

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Editor: [Pankaj Sekhsaria](#)

Editorial Assistance: [Wrutuja Pardeshi](#)

Illustrations: [Madhuvanti Anantharajan](#)

Produced by: [Kalpavriksh](#)

Ideas, comments, news and information may please  
be sent to the editorial address:

**KALPAVRIKSH**, Apartment 5, Shri Dutta Krupa, 908  
Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004, Maharashtra,  
India. Tel/Fax: 020 – 25654239.

Email: [pseksaria@gmail.com](mailto:pseksaria@gmail.com)

Website: [www.kalpavriksh.org](http://www.kalpavriksh.org)

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**EDITORIAL**

**Citizen Science for Conservation**

One of the biggest concerns about scientific research over the years has been its 'inaccessibility to common people' and often, the ivory tower disposition of the scientific community itself. Debates over the lack of accountability in scientific establishments and their general unwillingness to engage with the masses have been common. Admittedly, all scientific endeavours don't lend themselves to easy explanations, but that does not mean that none do.

A good example of the latter is MigrantWatch, a citizen science programme for bird migration that has now entered its second year. Over 500 amateurs, serious researchers and weekend enthusiasts from across the length and breadth of the country are already part of the program that seeks to document, understand and analyse the phenomenon of bird migration to and from this country. Bird studies in fact easily lend themselves to initiatives of this kind, and such efforts have shown their worth in different countries around the world, particularly in the West. Even in India some of the most significant contributions towards understanding birds have come from the enthusiastic amateur. What is significant this time is that the program is well thought out and structured. That the organizers are now expanding its scope significantly is perhaps proof that it has been enthusiastically received so far. Rest assured, we could be getting some exciting results.

What is further promising is that MigrantWatch is not an isolated effort of its kind. There are a few more such endeavors, though perhaps more low key. One of them in Project PteroCount, a South Asian Bat Monitoring Project that seeks to form a wide network of volunteers to create a comprehensive database of the roosting sites of the Indian Flying Fox.

Another one that has yielded some noteworthy results is a little initiative tucked away in Meghalaya in the North Eastern corner of the country. This is a project of the Samrakshan Trust to involve local people in monitoring

elephant movement in the South Garo Hills, which is part of the Garo Hills Elephant Reserve. It is considered to be one of the most significant elephant bearing areas in the country but little is known of elephant behaviour here. In a situation where the landscape is large, where human and financial resources are seriously limited, and the area extremely difficult to access, it makes perfect sense to involve the local community. The elephant monitoring project here has done just that. For about three years now, a network of local individuals situated in remote and dispersed villages has been trained to collect data on elephant presence and movement in a simple and structured manner. The data has just been put together and it has created for the first time a good overview picture of the elephants here; including aspects like herd size and the general direction and period of their movements. Additionally, the study has provided some important insights into other dimensions like crop raiding by the elephants. It is, perhaps the first crucial step in understanding and perhaps solving the escalating problem of human-elephant conflict, and for ensuring a better future for both, the local communities and the elephant.

These examples provide the proof that science need not be distant, that it can be made meaningful with and for people and it can still be just as exciting. Needless to say, the involvement of the local communities should not be restricted to only those situations where the going is tough or where getting data is difficult. We must recognize also that this is only a start, a good one and hopefully we'll be seeing a lot more of such citizen science initiatives for conservation in the days to come.

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### Area of Kolleru WLS to be reduced

The Andhra Pradesh State Assembly adopted a unanimous resolution in the first week of September requesting the National Board for

Wildlife (NBWL) and the Central Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court to reduce the area of the Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS) from the present 84,000 acres to about 30,000 acres. The proposal is to change the boundary of the sanctuary from the +5 feet contour to the +3 contour. The move comes in light of the recent 'Mee Kosum' yatra of the former Chief Minister, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu and his promise that the area of the sanctuary would be reduced if his party, the Telugu Desam (TD), was returned to power in the upcoming state elections.

It has been argued that the suggested denotification would benefit the livelihood prospects of at least three lakh farmers, as presently nearly 15,000 acres of 'zeroythi' patta land had been included within the boundaries of the sanctuary. The resolution to reduce the area was initiated in the assembly by the ruling Congress Party to prevent their political rivals from gaining mileage from the statements made by Mr. Naidu.

The issue is linked to the 1999 Government Order (GO) 120 for preventing misuse of the lake bed. Ironically, the order had been issued when the Telugu Desam was in power, but had not been implemented for various reasons. Large scale removal of encroachments like the illegal fish tanks was finally undertaken in 2006. (see *PA Updates* Vol XII, No. 4, and Nos. 55 & 49).

There was considerable opposition to the removal of the encroachments. The latest developments are linked to the continued demands for reduction of the sanctuary area because of the impediments to agriculture and other economic activities. The denotification now needs to be approved by the Central Government and the Supreme Court.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) has meanwhile said that they would oppose the move to change the boundaries as this was being done to woo the fish tank lobbies.

Source: 'Unanimity on reduction of Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary boundary', *The Hindu*, 05/09/08.  
'CPI to fight against Kolleru move', *The Times of India*, 07/09/08.  
Sreenivas Janyala. 'Cost of three lakh votes in Andhra: 50,000 acres of sanctuary land' *The Indian Express*, 10/09/08.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, I/c Kolleru  
WLS, Eluru. West Godavari District,  
Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08812-232356.

### **Fears over impact of irrigation project on wildlife in Nagarjunsagar Srisailem TR**

Fears have been expressed on the impact of the Srisailem Irrigation project on wildlife in the Nagarjunsagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR). Part of the concern has been voiced following at least eight recent sightings of tigers along the Hyderabad-Srisailem highway and other roads.

Ongoing excavation work for an underground irrigation tunnel that will pass through the reserve is said to be the main reason for these new developments. Work was recently started on the Rs. 1925 crore project, as part of which two 135-meter long Tunnel Boring Machines (TBM) will create a 44 km long tunnel under the forest. Allegedly, vibrations on account of this work have disturbed the tigers and other wild animals of the NSTR.

