate that the endemic Golden Gecko *Calodactylodes areus*, found in the Tirumala parts of the Seshachalam Ranges including the Sri Venkateshwara National Park (SVNP) is being adversely impacted on account on the increased construction work and human activity in this region.

In a technical report submitted to the Government in the year 2000 as part of the World Bank-aided project "Ecology and conservation of golden gecko in Tirumala hills and in some habitats of SV National Park,' Professor of Zoology at SV University, NV Nandakumar and researcher M. Rajasekhar, had mentioned that the number of geckos here had fallen to only. Now, it is being suggested, this number would be even less as about 25.

The geckos preferred habitat are the moist crevices of Byramkonda Quartzite rocks and boulders found in the Arundhati Vanam and Silathoranam areas of Tirumala.

One of the major tourist attractions in this area is the 'Sila Thoranam,' one of three naturally formed rock arches that is said to be a 120-crore-year-old geological marvel. Taking advantage of the tourist inflow here the Tirupati Temple Authorities have developed gardens and parking lots in the area and even arranged for flashlights to focus on the rocks at night. This is said to be

affecting the physiology, movement and behaviour of the gecko.

Further, proposed construction activities including those of VIP guest houses and communication towers here is likely to cause further deterioration of the gecko habitat.

Source: AD Rangarajan. 'Blow to wildlife at Tirumala', *The Hindu*, 08/03/06.

Contact: (DFO), Sri Venkateswara National Park, Tirupati, Andhra PRadesh - 517507. Tel: 08574-224980
CWLW, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhavan, Saifabad, Hyderabad - 500004, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 040-23230561 / 23232668. Fax: 337889

ASSAM

Project for the Gangetic dolphin in Assam

The Guwahati based Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research had initiated a project titled 'Saving the Gangetic Dolphins, Eco-tourism and Livelihoods'. Funded by the Ford Foundation it will be implemented over a three year period and cover Dhubri district, Kulsi in Kamrup district and Guijan in Tinsukia district.

The main objective of the project is to stabilise the dolphin population in the area by analysing the threats to the mammals and reducing them. As part of this project an awareness camp on dolphins was organised in the last week of May in collaboration with Gramya Arthanitik Bikas Kendra, a local NGO, in Kukurmara in Kamrup district.

Source: 'New project to save dolphins', *The Statesman*, 30/05/06.

GPS mapping of Manas

A project initiated by the Field Director of the Manas National Park is trying to create a detailed GPS based map of the Manas National Park. It is hope that once complete, the effort would create a new database for the use of park authorities and researchers.

As part of the initiative so far, some animal tracks inside the park have been

marked. The pugmarks of tigers and some routes preferred by elephants have been recorded as also a few important forest types. Several important man-made routes among various beats and camps have been marked, which, it is hoped, will enable forest personnel to reduce response time in accessing different areas, a significant factor in confronting poachers or timber smugglers.

The project is, however, said to be short on funds, which is affecting its initial momentum.

Source: 'GPS to map Manas National Park', *The Assam Tribune*, 07/05/06.

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

Call to declare Behali Forest a wildlife sanctuary

A team of geographers from Gauhati University (GU), that recently carried out a survey in the Behali Reserved Forest has suggested that the reserved forest should be declared a wildlife sanctuary. The Behali Reserved Forest in Sonitpur district is located on the North bank of the River Brahmaputra and is close to the Arunachal Pradesh border. Increasing anthropogenic pressure is considered to be one of the biggest threats faced by forests in this region.

Till recently, most parts of this 140 sq. km. had good forest cover and provided good habitat for wildlife including elephants, macaques, other land and arboreal animals and a large variety of woodland birds.

The GU team comprising Dr AK Bhagabati, Dr P Bhattacharyya, P K Borah, M Basumatary and Anjul Boro expressed satisfaction that unlike most parts of the northern zone of Sonitpur district, the Behali Reserved Forest area still had its original forest cover. They also pointed out, however, that if immediate steps were not taken for its protection this forest too would be soon lost.

Source: 'Declare Behali forest as wildlife sanctuary', *The Assam Tribune*, 05/04/06.

Contact: **Department of Geography**, Gauhati University, Guwahati - 781 014, Assam.

Environment camp near Amchang WLS, Nambar and Garampani WLS

The environmental NGO, Early Birds, conducted an environment awareness camp in April in the Bamunkhat Primary, Dr Hemoprabha Saikia M.E and the Topoban H.S. Schools in Bamunkhat in the vicinity of Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary.

The camp was organized in connection with the National Environment Awareness Campaign, 2005-06. A booklet published by Early Birds *Nagaria Abarjana aru Poribesh* was distributed to the students on the occasion. A ten member Eco-club was also formed.

A free veterinary vaccination camp was also organized as a support to the villagers against the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) that frequently hits the area.

A similar awareness and veterinary camp were also organized at Nambar and around Garampani WLS from April 22 to 24.

Source: Moloy Baruah. Email dated 11/04/06.

Contact: **Moloy Baruah**, Early Birds, 26, Surujmukhi, PO Silpukhri, Guwahati-781003, Assam. Tel. 0361-666353. Fax: 550158. Email: baruahm@iocl.co.in

Rhino population up in Orang; other positive developments too

The latest rhino census carried out on March 31 has counted a total 68 rhinos in the Orang (Rajiv Gandhi) National Park. This included 28 males, 27 females and 13 calves. This number is significantly higher than the 46 that was reported in the last rhino census that had been carried out here in 1999. The rhino number in the 1985 census was 65 while in 1991 it was 97.

The period between the last census in 1999 and this one also saw the death of 30 rhinos – 20 at the hands of poachers and 10 of natural causes. The details are as follows - 1999 (poaching 7, natural death nil), 2000 (P 8, ND 5), 2001 (P 1, ND nil), 2002 (P nil, ND 1), 2003 (P 1, ND 1), 2004 (P nil, ND 2), 2005 (P 3, ND 1), 2006 (upto March: P nil, ND nil).

48 enumerators comprising forest officials, wild life activists, NGOs and journalists participated in the count this time. The 78.80 sq. km area of the park was divided into 16 blocks for the purpose of the count. No rhinos were found in 4 blocks.

It has also been reported that inspite of the considerably poor infrastructure here and limited accommodation, the number of visitors, both domestic and foreign, has been increasing. In 1997 the number of domestic tourists was 964, the highest, while only 15 foreign tourists had visited the park. Significantly, the park recorded the highest number of foreign tourists in 2005; their number being 207. A trip to the park on the Brahmaputra introduced by a private operator from Guwahati had helped in this matter.

A new forest bungalow was also inaugurated near the Range Office of the park on March 31 to accommodate four persons in two rooms. This is in addition to the existing bungalow at Sal Simalu and the dormitory in the park. In an effort to make wildlife viewing easier for visitors, arrangements have also been made for an elephant safari and 12 departmental elephants have been trained for the purpose

The State government has also undertaken the reconstruction of the 18 km long Dheruguri-Silbori PWD road off the NH-52 under the programme funded by the Asian Development Bank.

Grazing in the park by cattle of the fringe villages is said to be having a serious impact on the habitat of the rhino and the FD has appealed to the villagers to prevent their cattle from entering the park.
(also see *PA Updates* Vol XII-1 &, 49)

Source: 'Orang rhino census: Increasing trend enthuse conservationists', *The Sentinel*, 07/04/06.

Contact: **DFO**, Orang NP, Mangaldoi Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Darrang - 784 125, Tel: 0914-22065(O), 22349(R)

1855 rhinos in Kaziranga

The 2006 census that was recently conducted in Kaziranga National Park (KNP) has recorded 1855 rhinos here. This number includes 405 mothers and 405 calves. This means that even though the park lost 80 rhinos due to various reasons in the

last year, the effective increase in number is about 120 animals

It has been estimated that in the coming ten years, the park will have another 1000 rhinos and additional land will have to be included within the boundaries of the park to accommodate them.

The 1999 census had put the number of rhinos in Kaziranga at 1552.

Source: '2006 rhino census', *The Sentinel*, 05/04/06.

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

Kaziranga casual worker's widow gets insurance money

The widow of Babul Baruah, a casual worker at the Kaziranga National Park was recently handed over his insurance claim of Rs. One lakh by the park Director, Mr NK Vasu. Baruah had been trampled by a captive elephant in 'musth', while he was collecting grass for the animal's feed.