The four year project is being executed by the Noida based Jaiprakash Associates Limited. Senior company officials have denied the allegation, and have argued that the tunneling cannot cause any vibration-related impacts because the work is taking place 200-400 meters below the surface. They also point out that they had adopted the more eco-friendly boring method and not the conventional blasting technique.

The Director, Project Tiger, has said that the matter would be looked into if a direct co-relation could be found between the irrigation project and the sightings of the tigers. He pointed out that the project had been approved much before the area was declared a tiger reserve. He was also of the opinion that tigers had not been seen in these areas earlier because of heavy Naxalite activities and police movement. Now that these activities have reduced, tigers were being spotted more regularly.

Local forest officials, however, are reported to have said that their objection against the passage of the tunnel through the core area of the tigers' natural habitat was brushed aside. They added that a road was

being laid without permission in the core area of the reserve, and that debris from the excavation, including huge boulders, was also being dumped into the Srisailem reservoir.

Source: N. Rahul, 'Concern over safety of tigers in reserve,' *The Hindu*, 07/08/08

'Project won't hinder movement of tigers: official,' *The Hindu*, 07/08/08

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

## **ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

### **Conservation Initiative for high altitude wetlands in state**



A high-altitude wetlands conservation project titled 'Saving Wetlands Sky High' is being launched in Arunachal Pradesh by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – India in conjunction with some Buddhist monasteries and with the Indian Army.

The Tawang monastery will be involved in the project to conserve the Bangajan Wetland Complex, which comprises 12 lakes. The Nagula Wetland Complex, which is made up of about 100 small lakes will be looked after by the army.

The initial mapping of the Nagula Wetland Bangajan Wetland Complexes has already been completed, and the state government has also identified the two for designation as Ramsar sites.

Source: 'Caretakers for Arunachal wetlands,' *The Telegraph*, 21/08/08

## **ASSAM**

### **Flood parts of KNP; anti-erosion project on the cards**

Large parts of the Kaziranga National Park were submerged in the rising waters of the

Brahmaputra in late July and again in early September.

A number of animals including deer, rhinos and elephants were seen moving to higher ground across National Highway – 37 (NH-37). Reports in September indicated that at least seven hog deer were killed by vehicles on the road. Three rhino calves and a swamp deer were also reported to have died, though not in road accidents. Authorities initiated special precautions on the national highway to limit animal casualties. These included strict enforcement of speed limits, barricading and night patrolling (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIII, No. 4 & 2 and Nos. 50, 49, 47, 45, 44, 38, 34 & 29).

In a related development, a Rs. 7.49 crore proposal has been finalized to check erosion by the river at the Arimora and Agratoli ranges of the park. The proposal is an outcome of a joint survey carried out in August 2006 by the Forest and Water Resources departments of the state government to assess the problem of erosion here.

The work is to start in December this year with funds from the flood management programme of the Central task force constituted in 1998. The anti-erosion project will entail the construction of various structures including bullheads and bars to protect the erosion-vulnerable areas of KNP. The project may also channelize the river for wildlife protection purposes, specifically for the passage of the animals across the NH-37 during the annual floods. (Also see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 6)

Source: Flood waters submerge Kaziranga Park areas', *The Assam Tribune*, 28/07/08  
'Anti-erosion project to protect Arimora, Agaratoli ranges at KNP', *The Assam Tribune*, 30/07/08.  
Susanta Talukdar. '60% of Kaziranga park submerged', *The Hindu*, 02/09/08  
Susanta Talukdar. 'Kaziranga park begins search for animal carcasses', *The Hindu*, 08/09/08.

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

## No expansion of NH-37 running through Kaziranga NP

The Central government has decided to call off the proposed expansion of an 80-km stretch of NH-37 running through the Kaziranga National Park to a four lane expressway. The State Government had earlier opposed the move, holding that the resultant manifold increase in the volume and speed of traffic would imperil the wildlife of the World Heritage Site.

The stretch that connects Jakhlabandha and Bokakhat cuts through the Kaziranga National Park, and speeding vehicles on this road kill about 55 animals every year. Apart from exacerbating this high incidence of road accident mortality in the area, the proposed expansion would also have seriously hindered the large-scale animal migration to the highlands across the highway that takes place in the Park annually during the floods.

The State Government had earlier come up with an alternative proposal for diversion of traffic of heavy and commercial vehicles through NH-52 on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, according to which heavy and commercial vehicles would be diverted from Koliabor (Kolia Bhomora bridge) to the north bank, and pass Jamuguri and Gohpur before joining NH-37 at Numaligarh through a new bridge (see *PA Updates* Vol. XII, No. 6; Vol. XII, Nos. 2 & 1; and Vol. XI, No. 6 & 4)

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee too had expressed serious concern over the proposed expansion, noting in its 32nd report that “upgrading the national highway will transform the already problematic road crossing into an impossible barrier for the wildlife of the property.” While opposing the highway expansion move, the State Government had consulted renowned wildlife experts from across the world, who identified increasing traffic flow through the Park as the biggest challenge to the animals and the rich biodiversity of Kaziranga.

Source: 'Reprieve for Kaziranga: Expansion of NH-37 halted', *The Assam Tribune*, 19/08/08

## Digital bank for Deepor Beel

The Kaziranga Wildlife Society has taken up a project to develop a digital data bank of the flora

and fauna of Deepor Beel, the state's lone Ramsar Site. The study will also cover the adjacent hill areas, and hopes to serve as an archive of the rich bio-diversity of the wetland located on the outskirts of Guwahati.

The society also plans to set up mini museum at the beel showcasing its diverse flora and fauna.

Source: 'Digital bank for Deepor Beel,' *The Telegraph*, 11/08/08

### **Rhinos relocated from Pobitara to Manas 'straying' regularly**

Authorities at Manas National Park plan to erect an electric fence along a 10-km stretch on the southern boundary to stop two translocated rhinos from moving into adjoining fields and settlements.

The two rhinos were brought from the Pobitara Wildlife Sanctuary (see *PA Updates* Vol. XIII, Nos. 5 & 2) a few months ago as part of the Vision 2020 plan to increase the rhino population in the park. They have, however, been regularly straying into the adjacent paddy fields, where they recently injured three farmers as well.

At present, the park has six rhinos, four of which are kept in a special enclosure, while the two from Pobitara are allowed to roam freely. Forest guards on bicycles are constantly guarding the boundaries of the park to stop the rhinos from moving into human habitat, and are reportedly facing many problems since these areas are inaccessible because of the lack of proper roads.

The Field Director of park said that the rhinos had become a headache and that the problem would hopefully be solved once the animals get a few electric shocks.

Source: 'Manas to fence in 'homesick' duo,' *The Telegraph*, 18/06/08

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

### **Gibbon Conservation Day observed in Jorhat**

The Mariani, Jorhat based Gibbon Conservation Centre celebrated the 5<sup>th</sup> Gibbon Conservation Day on August 30 at the Nakachari College located close to the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary. The program was held in collaboration with and support from the US Fish and Wildlife Services, the Assam Forest Department, Education Forum of Nakachari College Primate Research Centre, Aaranyak, and Department of Zoology Gauhati University.

More than 400 students and people from the fringe area of Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary and twenty forest officials from the Jorhat Forest Division of Assam participated in the program.

Contact: **Kumud Ghosh / Dr. Dilip Chetry**, Gibbon Conservation Centre, Meleng, Mariani, Jorhat – 785634, Assam. Tel: 09435043982 / 03771-244378. Email: [chetryd@rediffmail.com](mailto:chetryd@rediffmail.com); [dilip@aaranyak.org](mailto:dilip@aaranyak.org)

### **Workshop on Primate Census Techniques at Gibbon WLS**

The Bangalore based National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), in collaboration with Jorhat Forest Division and Gibbon Conservation Centre, organised a two-day training-cum-workshop on Primate Census Techniques at the Gibbon Conservation Centre recently. A total of fifteen forest personnel and local youth from the village of Meleng Laxhipur on the fringe of the Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary attended the programme.

Participants were taken to the adjacent sanctuary for field exposure in the implementation of various census techniques and in data collection of the various aspects of primate ecology.

Source: 'Workshop on Primate Census Techniques,' *The Assam Tribune*, 25/07/08

Contact: **DFO**, I/c Gibbon WLS, Jorhat Division, P.O. Jorhat, Dist. Jorhat – 785001, Assam. Tel: 0376-32008(O), 320456@  
**Chief Wildlife Warden** – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam. Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386

## DELHI

### Wild animals from airport being relocated to Asola Bhatti WLS

Excuse me, but I think you are in the wrong queue...



Wild animals being caught at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi are being moved to the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary. A number of animals include jackals, monitor lizards and birds that take refuge in the grounds of the airport have caused considerable delays to flights here in the recent past.

The authorities are being assisted by the NGO Wildlife SOS in the operation. Efforts were also being made to clear the grounds of the wild grasses that have grown in the monsoons and which attract the wild animals.

Six jackals, two feral cats and 10 stray dogs were captured from the airport area in December 2006. Wildlife SOS also helped in relocating 52 blue bulls from the airport to the nearby sanctuary recently.

Source: 'Animals being removed from airport runway,' *The Tribune*, 18/06/08.

## GOA

### Landslide blocks road in Molem WLS

Heavy rains in the first half of August snapped Goa's southern link with neighbouring Karnataka following a major landslide along Anmod Ghat, a road running across Molem Wildlife Sanctuary.

A hill in the ghat region along the highway caved in, causing the landslide in this narrow stretch traversing through thick forest. Long queue of vehicles transporting goods between both the states were stranded.

While the ghat landslide was being cleared, another landslide occurred on the railway track few kms away, disrupting the south western railway trains. The landslide took place just next to Dudhsagar waterfall, a popular tourist spot in the region.

Source: 'Landslide snaps Goa-Karnataka link,' *The Indian Express*, 12/08/08

Contact: **Director** (Wildlife & Eco-Tourism) In-Charge Mollem NP, IV Floor, Junta House, Panaji – 403001, Goa. Tel: 0832-229701 (O), 226051(R). Fax: 0832-224747

## GUJARAT

### Chharidhandh wetland declared a conservation reserve

The Gujarat Forest Department has declared the Chharidhandh wetland in the Kutch district a conservation reserve. A notification to this effect was issued on July 9, 2008. The reserve will be spread over an area of 227 sq. kms.

Earlier the FD had proposed to declare the wetland a wildlife sanctuary (see *PA Update* 45)

Source: Govt of Gujarat Notification No. GVN-2008(33)WLP-102003-341-W(641)

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

## HARYANA

### Elephant rehab and research centre to come up near Kalesar WLS

The Haryana Minister for Forests and Environment recently laid the foundation stone of the Elephant Rehabilitation and Research Centre at Ban Santoor near Kalesar Wildlife Sanctuary. The Centre is to be located some 35 kms from Yamunanagar and is expected to become a big tourist attraction in the region (Also see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 5)

50 acres will be used for rehabilitation whereas another 400 acres have been set aside for the movement of the elephants. The centre will

also be home to elephants kept illegally by people and those subjected to cruelty in circuses.

The Centre is to be developed on the pattern of Thailand's Elephant Nature Park Foundation; and at the request of the panchayats of nearby villages in the Chhachhrauli area, will be named after wildlife lover and former minister for agriculture and wildlife, Surender Singh.

Source: Ban Santoor, 'Minister lays stone of elephant centre,' *The Tribune*, 20/07/08

Contact: **Inspector Wildlife**, Vill. Kalesar, Dist. Yamuna Nagar, C/o DFO (Terr.) Yamuna Nagar 01732 – 236214, Haryana.