His widow became the fourth recipient of the insurance claim in the last three years that is part of a program initiated by the Wildlife Trust of India and supported by the Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation. As part of the program, about 17000 forest staff have been insured nationally. Of these 1579 are from Assam. The WTI maintains a Protected Area Staff Status (PASS) database based on inputs from the Forest Department. This is forwarded to the Insurance Company every month.

The policy stipulates that the claim should be registered within 15 days from the date of accident. A death certificate supported by a post mortem report giving cause of death, First Information Report (FIR) of the police and death certificate by a competent authority are required as supporting documents. All employees on field patrol duty of the rank of range forest officer and below are eligible.

The policy-holder can claim the insured amount in case of permanent, partial or permanent and total disability. In the case of death, the nominee can claim a sum of rupees one lakh.

Source: 'Insurance money bails out widow's family', *Survival*, Enewsletter of the WTI, 19/04/06
Contact: **RK Singh**, **Wildlife Trust of India**, A-220,
New Friends Colony, New Delhi. – 110065.
Ph. 011-26326025/6

Over 81,000 visit Kaziranga in 2005-06

A record number of 81,758 tourists visited Kaziranga NP in the year 2005-06, bringing in a total revenue of Rs 76,15,169. A little over 77,000 of the visitors were domestic tourists. FD officials pointed out that this year's figure was an increase of 8885 tourists and Rs 10 lakh in revenue as compared to 2004-05. The number of foreign tourists however saw a fall of 443 over the last year.

For 2005-06 the highest revenue was collected from the Kohara range, which was Rs 55,95,167 from 44,233 tourists who visited the range. On the other hand in Agartali range, Rs 2,82,487 were collected from 2,478 tourists while in the Bagori range Rs 17,06,459 were collected from 29,664 tourists. The figure for the Burahpahr range was Rs 30,656 from 651 visitors.

An attempt is now being made to ensure a more equal distribution of visitors over all the ranges of the park. Accordingly, a plan for development of the infrastructure of Agaratali and Burahpahr ranges has been submitted to the North Eastern Council. Some preliminary work in the Burahpahr range has already been initiated by the park authorities.

Source: Sanjoy Hazarika. 'Revenue collection up in Kaziranga National Park', *The Assam Tribune*, 20/04/96
Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam, Rehabari,
Guwahati – 781008, Assam. Tel: 0361-
2566064. Fax 2547386

BIHAR

Kanwar Lake dries up

The Kanwar Lake in the Begusarai district has reportedly dried up. A two-member team comprising Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Bashir Ahmad Khan and Jugnu Shardey, Member Secretary, State Forest and Wildlife Conservation

Committee were supposed to visit the area to investigate the reasons for the drying of the lake.

Initial information received suggested that all the channels bringing water to the lake had been plugged, preventing water from reaching here. Additionally, the breaches caused during the 2004 floods have still not been repaired. As a result, rain water that would have collected in normal course also got drained out.

Further details are not known and the report of the two member team is awaited.

Source: Faizan Ahmad. 'Kanwar lake dries up, inlets choked', *The Times of India*, 21/04/06.

Contact: **DFO**, Kanwar Jheel WLS, Extension Division, Begusarai, Bihar. Tel: 06342-222602 / 224401 (R)

GOA

Iron ore sludge dumped in PAs in Goa

The Belgaum based environmental group Paryavarni recently brought to light the fact that hazardous waste from sponge iron plants in Goa was being blatantly dumped in the forests of Goa and Karnataka in general and in the protected areas of Goa in particular.

It was pointed out that 13 truckloads of sponge iron by-product had been dumped in the Mollem Wildlife Sanctuary and at Anmod Ghat. Another eight truckloads were dumped near Ramnagar within the Tinai Ghat forest range. In Mollem, as a matter of fact, the waste was lying just six km from the range office.

The NGO said that the dumping had been going on for more than six months and that their complaints to the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) and the Forest Department had been ignored. The GSPCB Chairman subsequently informed that notices were being issued to all five sponge iron units operating in the state and that samples of the waste had been collected for testing. The State Tourism and Environment Minister said he had ordered an inquiry and

that if necessary he would not hesitate from ordering the plants to shut down.

Source: Devika Sequeira. 'Toxic waste dumped in State wildlife parks', *Deccan Herald*, 30/03/06.

Contact: **Paryavarani**, Mohd.Ali Road, Tilakwadi, Belgaum 590006, Karnataka.
Director (Wildlife & Eco-Tourism) In-Charge Mollem NP, IV Floor, Junta House, Panaji – 403001, Goa. Tel: 0832-229701 (O), 226051(R). Fax: 0832-224747
Chief Wildlife Warden, Wildlife Wing, Junta House, Panaji 403001, Goa. Tel: 0832 – 224747 / 223508 / 278891. Fax: 224747

GUJARAT

Rs. 1.5 crores for eco-tourism development, including in PAs in South Gujarat

The Gujarat Forest and Environment Department has prepared an Rs 1.5 crore plan to develop eco-tourism centres at Kilad near Vansada National Park and at Padam-Dungari in Surat district.

Kilad, located on the banks of Ambica near Vansada in Navsari, has been selected for its scenic beauty and its proximity to the 24 sq. kms national park. A camping site will be created here and an eco-tourism center will also be set up over an area of five hectares of forest land which has already been identified. The centre will also have facilities like small cottages where tourists can stay overnight. A sum of Rs 30 lakh will be spent on this project.

The rest of the money is to be used for the development of Padam-Dungari, located in Vyara taluka of Surat district.

An ongoing tourism promotion project of the Forest Department already exists at the Shoolpaneshwar WLS where local tribal people are being trained as guides and also in the catering profession

2006 has also been declared 'Tourism Year' by the state government.

Source: Anil Pathak. 'Rs. 1.5 cr. Plan to boost eco-tourism in S Gujarat', *The Times of India*, 15/05/06.

Contact: **DCF, Vansda NP South Dangs**
Division, Ahwa-Dangs, Gujarat. Tel:
02631-220246. Fax: 02631-20918

Activists oppose Gir night halt for navratri pilgrims

Wildlife groups including the Gir Nature Youth Club and the Nature Club of Sabar wrote to the Prime Minister, Mr Manmohan Singh seeking his intervention to withdraw permission given to pilgrims to stay overnight at Kankai temple inside Gir during the nine-day Navratri festival beginning March 30. Copies of the letter were also marked to President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam and UPA chairperson Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

The activists alleged that the permission given by the FD for pilgrims to enter the Gir Sanctuary and National Park during Navratri without any timing restrictions was illegal and that it would prove disastrous for wildlife. The letter also pointed out that the Gujarat High Court has banned stay and entry in Gir after sunset. They further said that the temple authorities have compelled the state government to cancel the entry fee and this has increased the flow of visitors. They also alleged that this would result in over one lakh visitors staying in the protected area during the nine day festival.

Contesting the claims of the activists the Forest Department clarified that there was no relaxation for Navratri and that pilgrims would be permitted entry only as per existing rules. It was also stressed that except for the trustees and the temple priest, no one would be allowed to stay in the temple at night

It is not known how the matter was resolved and what finally transpired in the nine day period of Navratri.

Source: Himashu Kaushik. 'Activists roar about Gir night halt' *The Times of India*, 28/03/06.

Contact: **Amit Jethava**, Gir Nature Youth Club, At: Khambha, Di: Amreli -365650, Gujarat. Tel: 02797-260121,260182. Fax: 260182. Email: amitjethava@rediffmail.com; amit_jethava@yahoo.co.in

Bharat Pathak, CF (Wildlife) Junagadh,
Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 -
2631678/ 2630051. Fax: 2631211

Water points in Gir, other sanctuaries for summer

More than 400 water points for wildlife were revived in Gir in early May to deal with the onset of summer and the rising temperatures. Natural water points in the sanctuary were reportedly drying up and the department has started releasing water in small ponds and other outlets. Similar steps were also being taken in the Ratanmahal and Jambughoda WLSs.

Source: 'Water points revived in Gir sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 10/05/06.

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

HIMACHAL PRADESH

State now opposes Tiger Reserve proposal

The Himachal Pradesh Forest Department is now said to be opposing the proposal for the creation of an inter-state Tiger Reserve that will include parts of the Simbalbara WLS in HP and the Kalesar WLS in Haryana. The proposal for the creation of this Tiger Reserve had been supported by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) (see *PA Updates* 47 & 43) following the recording of tiger pugmarks in here in 2003.

An area of 4,401 hectares had also been identified between Simbalbara WLS and Rajaji NP, adjacent to Haryana's Kalesar forest area, for inclusion in the tiger reserve.

Senior wildlife officials in Himachal, including PCCF Wildlife, Mr. KK Gupta are now disputing the presence of tigers in this area, and therefore questioning the logic of creating a tiger reserve here. They also expressed fears that the declaration of the Tiger Reserve could mean dislocation of a number of villages from the area.

The state government is reported to have already written to the Centre, saying that the creation of a tiger reserve here will not serve any purpose.

Source: Ashwani Sharma. 'HP doesn't want tiger reserve as there are no tigers', *The Indian Express*, 16/05/06.

Contact: **DFO Wildlife**, In-Charge Simbalbara WLS, Shimla Division, Talland, Shimla – 171001. Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 0177-223993

Chief Wildlife Warden, Himachal Pradesh, Dept. of Forest Farming & Conservation, Mist Chamber, 1st Floor, Khalini, Shimla – 171001. Tel: 0177-223038 / 0191-544575. Fax: 0177-224192 / 223038

Four sanctuaries to be denotified, 15 to be rationalized

The Himachal Pradesh Forest Department has proposed the denotification of four protected areas and redrawing of the boundaries of 15 others as part of the process for the rationalization of PA boundaries in the state. The sanctuaries to be de-notified are Nargu WLS in the Chuhar valley, Darlaghat and Sili WLSs in the Solan district and Naina Devi WLS in Bilaspur district.

The reasons given for the denotifications are that either there is too much human interference and biotic pressure like in the case of Nargu and Naina Devi or the PAs are too small as in the case of the other two.

In the case of the Naina Devi WLS there has also been pressure from the local people for the denotification. Many who live in the area are those who had been resettled here after the construction of the Bhakra dam. They have said that development activity was affected and forest rights like grant of trees under timber distribution rules were curtailed in the areas included in the sanctuaries.

The sanctuaries where boundaries will be redrawn include the Bandli and Kalatop WLS following a majority of the villages presently within the sanctuaries will now be excluded. The FD has suggested that once this exercise is completed, nearly 85% of human and cattle population will be excluded from the PAs

While environmentalists and wildlifers have opposed the move of the state government, senior officials of the HP FD

have said that the total area under the protected area network in the state would actually increase after the rationalization process, as some areas rich in wildlife that had been left out, would now be included. The largest such area is 850 sq km which is to be included in the Kibber WLS in the cold desert of Spiti.

The proposal for the changes were to be put up before the State Wildlife Board and after approval submitted to the government for action. The permission of the Supreme Court of the country would also have to be sought for the purpose.

Source: 'Forest Dept. to denotify four sanctuaries', *The Tribune*, 27/02/06.

'Plans to redraw limits of wildlife sanctuaries', *The Tribune*, 11/03/06.

Contact: **DFO Wildlife**, Shimla Division, Talland, Shimla – 171001. Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 0177-223993

Illegal road construction by PWD in Nargu WLS

The Range Officer (Wildlife), Barot was charge sheeted for allowing the Public Works Department (PWD) to illegally construct a road in the Nargu Wildlife Sanctuary. 84 trees of different species were cut and 550 saplings of deodhar were destroyed in addition to causing Rs. 14 worth of damage to government property. 3500 nursery plants were also damaged in the process.

The matter has also been referred to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests for initiating action against PWD officials. The Engineer-in-Chief of the PWD had also been asked to initiate action against the errant officials.

Source: 'PWD feels 84 trees for road', *The Tribune*, 05/04/06.

Contact: **DFO Wildlife**, Kullu Division, I/c Nargu WLS, Kullu – 175101, Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 01902-22276

INTACH project to assess villager's attitude to conservation in and around state PAs

The Wildlife Wing of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department in collaboration with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) will be undertaking a survey to assess

the attitude to conservation and wildlife protection of villagers living in and around the protected areas in the state.

The outcome would be a set of recommendations from INTACH on how public participation in caring for wildlife and precious forest wealth can be ensured.

An initial sum of over Rs 5 lakh has already been placed at the disposal of INTACH under the HP Forest Sector Reforms Project

An important aspect of the survey shall be the natural protection of some of the forests owned by the local *devi* and *devatas*, leaving the area practically untouched due to religious sentiments.

Source: 'Sensitising villagers towards wildlife', *The Tribune*, 01/04/06.

Contact: **B.S. Malhans**, INTACH Aira Holme, Shimla 171009, Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 0177-221713

Great Himalayan Conservation Authority proposed

The Himachal Pradesh State Government is considering the creation of a 'Greater Himalayan Conservation Authority' (GHCA) to oversee the management of the four PAs of the Great Himalayan and Pin Valley National Parks and the wildlife sanctuaries of Rupi Bhaba and Kanawar.

The proposal was recently mooted by Mr Ram Lal Thakur, the State Forest Minister, while presiding over a meeting of the governing body of the Bio-diversity Conservation Society that presently manages the Great Himalayan NP.

He said the authority would have a flexible administrative procedure and governing board structure to help ensure continuity of funding across financial years and eliminate bureaucratic delays.

He said the authority would be headed by a Chief Conservator of Forests, who would be responsible for the management and achievement of various objectives. It would also have non-official members on its board and ensure people's participation in the management of protected areas.

Source: 'Autonomous wildlife authority on cards',
The Tribune, 27/04/06.

Contact: **Director**, GHNP,
Shamshi, Dist Kullu – 175125, Himachal
Pradesh. Email: dirghnp@vsnl.com

Centre refuses funds for PAs still under territorial wing of FD

The Central Government has told the Himachal Pradesh Government that no funds will be granted for the management of five wildlife sanctuaries which continue to be under the control of the territorial wing of the State Forest Department. These include the Tundah, Kugti, Shimla Catchment Forest and the Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuaries.

The Centre's argument is that the PAs cannot be managed properly if they are not under the jurisdiction of the wildlife wing. The State is therefore set to lose funds to the tune Rs 1.5 crore to Rs 2 crore annually.

Source: 'Starved of funds, sanctuaries get neglected',
The Tribune, 05/05/06.

Contact: CWLW, Himachal Pradesh, see above

KARNATAKA

Plea to declare Bhimgad a sanctuary

A delegation comprising of members of various political parties including the Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Janata Dal (Secular) and the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samithi recently met the Chief Minister of Karnataka and urged him to declare the forests of Bhimgad a wildlife sanctuary. The delegation was led by Mr. VY Chavan, former MLA from Khanapur.

The delegation drew the CMs attention to the threat facing the forests of Bhimgad following a few individuals purchasing vast tracts of lands close to the historical Bhimgad Fort.

Source: 'Develop Bhimgad into a wildlife sanctuary',
The Hindu, 10/05/06.

Canals of Tunga Lift Irrigation project to pass through Shettihali WLS

The Tunga Life Irrigation project meant to take waters to the Shimoga and Honnali taluks of

Davangere district has been reportedly held up because of the refusal of the Central Government to sanction 170 acres of forest land for laying the canals of the project. This includes a 30 kms section that will pass through the thick forests of the Shettihali Wildlife Sanctuary.

The project which was accorded technical and financial approval in 1991 envisages the diversion of the Tunga waters to the Goudanakere Dam through the Hayhole dam and the Berehalla tank. It is proposed to lift 108 cusecs of water from the Tunga Dam at Gajanur, about 10 km from here, and release it into the Hayhole Dam. From here the water is to be lifted with the help of four pumps of 400 hp each and fill up the Barehalla dam located at a distance of about 3.5 km. Thereafter, the water impounded in at Barehalla is planned to be lifted and released into the Goudanakere through the channel.

Proponents of the project say that the project had not been cleared for 15 years inspite of the persistent attempts by successive state governments and the assurance that revenue land would be made available for compensatory afforestation.

Source: 'New hurdle to irrigation project', *The Hindu*, 16/04/06.

Contact: **DCF - Wildlife**, I/c, Shettihali WLS,
D.C. Office Compound, Shimoga –
577201, Karnataka. Tel: 08182-
22983(O), 274983(R). Fax: 08182-
21983 [CF (WL) Shimoga]

Ganja destroyed in Pushpagiri WLS

Two instances, one of seizure of ganja and another of destruction of a ganja plantation were reported from the Pushpagiri Wildlife Sanctuary in the month of March. The plantation spread over about 2.5 acres in the Mandalapatti – Kadamakkal range of the sanctuary was detected just a couple of days after the haul was made. The spot is about 10 km from Hammiyala village.