## **JAMMU & KASHMIR**

### **Wildlife training programme in Dachigam NP**

A three-day training programme was conducted at Dachigam National Park on 'Wildlife Crime Prevention in J&K' in the last week of July. It was organised by the J&K Department of Wildlife Protection in collaboration with the Delhi-based NGO, Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). During the course of the event, the wildlife wardens of the state observed that manpower equipment, mobility and communication was needed for better management of wildlife. 160 field kits were also distributed to the wildlife department staff.

Source: 'Wildlife training program', *The Tribune*, 29/07/08.

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

### **Indian 'cold desert' to be on world biosphere reserve map**

The UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme will soon include Lahaul-Spiti and Leh-Ladakh areas on the world's network of biosphere reserves. The Man and Biosphere Committee (MBC) of the Union Ministry of

Environment of Forests (MOEF) is said to be giving 'final touches' to the project.

The 97,665 sq km cold desert biosphere will extend from the Pin Valley National Park in Lahaul-Spiti to the Hemis National Park in Ladakh. It will also include the wetlands of Tsokar and Pangong Tso in Ladakh, the Chandertal wetland in Lahaul, and the Ramsar site of Tsomoriri, which is the country's only breeding ground for the rare bar-headed geese and the black-necked crane.

Source: Kuldeep Chauhan, 'Indian 'cold desert' to be on world biosphere reserve map,' *The Tribune*, 18/06/08

### **Rs. 2.90 crores for wildlife conservation from Mughal Road Project**

The Jammu & Kashmir State Government has earmarked Rs 2.90 crore for fencing and channeling the Hirpora, Limber and Lachipora Wildlife Sanctuaries along the Mughal Road. The move purports to protect wildlife and segregate human habitations to prevent poaching, grazing and other illegal activities in compliance to the directions of the Supreme Court (SC) (see *PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 5).

The amount would be arranged by the R&B Department from the 90 crore budget allocated to it, and would be utilised by the Wildlife Department after getting the plan technically vetted.

An additional 5% of the cost of the Mughal Road is also to be given to the department for expeditious execution of the Markhor conservation plan in compliance with the SC directions.

Source: Ehsan Fazili, 'Mughal Road Project,' *The Tribune*, 27/07/08

## **JHARKHAND**

### **DNA fingerprinting to help decide number of tigers in Palamau TR**

DNA fingerprinting will soon determine the number of tigers left in Palamau Tiger Reserve. The genetic determination project will be carried out by the Reserve in collaboration with the Union Science and Technology Ministry (which

has also funded the initiative), the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, and the Central Zoo Authority.

The project is the outcome of a two-year long controversy over the number of tigers in the reserve. The Forest Department (FD) estimates there to be 30 tigers in the reserve and has started collecting and sending the scat samples to be used for the study. A tiger monitoring report prepared by the Field Director of Palamau in 2007 indicated the existence of 17 tigers on the basis of pugmarks, and claimed the existence of 13 others in an area of the Park which could not be accessed due to Naxalite presence. The Wildlife Institute of India, however, had said that no tigers were sighted at the reserve during the phase I of its national survey.

Source: Aneeta Sharma, 'Palamau tigers await DNA test,' *The Telegraph*, 16/07/08

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

### **State to adopt Karnataka model for tourism promotion in wildlife areas, PAs**

The Jharkhand Tourism Department is planning to adopt the 'Karnataka model' for development of tourism in forest and wildlife rich areas and wildlife sanctuaries and national parks of the state.

The Tourism Department will get into public-private partnerships with well-known names in the field and has already identified 13 forest rest houses in places like Ranchi, Chaibasa, Gumla, Latehar and Lohardaga for the purpose. These will first have to be transferred from the Forest Department, following which work on renovation and promotion would start. A special effort will be made to improve security at potential 'tourist-magnets' like the Betla Tiger Reserve and the Hazaribagh National Park.

Several consultants have already made detailed project presentations before senior officials of the department, including the secretary (tourism). In the fray are the Tourism Finance Corporation of India, IL&FS, DMG Consultants and SRIE.

Source: Aneeta Sharma, 'Karnataka model for money-spinner tourism,' *The Telegraph*, 22/07/08

### **No experts to radio-collar Dalma elephants**



Forest officials of Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary have had to return money received from the Central Government for a project to radio-collar wild elephants here. The reason is that they have been unable to find experts who can fix the collars of the animals.

The Centre has been sanctioning Rs. Eight lakh per year for the project but the funds have been returned two times already.

The task of radio collaring would require a team of experts to be engaged for at least a year. According to the plan the assigned expert was to also train officials at Dalma to use the equipment.

The tracking system would have enabled the Dalma foresters not only to better study the movements and behaviour of wild elephants, but also to warn villages if a herd was heading towards it.

Source: Kumud Jenamani, 'Search for tusker trackers,' *The Telegraph*, 23/07/08

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

### **Rs Five Lakh Central support for Dalma Bachao Abhiyan**

The success of the Dalma Bachao Abhiyan has prompted the Central Government to sanction a sum of Rs 5 lakh for sensitizing villagers to prevent the killing of wild animals here. The success of the campaign has been ascribed to the support received by the FD from the villagers, who have now become partners in conservation,

and from the Van Suraksha Samiti members along with the eco-development committee.

One of the main aims of the campaign has been to wean away the tribal communities from the ritual hunting of wild animals during the festival of *Bishu Shikar* that takes place every year in the month of April (see *PA Updates* Vol. XIII, No. 3 and Nos. 55, 50 & 25)).

It has now been reported that incidents of hunting in the 82 villages (29 located inside the sanctuary and 53 in the periphery) have reduced significantly, and that there has only one case of killing a wild animal this year.

The awareness campaign is being carried out with the help of wildlife enthusiasts and samiti members who use pamphlets, street corner plays and archery tournaments to sensitize the villagers.

Source: Jayesh Thaker, 'Central funds boost to Dalma campaign,' *The Telegraph*, 06/07/08.