The police team that visited the site found about 3,500 to 4,000 ganja plants that had grown to a height of five feet. They were destroyed in the presence of the officials as

per the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

The plants were destroyed in the presence of "panchas" who included the Madikeri Tahsildar K.P. Somaiah, Revenue Inspector Vishwanath, Public Works Department Engineer Manjunath, Circle Inspector of Police Sunderraj and Sub-Inspector Harishchandra.

Two suspected cultivators reportedly fled the spot on seeing the 40-member team of police and officials. The involvement of local people in the cultivation of ganja is suspected and a vigil has been kept on their activities. A special team has been constituted to track down the culprits.

Source: 'Police destroy ganja grown near Madikeri', *The Hindu*, 14/03/06.

Contact: **ACF – Wildlife Subdivision**, I/c Pushpagiri WLS. Medikeri – 571201. Dist. Kodagu, Karnataka. Tel: 08272-228019(O), Fax: 08272-28439 (C.F. Madikeri)

Tourism boom at Kabini backwaters causing concern

The annual summer congregation of 100s of elephants at the backwaters of the Kabini dam is also attracting a large number of tourists, causing concern in forest and wildlife circles. Forest officials have said that the holding capacity of the area has been exceeded with the increasing movement of vehicles in the area. 13 vehicles ferrying tourists were plying in the Nagarhole forests adjoining the backwaters. A similar or even larger number of vehicles were coming in from the Bandipur National Park side, causing problems for the wildlife here.

Tourists visiting here are taken on safaris for three hours and two hours respectively in the morning and evening. There were concerns about tourist behaviour too. It has been reported that the tourism zones were being violated, vehicles were moving without guides and tourists were getting down from the vehicles in the national park.

Another issue of concern has been the rapid increase in tourism infrastructure here. Presently, at least four hotels, including the Karnataka Jungle Lodges and Resorts, dot the periphery of the Nagarhole forests. A number of tourist homes and lodges are also coming up and Revenue Department officials have confirmed that

large areas of land around the forests have been purchased for development of holiday resorts.

Source: Sharath Srivatsa. 'An intrusion against the interests of wildlife', *The Hindu*, 17/04/06.

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

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

Proposal for ecologically fragile zone around Bandipur NP

The Forest Department has proposed the creation of an ecologically fragile zone in an area within the 10 kms radius of the Bandipur National Park. The zone would be notified under the provisions of the Environment Protection Act 1986 and would be in line with the prescriptions of the National Wildlife Action Plan – 2001.

One of the key issues that the proposal seeks to deal with is the huge growth of tourism in the area, causing serious problems for the management of the park and for the wildlife herein (see story above). Senior park officials have said that the declaration of this zone would help them regulate tourism and movement of people within the forest areas.

Bandipur receives nearly 60,000 tourists every year. The revenue the park earned from tourism in 2005-06 was nearly Rs. 82 lakhs. Similarly Nagarhole collected Rs. 55 lakhs as tourism revenue for the same period.

Source: R Krishna Kumar. 'Ecologically fragile zone likely around Bandipur park', *The Hindu*, 22/04/06.

KERALA

Plea to declare Attappady ecologically fragile

The Attappady Hill Area Development Society (AHADS), an agency engaged in the implementation of the Rs. 219-crore Japan-aided eco-restoration project in the largely tribal area has urged the State Government to declare the hills an ecologically fragile zone.

The proposal comes in light of the large-scale destruction of trees in private estates in Sholayur area of Attappady resulting in soil erosion and other negative impacts.

Source: 'Plea to declare Attappady ecologically fragile zone', *The Hindu*, 09/05/06.

MADHYA PRADESH

MP Wildlife wing to meet annually

In order to streamline activities and share experiences of staff posted in protected areas, the wildlife wing of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has decided to hold a review meeting of all activities undertaken by the wing on an annual basis.

The first such meeting was held recently at Pench National Park and was attended by Directors and Deputy Directors of all national parks and sanctuaries apart from the PCCF (Wildlife) and veterinary experts.

Issues discussed during the meeting included those related to water hole construction, anti-poaching plans and relocation of human settlements located within PAs. It was also decided to adopt commonality and identifying best practices at the planning stage of a project so that when proposals are sent to Bhopal for clearance there is lesser chance of their rejection.

Source: 'Wildlife wing of forest dept to meet annually', *The Pioneer*, 03/05/06.

NGO issues notice to CWLW on tourism development in Ralamandal WLS

The Indore based NGO, Society For Nature Education & Habitats (SNEH) recently sent a notice to the Madhya Pradesh Chief Wildlife Warden under section 55-(C) of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, asking for the stoppage of tourism promotion and other activities in Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary.

A news item published in the newspaper *Nai Dunia* dated 25th January 2006 had highlighted the fact that a Master Plan for the Development of Ralamandal Sanctuary had been prepared and was under implementation. It was the outcome of a meeting held under the Chairmanship of the Principal Secretary of the state Mr. Avani Vysya and attended by the District Collector, Indore; Divisional Commissioner Indore; Mr Ratan Purwar, Secretary; and Mr. Rajesh Srivastav, C.F. Indore. It was reportedly decided at the meeting to:

1. Construct a ropeway from Devguradia to Ralamandal through the sanctuary.
2. Construct a road through the Ralamandal Sanctuary and
3. Encourage eco tourism in Ralamandal sanctuary and develop infrastructure worth more than Rs. Two crores

Members of the NGO who then visited the area reported that the Indore Forest Division had undertaken construction work around four scenic view points inside the sanctuary. All of these were cemented. A cement water tank and a cement road of about three kms till Shikargah had also been completed. Construction activity of a cafeteria was also going on at the Shikargah.

These facts were reported to the CWLW along with the notice that also sought a clarification whether the said Tourism Master plan had been incorporated in the management Plan of the sanctuary and whether it had received the approval of state and Central governments.

The response and the latest in the matter are not known.

Source: Dinesh Kothari. Letter to Mr. PB Gangopadhyay, CWLW, Madhya Pradesh, 17/03/06.

Contact: **Dinesh Kothari**, M/s Navkar Capital Market, 1B, Dhenu Market, Indore – 452003. Madhya Pradesh. Tel: Email: ???

DFO, Indore, I/c Ralamandal WLS, Indore. Tel: 0731-2490239

CWLW, MP, Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0755-2557371/ 2550391.

MANIPUR

Sangai census in Keibul Lamjao NP

A three day Sangai census starting April 7 was jointly conducted in the Keibul Lamjao National Park in Loktak Lake by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Manipur Forests and Environment Department.

New methods and equipments were employed in the count and the earlier practice of using helicopters to count the animals was dispensed with this time. The count was conducted under the supervision of two experts from the WII with the help of a number of people from various sectors. This included seven people from the Forest Department, 33 from various NGOs in addition to four environmentalists and two Manipur University representatives. The park area had been clustered into 24 blocks for the exercise.

The details from the count are not known

Source: 'Sangai head count begins at Keibul', *The Sangai Express*, 08/04/06.

New law, Rs. 400 cr project for Loktak

The Manipur State Government has initiated a number of steps in relation to the Loktak Lake. These includes among other things the introduction of the Manipur Loktak Lake (Protection) Bill 2006 and a Rs. 400 crore project proposal for 'sprucing' up the lake that is to be sent to the Central Government. .

One of the main aims of the new bill that was introduced in the recent budget session of the state legislature is to give the Loktak Development Authority, a government agency, more power to prevent pollution, encroachment and unauthorised fishing in the lake. The bill proposes to prevent alteration, lease, mortgage, transfer or allotment of any part of the lake. Besides, no person would be allowed to obtain any resources from the lake or knowledge associated thereto for research or for commercial utilisation or for bio-survey and bio-utilisation without prior permission. The proposed legislation will also prevent anyone from transferring results of any research relating to the lake or its resources without prior approval of the lake authority.

One of the main thrusts of the other, Rs. 400 crore initiative is to convert the lake into a

major tourist spot. The state government has engaged an Australian consultant to formulate a strategy following suggestions from the Planning Commission.

The project will entail clearing of the phumdi (floating vegetation) that reportedly covers 40% of the water body and the rehabilitation of the fisherfolk who live and work here. The North Eastern Council has reportedly agreed to provide an initial amount of Rs 41 lakh for rehabilitation of the 1,000-member strong fishing community.

State tourism department officials have welcomed the move. They said that the lake has always been a tourist attraction and if the wetland is cleared, water sports too could be introduced to attract more domestic and foreign tourists

Source: Khelen Thokchom. 'Hope ripples for Loktak', *The Telegraph*, 21/03/06.

Contact: **DCF**, Keibul Lamjao NP, Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795 001

Salam Rajesh, Sagolband Salam, Leikai. PO: Imphal-1, Manipur. Tel:

0385-222395. Email:

salamrajesh@rediffmail.com;

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salraj_imp@yahoo.com

Project Director, Loktak Development Authority. Email:lda@neline.com

Chief Wildlife Warden - Manipur, Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795001,

Manipur. Tel: 03852 - 220854 / 285385

PUNJAB

State Wildlife wing recast

In a major restructuring of the Wildlife Wing of the Department of Forests and Wildlife Preservation, Punjab, the state has been divided into two wildlife circles each headed by a Conservator of Forests.

The changes have been done following the winding up of the Integrated Watershed Development Project (IWDP-Hills II) of the World Bank.

The 'Parks and Protected Areas Circle' will includes all zoological parks, deer parks and sanctuaries in the Punjab plains will be headed by a Conservator of Forests

(Wildlife). The 'Shivalik Hills and Wildlife Circle' will be constituted by redesigning the post of Subject Matter Specialist to the Conservator of Forests (Wildlife).

The "Parks and Protected Areas Circle" will comprise three divisions. One division will be headed by the Field Director, MC Zoological Park Chhatbir. S/he will look after Chhatbir Zoo, Ludhiana Zoo and the Neelon Deer Park. The second division will be headed by the DFO, Patiala, and will look after the protected areas and sanctuaries of Patiala, Sangrur, Fatehgarh Sahib and Mansa districts besides looking after Deer Park Bir Moti Bagh, Patiala. The third division will be headed by the DFO Ferozepore, the same post that currently exists as DFO, Harike. The officer posted here will function from Ferozepore and will look after the Harike Wildlife Sanctuary, the Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary and other protected areas which will be constituted in Ferozepore, Amritsar, Faridkot, Moga and Bathinda.

The "Shivalik Hills Wildlife Circle" also has three divisions. The first headed by the DFO, Ropar, after re-designating the present post of DFO (IWDP-Hills) at Mohali. The second division will be headed by the DFO, Hoshiarpur, after redesigning the post of DFO (IWDP Hills -II)). This wildlife division will cover Hoshiarpur and Nawanshahar districts and will monitor the wildlife ranges at Garhshankar, Hoshiarpur and Dasuya. The third wildlife division of the Circle will be at Pathankot with ranges at Dhar, Pathankot and Gurdaspur. The DFO (IWDP Hills II) will be re-designated as DFO (Wildlife).

Source: Chitleen Sethi. 'Wildlife wing recast', *The Tribune*, 01/04/06.

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

SIKKIM

Villagers to be made *Himal Rakshaks* – Honorary Mountain guardians

The Sikkim Government is soon launching an initiative to recruit willing villagers with high concern for wildlife conservation and a clean personal record residing in high altitude areas as

honorary mountain guardians (*Himal Rakshaks*) for the conservation of the Himalayan ecosystem.

This was notified in the state gazette recently. The reason for this initiative of the state government is that inspite of determined efforts by the Forest and Environment Department, unregulated grazing, unplanned trekking, tourism, hunting, trapping of wild animals, smuggling of medicinal and aromatic plants had continued unabated in the upper Himalayas.

Further, the high altitude, remoteness, tough terrain, harsh climatic conditions, lack of adequate infrastructure, limited resources and high cost of patrolling by the forest staff also made conservation action very difficult

The rationale now is that the new initiative with the villagers practising traditional subsistence livelihood in high altitudes would result in more effective conservation jointly with the forest department.

As part of the program, the *Himal Rakshaks* would be imparted training to control poaching, illegal trade in wild animals, prevent damage to wildlife habitats, smuggling of medicinal and aromatic plants, reduce negative impact of trekking and spreading the message of conservation among the people. They would also be delegated power to search, seize and detain persons for offences under the wildlife Act. They would initially be recruited for a period of one year and would work along with the forest staff. The period of their service could be extended for a maximum period of two to three years at a time. The *Himal Rakshaks* would also be honoured for their outstanding work with a letter of appreciation and cash would be given in suitable cases.

Source: 'Himal Rakshaks to protect and conserve Himalayan eco-system', *The Sentinel*, 08/04/06.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Government of Sikkim, Forest Secretariat, Deorali, Gangtok, - 737 102, Sikkim. Tel: 03592-222330 / 222978(O) / 222578(R). Fax 03592-222978 / 226368

TAMIL NADU

Mudumalai closure put off due to good weather

The annual closure of the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary which normally happens in early March was put off till the end of April due to good weather conditions.

Since the area had received good showers the weather conditions were not as dry as they normally are for that part of the year. The threat of bush fires had also reduced considerably due to this reason, allowing for the extended opening of the park. Since there was sufficient water in all the reservoirs within the sanctuary, animals too were not migrating.

It was also pointed out that the inflow of tourists was higher than usual this year, especially during weekends.

Source: 'Closure of Mudumalai sanctuary put off', *The Hindu*, 18/04/06.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Mudumalai WLS, Mahalingam Bldgs, Coonor Road, Udthagamandalam- 643001 Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0423-244098

UTTAR PRADESH

Train kills tigress in Dudhwa

A tigress, about four years old was knocked down and killed by a train in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in April. Park officials informed that this was the 35th animal to get killed on account of the train's passage through this wildlife park over the past 10 years, though it was the first tiger (See *PA Updates* 56, 44 & 34).

The Forest Department has registered a case of criminal neglect against the Divisional Railway Manager, the engine driver and the guard of the train. The body of the tigress was sent to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) at Barielly for a post mortem.

The FD has expressed its annoyance at the 'utter apathy' of the railway officials towards this problem. They said that they have been writing to the railways for many years seeking an alternative route for the railway line, or to at least bring down the speed of the trains.

Railway officials, however, maintained they had not received any communication in this

regard from the FD. They also pointed out that four pairs of trains were passing through the forests here for decades and this was the first time that a tiger had been killed in this manner. It has further been pointed out by them that diverting the rail route would not be easy in this region because the outer periphery of the park was along the international border with Nepal.

Source: 'Tigress killed by train in Dudhwa park', *The Times of India*, 17/04/06.

Contact: **Director**, Dudhwa National Park, Dist. Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 05872-252106. Fax: 05872-252106
Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow – 226001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-206584(O), 2237715 & 2223015(R). Fax 0522-222061/ 206188

UTTARANCHAL

Four tigress deaths in Corbett in two months

Four tigresses were found dead within a two month period in the early part of 2006 in the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR). The possibility that all of them were killed by a tiger had been suggested initially. The park officials said they had picked up certain clues like pug marks which pointed towards this possibility

The first of the four tigresses was killed on January 19 in the Bijrani area of the park. The next death occurred on February 26 in the nearby Dhela range. Forest guards found multiple wounds on the carcass. The same area then also saw another death on March 7, followed a week later by one more in the Ramnagar Forest Division on the park's fringes.

The post-mortem reports said that all the four tigresses were nearly three to four years old.

Subsequently, and following visits by a special team of Project Tiger and the Wildlife Institute of India, to investigate the matter, it was clarified that two of animals that died were cubs and could have been poisoned by villagers in the area.

Source: 'Mystery tigers deaths in Corbett', *The Telegraph*, 21/03/06.

'Corbett tiger deaths could be due to poisoning', *The Times of India*, 29/03/06.

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

Dr. Rajesh Gopal, Director, Project Tiger Annexe No.5, Bikaner House, Shah Jahan Road, New Delhi 110 001. Email: dirpt-r@hub.nic.in

WEST BENGAL

North Bengal rail track kills four elephants

Four wild elephants were killed in the last week of May by trains plying on the Northeast Frontier Railway tracks that cut through four protected areas in the region. These are the Chapramari and Mahananda WLSs, the Gorumara NP and the Buxa Tiger Reserve.