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

## **KARNATAKA**

### **Permission granted for electrification; erection of poles inside Nagarhole NP**

Comprehensive electrification of villages and hamlets, including tribal *hadis* (colonies) in Kodagu, under the Rajiv Gandhi Rural Electrification Project will be taken up in phase II of the 11th Plan. This will include electrification and erection of electric poles in villages inside the Nagarhole National Park.

The Forest Department (FD) had recently (see *PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 6) denied permission for the erection of poles inside the park and the local people had been very upset on account of this. They had locked the Anechowkur gate bordering Mysore-Kodagu in January 2008 in protest and then the Nanachi, Murkal and Karmad gates, all inside the Nagarhole National Park, again in July. They had argued that the Forest Conservation Act did allow for diversion of forest land for

non-forestry purpose and therefore there should be no problem in allowing the power lines.

The situation has now been decided with Union Power Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde writing to the president of Kodagu Zilla Panchayat stating that the work in Kodagu would be approved and that it would be started in due course of time.

Source: Jeevan Chinnappa. 'Total electrification in Kodagu in Phase II of 11<sup>th</sup> plan', *The Hindu*, 2107/08.

### **Garbage dumping near Bannerghata NP**

The Deputy Conservator of Forest (DCF), Bannerghatta National Park, has sent a letter to the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Commissioner, alleging that its trucks are dumping garbage too close to the national park. It was also pointed out that the trucks were passing through the national park to reach the dumping site.

The site in question adjoins Survey No. 2 of Bannerghatta village near Kalkere State Forest of the national park. The garbage is being dumped only 50 meters from the boundary of the park and there is a threat of it getting dispersed to the adjoining areas and also into the park itself premises. The DCF's letter has also been sent to the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board.

The Commissioner of the BBMP has said that the Forest Department was at liberty to take action if the dumping was found to be unlawful. He pointed out that the site in question mentioned was one of nine areas allotted by the Government to the BBMP to dump garbage .

Source: 'Garbage dumping causing damage to wildlife: DCF,' *The Hindu*,

### **Flood waters threaten Ranganathittu**

The rising water level of Cauvery river in the middle of August threatened to inundate the Ranganthittu Bird Sanctuary.

The water levels rose following heavy discharge of water from the Krishnaraja Sagar reservoir near Mysore, and the river was reported to be flowing three to four feet above the danger mark. Trees on which birds roost were partially submerged, and it was feared that nests would be

washed away if the water level rose further, especially since water was also released from the Hemavathy reservoir in Hassan district. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XIV, No. 1)

Source: 'Birds in Ranganathittu under threat,'  
*The Hindu*, 14/08/08

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

## KERALA

### **Spurt in animal deaths in Periyar TR; disease, pollution of river could be reasons**

Unconfirmed reports indicated that 30 sambar and wild boars were found dead in the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) in the first half of August. The exact cause of the death could not be confirmed as the carcasses were old and the virus that caused the disease could not be isolated. Officials suspect that cattle from neighbouring areas grazing inside the reserve may have carried some disease, most like the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) to the wild animals.

The Forest Department (FD) started a vaccination programme for cattle in the surrounding areas. The drive was also extended to the Tamil Nadu side of the reserve where 12,000 cattle have been inoculated following a meeting between the forest officials of the two states. The drive was to be completed by August 15. In 1997-98, a major disease had hit wild boar on the Tamil Nadu side of PTR. An average of 120 animals were reported to have died daily during that outbreak. A similar outbreak had also affected sambar and wild boar here in 2005.

The Periyar River, the main source of drinking water for wild animals, has also been found highly contaminated in Thekkady, where unauthorised slaughter houses and hotels have been dumping waste into the water body. Problems at PTR are compounded by the fact that the reserve is not closed annually, whereas other sanctuaries visited by tourists are closed for three months every year.

A proposal by the FD to close the reserve for a month annually is reported to have met with strong opposition, as the closure

would affect the business and tourism activity in Thekkady.

Source: Giji K. Raman, 'Spurt in animal deaths in Periyar Tiger Reserve a cause for concern,'  
*The Hindu*, 08/08/08

Contact: **Field Director**, Periyar Tiger Reserve,  
Aranya Bhavan, Forest Complex, S.H.  
Mount P.O. Kottayam - 686006. Kerala.  
Tel: 0481-2562940(O) / 2560297(R). Fax:  
2569217 / 2565740

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

## MADHYA PRADESH

### **Diamond mining to restart inside Panna TR**



Diamond mining that had banned inside the Panna Tiger Reserve two years ago following a Supreme Court order is likely to start again very soon. The development follows a go-ahead granted by the SC.

The court has also created an environment impact monitoring committee to keep an eye of the mining activity inside the forest. The National Mineral Development Corporation that is responsible for the mining activities has been asked to deposit 5% of its capital cost for afforestation activity that would be overseen by the committee.

Source: 'Court gives green signal to Panna diamond mines', [http://timesofindia .indiatimes. com/India/ Court\\_gives\\_ green\\_signal\\_ to\\_Panna\\_ diamond\\_mines\\_ /articleshow/ 3362600.cms](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Court_gives_green_signal_to_Panna_diamond_mines_/articleshow/3362600.cms)

Contact: **Field Director**, Panna National Park,  
Panna – 488001, Madhya Pradesh. Tel:  
07732-252135. Fax: 07732-252120

### **Karera Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary to be denotified**

The Madhya Pradesh Government has requested the Centre to allow for the denotification of the Karera Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary located in Shivpuri district. The main reason is that not a single bustard has been seen here for the last 15 years. An estimated 500 blackbucks are present in the sanctuary and are known to cause serious damage to agricultural fields here.

The State Board for Wildlife and the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife have agreed to the denotification proposal. If the Supreme Court also agrees, the MP Government intends to facilitate the sale and purchase of land in the 33 villages that come within the boundary of the sanctuary. The sanctuary covers an area of a little more than 200 sq. kms, of which 146 sq. kms is private land.