The impact of this railway line on wildlife has been a constant concern and the proposal to convert it to broad gauge had been opposed on the grounds that wildlife would be adversely affected.

A public interest litigation (PIL) filed by the WWF in August 2000 in the matter could not stop the gauge conversion, but the court had asked for the establishment of a committee of forest and wildlife officials to keep a regular check on whether its recommendations were being followed (see *PA Updates* 49, 47, 43, 39, 36, 34, 32 & 29).

The committee however met only twice in 2003. Meetings of the committee with the frontier railway officials and NGOs like WWF took place on February 15 and June 10, 2003. The delegates of the second meeting were even taken to sites in Chapramari, and the NGOs had expressed that the situation was not satisfactory. The WWF has alleged that the ramps, slopes, bridges and barriers recommended to help migratory animals had either not been built or were made shoddily. It was the same with signboards to warn drivers about the presence of animals in particular areas.

It has also been pointed out that after gauge conversion trains started picking up speeds of 80-90 kms per hour against the recommended speed in the forest and wildlife areas of 20 -30 kms per hour.

It has been reported that 70 elephants have been killed in railway accidents across India

in the past four years. Fifteen of these were in north Bengal, where the total wild elephant population is said to be about 350 animals.

Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr. AK Raha said the chief minister was now looking into the matter.

(Also see *PA Updates* 49 & 47)

Source: Sebanti Sarkar. 'Death trap for elephants', *The Telegraph*, 01/06/06

Contact: **Ujjwal Bhattacharya**, CF (Wildlife), North Bengal, West Bengal Forest Dept. Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-25627(O) 25596 (R). Email: ujjwal_b@yahoo.com

30 poachers arrested in Sunderbans in the early 2006

IT was reported that 30 poachers were arrested in the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve (STR) in the first two months of 2006. This is much higher than the total of 40 that had been apprehended in 2004 and 2005. Authorities said that the sharp jump in arrests in the first nine weeks of 2006 were largely the result of joint patrolling by the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Forest Department.

Source: 'India takes on poachers in key tiger reserves', *Reuters*, 13/03/06.

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

Workshop on wildlife rehabilitation

The fifth annual workshop on wildlife rehabilitation, organized by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) in partnership with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) was held in Visakhapatnam from March 27 to 29. The meeting was jointly hosted by Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Vishakapatnam and the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The focus of this year's meet was on marine turtles and snakes. About 50 wildlife rehabilitators from eight states including Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Orissa, West Bengal, Kerala, Mizoram, Karnataka and Delhi, participated.

Resource persons from the IFAW, Wildlife Institute of India, Central Zoo Authority, Compassion Unlimited plus Action, and Turtle Conservation Project Sri Lanka contributed to the sessions and deliberations.

Contact: **WTI**, see above

Environment Fairs at national parks and sanctuaries

The Bharati Vidyapeeth Institute of Environment Education and Research (BVIEER) recently organized environmental fairs at some of the protected areas in Madhya Pradesh (MP) and Uttar Pradesh (UP). These were held at Sidhi for Sanjay National Park and at Tala for Bandhavgarh National Park in MP and in Lucknow and Palia for Dudhwa National Park in UP.

The fairs are a part of the institutes program for 'Conservation Education for Critically Important National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries' that has been funded by the India Canada Environment Facility (ICEF).

The program, which was launched about two years ago, has so far covered nearly 120 schools (including Inter College & Junior High Schools) and at least 7000 students.

Apart from school activities, the programme also aims to target front line staff of the Forest Department of both the states and the communities of the fringe villages of the adjoining protected areas mentioned above. The Nature Interpretation Facilities at each of these sites are also being redone.

Contact: **BVIEER-ICEF**, UP Project Office, C-14
Sector B, Aliganj, Lucknow - 226024, Uttar

Pradesh. Tel: 0522-2326242 (O) /
Mobile: 9839417037. Email:
pronab_2k@yahoo.co.in,
bvicefup@rediffmail.com. Web:
<http://environment.bharativedyapeeth.edu/html/bviever-icef-ee-project.shtml>

MoEF committee to examine suggestions of the Tiger Task Force and special investigation of the CBI related to the WLPA

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) recently constituted a committee to examine the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, with reference to suggestions of the Tiger Task Force and the Special Investigation of the CBI related to WLPA. The terms of reference of the said Committee are as follows:

1) Appraisal of the provisions in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and making suggestions for amending the criminal provisions of the said Act vis-à-vis the report of the Tiger Force and suggestion made by the CBI.

2) Providing special provisions for enforcement of CITES in the country. This committee is to be chaired by the Additional DGF (Wildlife) and will constitute of the following members

Non-official Experts on the committee are
Dr. Kamal Misra (Social Anthropologist), Prof. M.N.Murty (Environmental Economist), Shri. Bharat H. Desai (Expert-Environmental Law), Shri. Sanjay Upadhyay (Expert-Environmental /Wildlife Law), Shri. H.S.Panwar, Retd. Director (WII) and Wildlife Expert, Shri. V.B. Sawarkar, Retd. Director (WII) and Wildlife Expert and Dr. R.Sukumar, Scientist & Wildlife Expert (Indian Institute of Science).

The official members on the committee are representatives of the following Departments and Ministries: Ministry of Law and Justice, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Rural Development, National Highways, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Defence; Chief Wildlife Wardens of the states of Madhya Pradesh, Assam, and Tamil Nadu; representatives from the Botanical and Zoological Surveys of India

and the Director of the Wildlife Institute of India. The Member Secretary of the committee is the DIG (Wildlife) in the MoEF.

MoEF committee on rationalisation of PA boundaries

In pursuance of the decision taken in the meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) in March 2005, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) constituted a Committee on Rationalization of Boundaries of National Parks and Sanctuaries in January, earlier this year.

The terms of reference of the Committee are as follows:

1. To lay down the criteria and due process for rationalization of the boundaries of the existing national parks and sanctuaries.
2. To examine the proposals received from the states for revision of boundaries of existing PAs after following the due process of approval of the State Board of Wildlife etc and make recommendations to the Ministry of Environment and Forests within six months.

The Committee will be chaired by the Additional Director General (WL). Members of the committee include the following: Director (Wildlife Preservation), Sri. G.A.Patel, IFS (Retd.) Sri. V.B.Sawarkar, Former Director, WII, Prof. R. Sukumar, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Chief Wildlife Warden of concerned State and the Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife)

IUCN (2004) Red list of Indian Fauna

The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has recently finalized the IUCN (2004) Red List of Indian Fauna. It can be accessed at the following websites: <http://www.ncbi.org.in>
<http://www.wii.gov.in/indianfauna.htm>

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‘Biodiversity Conservation and Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project’

A ‘Biodiversity Conservation and Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project’ is proposed to be implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) through the Project Tiger Directorate with funding from the Global Environment Facility and the World Bank. With a grant cum loan of about US\$38 million, the project hopes to integrate wildlife and biodiversity conservation with livelihood security across six landscapes. These include the Agasthiyamalai landscape in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Rann of Kutch in Gujarat, the Upper Indus Valley landscape in Ladakh, Dampa in Mizoram, Askote in Uttaranchal and the Satpura Landscape of Madhya Pradesh. Each is centred around one or more protected areas – the total number that will be covered being 11.

The project document says that the project will follow the approaches of ‘participatory conservation’ and ‘landscape planning’. Its initial analysis however seems to indicate that the proposal does **not** (a) effectively empower panchayat institutions, (b) move away from the centralized power that government departments wield, (c) move protected area management towards collaborative or joint mechanisms, (d) tackle crucial issues of tenurial security and rights to resources, and (e) assess the hurdles created to participatory conservation by existing laws and court directives.

A scoping exercise involving a number of Indian consultants, which includes consultations at the proposed landscapes is presently going on.

Contact: **Director**, Project Tiger, see above
Ashish Kothari, Kalpavriksh. Email: ashishkothari@vsnl.com

SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH

Radio collaring of Bangladesh Sunderban Tigers

Bangladesh wildlife experts fitted a radio collar on a second Royal Bengal Tiger in the Bangladesh Sunderbans in March as part of project funded by the United States Fish & Wildlife Services.

The animal called the Queen of Shaplakhali, was the second to be fitted with a radio collar after the first - the 12-year-old Queen of Jamtala - died suddenly. The project is being led by Adam Barlow, an expert in wildlife studies from the University of Minnesota in the USA.