An announcement to this effect was made by the Chief Minister Mr. Shivraj Singh Chouhan at a public meeting held at Karera recently.

Source: 'Centre told to wind up Great Indian Bustard Project', *Central Chronicle*, 26/07/08.

Contact: Contact: **DFO**, Karera WLS, Dist. Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07492-23379. Fax: 07492-33692

### **Gaur spotted near Bandavgarh NP**



Recent reports indicate that local people have sighted gaur in the forests adjoining those of the Bandavgarh National Park. Farmers of the Jugwari village in Shahdol district said that at least 10 animals had come down to their fields from the Maikal

hills and caused considerable damage to standing crops.

Another report in the last week of August confirmed the presence of a dead gaur near the village of Keraha'tola. There is a forest corridor connecting this area to the forests of the national park. The village of Ghunghuti, which is even closer to Bandhavgarh, has also reported the presence of gaur, but it has been suggested that this could be the same herd.

The sightings are significant in light of the proposed project of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department to translocate gaur from the Kanha NP to Bandavgarh with technical and financial support from Conservation Corporation – Africa, a tourism enterprise that is now also operating around protected areas in India (see *PA Update* Vol XIV, No. 3).

Forest officials have confirmed that the sightings notwithstanding, they would be going ahead with the translocation.

Source: 'Gaur found near Bandavgarh', <http://www.wpsi-india.org/news/29082008.php>

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

CWLW, MP, Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0755-557371/ 550391.

## **MAHARASHTRA**

### **Tiger attacks continue around Tadoba Andhari TR; six more killed since March 2008**

Attacks by tigers have continued around the forests of the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) resulting in the death of at least six more people since March 2008.

Two shepherds, Rajeshwar Kumre and Ramesh Ichkape were found dead in the Balapur FDCM territory in the latest incident that occurred in the last week of July. Both were from Janakpur in Nagbhid tehsil.

The villagers suspect that both were victims of a tigress that was sighted with two of its cubs in forests near Janakpur.

Nearly 20 similar incidents of attacks by tigers have been reported here since July 2007 (see *PA Update* Vol. XIV, No. 2)

Source: Mazhar Ali. 'Two more killed in tiger attack', Times News Network, 28/07/08.

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

### **Rs 35-lakh plan to end human-tiger conflict in Tadoba Andhari TR**

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has sanctioned Rs 35.58 lakh for the implementation of a special plan to contain the human-tiger conflict around Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR).

The three-year plan, called the 'Corridor Conservation Programme' is to be executed jointly by the Forest Department and the NGO Tiger Research and Conservation Trust. It envisages a survey in the area to assess the population and distribution of the tigers, and to understand the reasons behind the man-animal conflict. It would also improve the protection and monitoring system, and look into issues concerning habitat degradation, water bodies and other physical features. The training would be on wildlife management — monitoring the carnivores, studying their movements and undertaking community awareness programmes to reduce human interference.

At least 35 human deaths have been reported in the forests of the tiger reserve here in attacks by tigers since 2006 (see *PA Update* Vol. XIV, No. 2)

Source: Vivek Deshpande, 'Rs 35-lakh plan to end human-tiger conflict,' *The Indian Express*, 22/07/08

### **Villagers from Pench, Tadoba Andhari and Melghat TRs denounce relocation moves**

Representatives of villagers living inside the Tadoba, Tadoba Andhari and Melghat Tiger Reserves have jointly denounced the move of the Maharashtra government to relocate 108

villages from inside these three reserves after their declaration as Critical Tiger Habitats. A resolution to this effect was issued during a meeting convened in Nagpur in the last week of July by the National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPPFW), a national federation of forest rights movements in the country, and Shashwat, a Pune based organization.

Those attending the meeting detailed the harassment they were facing at the hands of the forest department which was apparently trying every trick in the book to force the people out of the forests. Documents were also presented as evidence of various irregularities committed by the revenue and forest departments.

A coordination committee of the relocation affected people, the Van Visthapan Prabhavit Samanvaya Samiti (VVPSS) was also constituted at the meeting under the president ship of Ms Kusum Karnik of Shashwat. In its resolution, the committee denounced the state government's decisions regarding the notification of critical wildlife habitats and the relocation of villages without either consultation with or consent of the affected population. It argued that the government moves violated the 2006 amendment of the Wild Life (Protection) Act - 1972, and also the Guidelines to Notify Critical Wildlife Habitats issued by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests in October 2007.

Source: Press Release 31/07/08 issued by the Van Visthapan Prabhavit Samanvaya Samiti.

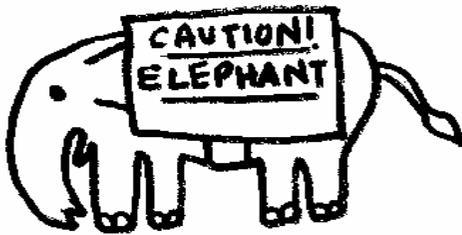
Contact: **Manohar Kothekar**, VVPSS, 17, Shahane Layout, Outer Ring Road, Trimurti Nagar, Nagpur-440022, Maharashtra. Tel: 09423684638. Email: vanvpssngp@gmail.com  
**Chief Wildlife Warden**, Maharashtra State, Dr. Ambedkar Bhawan, 4 & 5th Floor, M.E.C.L. Building Seminary Hills & Campus, Nagpur – 440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-2526758 / 2530126. Fax – 2510671. Email: cfwl@nagpur.dot.net.in

### **MEGHALAYA**

#### **'Caution' signboards help save elephants in the Garo Hills Elephant Reserve**

In order to urge visitors to exercise restraint while crossing wild elephant bearing areas of the South

Garo Hills, signboards bearing messages like 'be patient' and 'wait for it to pass', have been put up on roads in the Baghmara and Rewak Reserve forests that form part of the Garo Hills Elephant Reserve (see *PA Update* Vol. XI, No. 5) The Samrakshan Trust, an organisation working for biodiversity conservation in collaboration with Meghalaya Forest Department, has put up these messages in Garo and English, and has also been distributing handbills to drivers asking them to be cautious.



While National Highway 62 passes through the Rewak Reserve Forest, which is used regularly by elephants crossing across the Simsang river from Siju, State Highway 31A passes through the Baghmara reserve forest, which has a resident elephant population as well as seasonal visitors.

Though statistics are not maintained and most cases of encounters with elephants on the road go unreported, rough estimates indicate a minimum of three to four encounters in a week. Some of these turn violent and dangerous with elephants damaging vehicles and chasing people.

Source: Roopak Goswami, 'Caution signboards help save elephants,' *The Telegraph*, 11/08/08

Contact: **Samrakshan Trust**, Bolsalgre, PO Baghmara, Dist South Garo Hills – 794102, Meghalaya Tel: 03639-222187 / 094361-56458. Email: [info@samrakshan.org](mailto:info@samrakshan.org) Web: [www.samrakshan.org](http://www.samrakshan.org)

## ORISSA

### Crocodiles to protect Bhitarkanika

At least 57 captive bred salt water crocodiles were released by the Forest Department (FD) in Kharinasi, Batighar, Ramnagar and Jamboo areas of the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS) in the hope that this will protect the forests here from encroachment and human intrusion.



The move follows a similar exercise last year (see *PA Update* Vol. XIII, No. 4), where fear of crocodile attack was found effective in keeping human trespassers away from the many nullahs and creeks of the sanctuary.

Source: 'Crocodiles guard' Bhitarkanika, *The Statesman*, 21/07/08

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

## RAJASTHAN

### Good rainfall and Planning Commission bring good news for Keoladeo NP

Early monsoon showers in Rajasthan have fed about 40 million cubic feet (MCFT) of water to E and D Block of Keoladeo National Park (KNP) in the month of July. It is hoped that this will ensure a better season for the breeding birds at the park than has been the case in the recent past. The Chiksana canal was partly built last year with an investment of Rs. 41 lakh but nothing has been done yet about two other sources—the Panchana dam and the proposed Govardhan drain for bringing additional waters to the park (see *PA*

*Updates* Vol. XIV, No. 1; Vol. XIII, Nos. 6 & 1; Vol and Nos. 54, 53, 50, 43, 40 & 39).

The Rajasthan Government meanwhile is said to have agreed to an initial allotment of Rs. 15 crore for the Govardhan project and tenders for the same are expected to be floated soon. The Planning Commission (PC) too is reported to have taken interest and has extended its support. In response to a Rs. 65 crore proposal for funding the 100 km Govardhan Canal for bringing in Yamuna floodwaters from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan the PC has written to the Chief Secretary, Rajasthan that the project could be considered for funding.

The project — one among the many proposed for ensuring a regular water supply to the park — entails diversion of water during the monsoon through an underground pipeline of 16 km with lifting arrangements and finally draining the water into the park at Bhinsa Mori, at a distance of 80 km from the canal-head.

Source: Sunny Sebastian. 'Hope and fear in birds' paradise', *The Hindu*, 13/07/08.  
'Planning Commission may give funds for Bharatpur birds', *The Hindu*, 20/07/08

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

### **Satellites tracking tigers introduced to Sariska**

Satellite tracking of the two tigers relocated recently from Ranthambore to Sariska has shown that the animals are moving around freely in the core areas of the reserve. The signals have been received through the Canada-based Argos satellite, which specialises in data collection of wild animals.

Officials have also said that the movement of the animals indicates that they are moving closer to each other and that they would soon interact.

The satellite maps show that the male tiger is moving freely in the northern part of the tiger reserve close to Pandupole Temple, Slopka Chowki and Tehla Gate; and has of late been moving towards eastern part of STR

towards the tigress, who is also moving northwards from her zone in central eastern part of the park.

The GPS-based Lotek radio collars can monitor a maximum of 6 locations at any given time. Following their success at Sariska, the NCTA has decided to employ radio collaring in four other tiger reserves — Sunderbans, Pench, Kahna and Ranthambore — all of which have been under constant threat of poachers in recent years. (Also see PA Updates Vol. XIV, No. 4; Vol XIII, No. 6 & 3, Vol XII, No 4 and Nos. 57, 56, 55 & 50)

Source: Chetan Chauhan, 'Sariska tiger couple at home, getting closer,' *Hindustan Times*, 19/08/08

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

**CWLW** Government of Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, JAIPUR - 302 005.  
Tel: 0141-2380832 / 2540531. Fax: 2380496/ 2380832

## **SIKKIM**

### **Panang hydel project opposed over fears of impact on people and Khangchendzonga NP**

The members of the Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) have opposed the Panang hydel power project in a preliminary round of talk with the Sikkim Power Department officials. The meeting centered around the Panang and Teesta IV projects in the heart of Dzongu, where four such projects have already been scrapped so far.

ACT members said that the projects, if executed, would harm the people of the area, and that all project work must stop until it receives concurrence from the Central Electric Authority, and clearances from the Forest and Tribal and Social Justice Ministries. The State Power Secretary on his part said the government can stop the projects if the majority of the people were not in favour of them.

ACT members also alleged that the Catchment Area Treatment (CAT) plan of the Panang project was encroaching 4005 hectares of Khangchendzonga National Park and Biosphere

Reserve, and that this directly violated Supreme Court Rulings and National Park Notification.

It has also being pointed out that monasteries including Mani Lhagangs, along with the sacred springs, lakes and landscapes propitiated by the Lepchas, were also getting affected by the project work in the Dzongu region. The activists however maintained that they are ready to comply with the suggestions of the independent expert committee which had visited the project area in May; and that a moratorium of ten years is also acceptable to them in the case of Panang project.

Source: 'Talks over Panang project in Sikkim held', *The Assam Tribune*, 11/08/08

## TAMIL NADU

### **Rs. 37 cr. sought for Anaimalai Tiger Reserve**

The Forest Department has sent the Central Government a Rs. 37 crore proposal for the Anaimalai Tiger Reserve (formerly the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary). Rs. 34 crores is to be used for the relocation and rehabilitation of the tribal population within the reserve, and the remaining Rs. 3 crore would be allocated for other development works.