Source: 'On the trail of the elusive Bengal Tiger', *Associated French Press*, 06/03/06.

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PAKISTAN

Survey to assess Indus Dolphin population

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Pakistan recently conducted a survey to assess the population of the rare blind Indus Dolphins in the 1500 kms stretch between the Jinnah and Sukkur barrages. The survey has been jointly funded by the Pakistan Wetlands Programme and supported by the Global Environment Facility, United Nations Development Program (GEF-UNDP) and the Wildlife Departments of NWFP, Punjab and Sindh. The Dutch Embassy too has donated US \$4 million for the larger project that will survey endangered wildlife species listed by the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

A survey conducted five years ago found that the Indus had 1,100 dolphins and that they were having difficulties in travelling upstream once they passed the Sukkur Barrage.

The Indus Dolphins were earlier found throughout the Indus River system, including the main tributaries of Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej. In the 1930s, numerous dams and barrages were constructed on the river, which split the dolphins into small groups, destroyed their habitat and hindered their migration. Now, they inhabit the Indus River beginning from Kotri Barrage in Sindh to Jinnah Barrage in North-western Punjab.

The stretch of the river between the barrages at Sukkur and Guddu in Sindh, was declared the Indus River Dolphin Reserve by the government of Sindh in 1974. The reserve still continues to harbour a majority of the existing Indus Dolphin population. (Also see *PA Update* 46)

Source: 'WWF conducting survey to save blind Indus dolphins', *Daily Times*, 06/04/06.

Habitat and Species Conservation Project in Balochistan

The Sustainable Use Specialist Group SUSG-Casia has recently launched a Global Environment Facility (GEF) Medium – sized Grant Project, "Conservation of Habitats and Species of Global significances in Arid and Semi – Arid Eco systems in Balochistan" (Habitats and Species Conservation Project).

The goal of the project is to protect and conserve the habitat and species of globally significant birds, ungulates such as Markhor and Urial in Toghar Killa Saifullah and reptiles in the Nushki District through a collaborative management approach.

This is the first GEF/UNDP medium sized project in Pakistan where an NGO, has the responsibility as Implementing Agency while the Forests and Wildlife Department of Balochistan will act as the Execution Agency, limited to an advisory role.

The other donors to the project include a local NGO, Society for Torghar Environmental Protection (STEP), UNDP and Government of Balochistan. The total cost of the project that will run for a period of five to seven years is US \$ 1.129 million

Source: Syed Mahmood Nasir. Email dated 31/03/06

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UPCOMING

National Snakebite Conference

A National Snakebite Conference is being held in Cochin on July 24 & 25, 2006. The organizers hope to get the top 50 snakebite experts in India for the conference to develop:

1. A single treatment protocol, containing the latest and most effective treatment methods.
2. A single first aid protocol.
3. A coordinated all India research programme &
4. A plan for ELISA development and deployment in India.

The meeting is being supported by Government of India and the World Health Organisation

Contact: **Ian Simpson.**

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International Seminar on Forests, Forest Products and Services

The Department of Forestry, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar is organizing an International Seminar on 'Forests, Forest Products, and Services: Research, Development and Challenges ahead from November 1 to 3.

The main themes of the seminar are as follows:

- Ecosystem Service Accounting
- Implication of Afforestation/Reforestation through Clean Development Mechanism
- Mountain Development through watershed development
- RS & GIS in Forest Resource Management
- Management of Non Timber Forest Products – Policy & Legislation
- Criteria & Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management
- Conflicts in Right to Livelihood and Biodiversity Conservation
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Strategies and methodology for conservation of wild genetic resources
- Role of biotechnology/genetic engineering in forestry research.

Contact: **Dr. DS Chauhan**, Dept. of Forestry,
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Srinagar, Garhwal – 246174,
Uttaranchal. Tel: 01370 – 267529. Fax:
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OPPORTUNITIES

Vatavaran Film Festival

The Centre for Media Studies (CMS) that organizes the Vatavaran Environment Film Festival is seeking people for various positions at the Festival Directorate

The responsibilities include conceptualizing, planning, networking, identifying potential partners and organizing the Festival Events at a national and regional level, promoting and publicizing the festival in print, electronic and new media, fostering good working relationships with the media; monitoring media articles of relevance to Vatavaran activities, developing content for communication material like submission forms and guidelines for receiving entries, website, posters, flyers, advertisements, jingles for radio and promos for TV, festival book, websites, etc. and promoting and publicizing the festival among stakeholders.

Interested candidates should have either mass communication / environmental education / event management / fundraising background with relevant experience of 5-10 years.

Contact: **Vatavaran Film Festival**

Directorate, CMS, Research House, 34
B, Saket, New Delhi 110017. Ph: 011-
26851660, 26864020. Fax: 011-
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Website: www.cmsvatavaran.org

Conservation Officer for Melghat TR

The Nature Conservation Society, Amravati (NCSA) has advertised for a Conservation Officer (CO) to work in the villages around the Melghat Tiger Reserve. The responsibilities of the CO will include the monitoring of the village level conservation programmes run by NCSA. S/he will be assisted by two community activists in the field. The initial period of the assignment is one year.

Contact: **Kishore Rithe**, 201, Sapphire, Opp. Jantar-Mantar Flats, Bharat Nagar, Amravati Road, Nagpur, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-2557320(0) / 9422157123.

Email: satpuda_found@yahoo.com
ncsa.India@gmail.com

Conservation Officer for Pench TR

The Satpuda Foundation has advertised for a Conservation Officer (CO) to work in the villages around the Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The initial period of the assignment is one year.

Contact: **Kishore Rithe**, see above

IN THE SUPREME COURT

- a) Supreme Court Order in the Kolleru Sanctuary Case, Andhra Pradesh: A Summary
- b) Highlights of the Central Empowered Committee Hearing on 17th May 2006

A) Supreme Court Order in the Kolleru Sanctuary Case, Andhra Pradesh: A Summary

I.A. Nos.1486-87 in Writ Petition (C)
No.202 of 1995

The common issue that arises for consideration is the validity of the recommendations made by Central Empowered Committee (CEC) in its Report dated 20th March 2006. This concerns implementation of the notification issued by State of Andhra Pradesh dated 04.10.1999 under *Section 26A of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972* whose validity has been upheld by the decision of the Andhra Pradesh High Court dated 30th July, 2001 in the case of *Dr. T. Patanjali Sastry, President, Environment Centre vs. Chairman, Andhra*

Pradesh Pollution Control Board and ors. reported in 2001 (5) ALT 315.

The CEC has issued directions for demolition of all fish tanks constructed inside the Kolleru Wild Life Sanctuary in a time bound manner, as indicated therein and prohibited use or transportation of inputs for pisciculture in the said sanctuary. However, only 308 sq. kms. out of 901 sq. kms. have been declared as wild life sanctuary. This has been done in order to strike a balance between the rights of the people living in and around the lake on one hand and to protect the ecosystem on the other hand.

The above notification came to be issued under following circumstances:-

- Submersion of delta facility in the upstream area on account of blockage of free flow of water into the lake caused by encroachers.
- Further, thousands of acres of land stood converted into fish tanks resulting in the blockage of the drain system of Krishna and West Godavari districts which chooses the said lake as a natural route to the sea.
- The notification above-mentioned seeks to preserve the lake both for the benefit of the migratory birds and to avoid floods.

The basic argument advanced on behalf of the objectors is that acquisition is the basis for issuance of notification/official declaration under section 26A of the said 1972 Act. It is submitted that although final notification has been upheld, the terms and conditions of the notification indicate that demolition of bunds can only take place after acquisition by the government of private lands. Consequently, the government should first acquire the rights of the objectors before ordering demolition of the fish tanks/bunds.

The Supreme Court is of the opinion that having regard to the larger public interest and in view of the fact that the Notification under section 26A has been issued pursuant to the orders of the High Court in the case of *Kunapuraju Rangaraju vs. Government of A.P. reported in 1998 (3) ALT 215*, the Notification issued under section 26A needs to be enforced immediately. In any event, the rights of those fishermen surviving on a

traditional method of fishing have not been taken away, they have been duly protected. Only those who had illegally constructed bunds and who were using harmful manures have been prevented from doing so by reason of the said Notification. In view of the provisions of section 26A read with section 29 all commercial activities which seek to destroy the ecology, stands prohibited. So, government is right in regulating the rights under the said Notification. If such encroachments are not removed immediately the right of the farmers in the upstream mandals to do cultivation would be in jeopardy, consequently, it is their right to live guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution which is violated.

The Supreme Court observed that out of 901 sq. kms. of Kolleru lake, an area of 308 sq. kms. alone is notified as Sanctuary. This indicates that the government has balanced the needs of sustainable development with the livelihood of persons surviving on the resources of this lake. Lastly, the preliminary notification was issued as far back as in 1995 under section 18 of the Act. Therefore, the objectors were put to notice about the future course of action. Therefore, it is not open to the objectors now to say that they have made huge investments which would be lost if the report of the CEC is implemented.

For the above reasons, the Supreme Court directed the State government and its officers to implement the directions of CEC in its report dated 20th March, 2006 and order that the use or transportation of inputs for pisciculture shall be stopped immediately. The SC further clarified that the demolition of all fish tanks in a time-bound manner shall commence with effect from April 20, 2006. Accordingly, the interim order granted by this Court in I.A. Nos.1486-1487 in W.P. (C) No.202 of 1995, shall stand vacated and writ petitions/objections filed by various objectors shall stand disposed of.

Also see: <http://www.andhranews.net/state/2006/May/20-Demolitions-Operation-Kolleru.asp>;
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/1446650.cms>;
<http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2006/04/11/stories/2006041121380100.htm>

B) Highlights of the Central Empowered Committee Hearing on 17th May 2006

Following are the highlights of matters related to protected areas in the hearing before the Central Empowered Committee on 17th May 2006.

- *Regarding Permission For Construction Of Baghdad Dhawaiya Lift Irrigation Scheme on 0.37 Ha Private Land Within the Notified Area Of Sone Ghadiyal Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh (Application Number 844)*

This project was approved by the National Board for Wild Life on 4th October 2005 and by the State Board for Wild Life on 10th November 2005. The CEC sought further inputs from the counsel of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, A.D.N Rao. Mr Rao mentioned that the project has been cleared, and that the MoEF will respond in two weeks time.

- *Regarding Permission for Survey And Formation of Road From Killavankoil To Kodikulam Kudisai In Watrap Range, Srivilliputhur Giant Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary, Virudhnagar District, Tamil Nadu (Application Number 857)*

This application was filed by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Tamil Nadu. The CEC asked the applicant to provide more details and reasons in the case. These include: number of trees, species wise that would need to be cut; whether the road will be utilized by passengers; why was this road not built earlier and what is the reason for building it now; and whether the construction could have a negative impact on the sanctuary and the squirrel. The applicant was asked to explain through an affidavit the above points and specifying clearly whether the construction of the road was only for use of forest department or will there be civilian use as well.

- *Seeking Permission for Construction Of Fencing and Patrol Road Along Indo-Bangladesh Border Falling Under Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram (Application Number 858)*

This application was filed by the Deputy Secretary to the Government of Mizoram and the state counsel explained the matter before

the CEC. He referred to certain formal letters in the affidavit filed by them. The counsel for the Ministry of Environment and Forests sought two weeks time to file the response and also stated that NBCC needs to be made a party in this case. The CEC clearly pointed out that if the state government is seeking permission for 22 meters of fencing and road, then only that will be considered and nothing else.

- *Regarding Immediate Action on the Destruction of the Buffer Area of Silent Valley National Park and for Declaration of Buffer Area, Tamil Nadu (Application Number 697)*

The counsel for the applicant (Tony Thomas, One Earth-One Life), Ritwick Dutta presented the case before the CEC. The CEC pointed out that a detailed affidavit has been filed by the state government and the state is agreeing to what is being said by the applicant. Since it is a positive response from the state government, the CEC told the counsel for the applicant that they would keep the matter pending till the applicant would like it listed.

- *Regarding Construction of Hydel Projects Across River Barapole within Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary in Kodagu District Of Karnataka And Also In Kannur District, Kerala (Application Number 648)*

The Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW), Karnataka highlighted that the proposed hydel projects are in the wildlife sanctuary. However at present there is no construction or related activity that is taking place. The counsel for the applicant (Coorg Wildlife Society) indicated that the concerned minister has made a statement that the projects will be taken up. The counsel for the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) agreed that there is total violation in this case.

The CEC highlighted that they will pass an order after recording the statement of the CWW. In this case, neither the survey nor work will be undertaken till permission is taken from Supreme Court and the National Board for Wildlife..

'In the Supreme Court' is based on the Forest Case Update, which is a web-based initiative to provide information and updates on developments related to forests and wildlife in the Supreme Court
Forest Case Update Editors:
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READERS WRITE

Court judgements should be based on knowledge and facts.

Your editorial (Court orders...and happy tigers!, *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 2, April 2006) has pointed out some interesting aspects of our judicial verdicts. Your column has also raised some vital points - in good humour. However, I have some serious thoughts to share: The Mullaperiyar verdict is yet another example of a wrong that has crept into the resolution of dispute, where, if the greatest harm is to happen then it is to the wildlife.

The so called facts 'placed on record' have to be questioned. While it is beyond doubt, that to a large extent, the Indian Judiciary had proved its mantle by delivering incisive and instructive judgments/orders on many environmental issues, it is also seen that many judgements have not been pronounced keeping in mind science as a consideration. It is not just a matter of articulation, but of facts too, which all know are supposed to be sacrosanct. And science does help facts to be established beyond doubt.

Knowledge has to be the basis of wisdom. Going by your reportage of the Periyar judgement, it appears that the judgement is rationalized by the zeal of patriotism and nationalism - emotive in structure, rather than the application of pure reason. An informed judgement has to be derived by ascertaining facts from fiction. But how does a judge who is educated in economics know anything about ecology. The personal opinion is mixed up in his /her so called balanced consideration. The judgement therefore will reflect such discrepancies. Here

lies the lacuna in the dispensation of true justice.

This particular judgement reflects an attitude which is widespread in India and has shown how judges are also not spared by such thoughts and ideas. We are always impressed by the façade, but what is happening in our backyard is seldom of much concern to us. It is this attitude where by we can only see the social grades or status we want to be at or be referred to as, unmindful of the degradation of life that we are responsible for.

In the Sethu Samudram case (as pointed out by your editorial space) it is appalling to hear that a judgement includes a commentary on an ambition to be as economically powerful as other countries. How did international status and perception of being powerful or of being a strong nation get into a judicial opinion. The Periyar matter was taken to court to resolve a seemingly minor dispute among two neighbouring states of India - and not to give a personal opinion on our nation's international status or for that matter on how wild animals would like a larger water spread. The 'Don't worry, be happy' kind of a reasoning is a joke! The 'happy animals' mis-judgement needs urgent repairs before it becomes a new trend in Indian jurisprudence

I would therefore like to suggest that there are two impending things that need urgent attention. Firstly, the special fast track green courts are a must. The courts with special tools and resources should be capable of understanding the nuances of science and the intricacies involved in ecology, and thereafter take a correct stand and decision. For this, the judges should have some science background or at least a profile of someone who understands better the environmental problems facing the country. It has become more of a necessity because the EIA route for any developmental projects is a sham. Secondly, if the editorial wisdom of the *PA Update* has any doubts on the records that were placed, then like minded scientific and

environmental organisations should commission an independent EIA for Mullaperiyar and place the same before the people.

Although the Apex courts judgement 'resolving the issue' is law now, we should let the people ultimately decide what is wrong and right, so that, in future all administrative and judicial decisions are taken in the light of (eco)logical facts based on sound science. The wrong needs to be set right.

- **John Manjali**. Shop No 8, Udaaka Scty. (MHADA Bldg 57\B), Prabhodhan Road, Siddarth Nagar, Goregaon (W), Mumbai – 400104, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-28788656 / 56845663. Email: johnmanjali@yahoo.com

PA Update needs your support

For the last many years we have been able to produce the *Protected Area Update* because of the full and magnanimous funding support that we have received, prominently from the Foundation for Ecological Security.

Starting with this issue, we don't have enough support now to take the publication of the newsletter through the coming year. FES continues with its support but that is to the tune of about 70% of the budget requirements. The rest we have to now raise.

This is an appeal, therefore, to individuals and organizations who value the Update as an useful source of information to extend help and support.

For details of how this can be done and what the requirements are please write to me at pankajs@vsnl.com

Many thanks
Pankaj Sekhsaria

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