Nearly 7000 tribals (1688 families) spread over 34 hamlets presently live inside these forests. The FD is offering two packages for the relocation: Rs. 10 lakh for settling outside the forests or that the FD would provide land and other infrastructure. Forest officials have said that the tribals will be sensitized to the need to move out on their own and there would be compulsion or coercion.

Source: 'Rs. 37 cr. Sought for Anaimalai Tiger Reserve', *The Hindu* 28/07/08.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden, Indira Gandhi WLS**, 178, Fisheries Dept. Road, Govt. Timber Depot, Pollachi 642 001, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 04259 - 225356

## UTTARAKHAND

### **Special train to connect Delhi and Rajaji NP**

The Rajaji National Park has proposed a special train 'Doon on Wheels' to connect Delhi and the park to boost tourism here. Scheduled to run five days a week, the train will start from Delhi and touch Rishikesh, Haridwar, Raiwala and Dehra Dun before reaching Rajaji. The project is based on the 'low volume – high value' principle of tourism and has promised services of international standard.

It is not known, however, when the train is expected to start.

Source: Nihi Sharma, 'Doon on Wheels' on track, *The Tribune*, 28/07/08

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP, 5/1 Ansari Marg, Dehradun – 248001, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0135-2621669 Fax: 262166

### **Tigers migrating from Rajaji's western section**

Tiger numbers in the western section of Rajaji National park are reported to have dropped to one or two from about seven cats over the last three years. Playing down the possibility of poaching, senior forest officials have said that this could be because of tigers having migrated from this section of the forest because of the human colonies close by.

The park is believed to have more than a dozen tigers, mostly concentrated in the eastern section of the national park.

Source: 'Tigers migrating from Rajaji's western section,' *The Indian Express*, 13/08/08.

### **Elephant overpass at Rajaji park**

Authorities at Rajaji National Park have undertaken a project to build an elephant overpass above a stretch of road and railway track that passes through the park. The move follows the directions of the Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee. The 1.5 km overpass will stretch between Motichur railway crossing to Raiwala in Haridwar district and will be the first of its kind in the world. The CEC has also agreed to re-direct the Rs. 100 crores that are needed for the project.

An earlier plan to construct flyovers for vehicles in this stretch (see *PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 5) is being replaced by the present one. The CEC was of the opinion that even if the flyovers were built the problem of the railway line running through the corridor would remain.

Park authorities are also holding consultations with the experts at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, for making the overpass vibration-proof. This is to ensure that while crossing the overpass, the elephants do not feel the throb of the rail and road traffic passing underneath.

Meanwhile, a logo for the Rajaji NP was designed and unveiled to mark its silver jubilee celebrations. A brochure and a book detailing the ecological diversity of the park have also been launched. It is hoped that this effort will deflect some focus and pressure off Uttarakhand's most prominent protected area, the Corbett NP.

Source: Rajeev Khanna, 'Grand 'trunk' road: overpass for elephants at Rajaji park Dehradun,' *The Indian Express*, 14/08/08.

### Officers shifted from Corbett NP

The Uttarakhand Government has transferred seven officials holding crucial posts from the Corbett Tiger Reserve in an exercise executed during monsoon season when tigers are considered most vulnerable to poaching. Those transferred include Park Director, R. Bhartari; Deputy Director, P. Dhakate; and Divisional Forest Officer, Kalagarh, G Sonar. While Bhartari has served for three years at the park, the other two had have worked for less than two years each. 11 Range Officers from Dhikala, Kalagarh, Palain and Adnala have also been transferred.

Some independent conservationists including a member of the National Board for Wildlife criticized the move calling it unjustified and ill-timed. It has also been alleged that the transfers were affected because senior officers in the Forest Department were being overshadowed by the Corbett staff; and also that they were opposed to the rapid growth of tourism around the park (see following

story). The decision also stands in violation of an advisory issued by the Central National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), which had suggested that no transfers should be executed during the monsoon. Member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science, Technology, Environment and Forests and the Member of Parliament from Nainital, K C Singh Baba, too is reported to have written to the Prime Minister requesting that the transferred team of officers be brought back to the reserve.

The Chief Wildlife Warden of the state has however said that the transfer was a routine matter and the officers had been shifted as they had attained seniority.

Source: Neha Sinha, '7 officers shifted from Corbett,' *The Indian Express*, 30/07/08  
Neha Sinha, 'Uttarakhand Govt violated advisory against transfer of Corbett officers,' *The Indian Express*, 31/07/08  
Neha Sinha, 'Corbett battles commercialisation to protect its tigers,' *The Indian Express*, 09/08/08

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

### Increased tourism threat to Corbett TR

Growth in the tourism industry and resorts around the Corbett Tiger Reserve is emerging as a big threat to the Corbett Tiger Reserve. Around 40 resorts have come up in the vicinity of the reserve, on the banks of the Rivers Kosi and Ramganga These resorts are said to be increasing pressure on the wild animals ,particularly those that migrate through these parts.

Forest officials of the park reportedly opposed this increase in tourism activity here, and it is believed that their recent transfers from Corbett were on account of this (see earlier story). A team comprising the Park Director, Deputy Director, Warden, and the DFO Kalagarh had stopped elephant safaris during the monsoon in order to quell illegal access to the rivers. This put an end to the illegal buying and selling of permits practiced by resort owners, and angry gypsy drivers had subsequently gheraoed the director on two occasions.

Under an agreement signed in 2004, four different angling associations were given rights to

two km of the Ramganga for angling of mahaseer, which included catching the fish and releasing them back as part of an eco-tourism module. Initially, the lease was supposed to be for less than 10 years, but it was eventually signed for 30 years.

One of the parties involved was stopped by the former Director when it allegedly tried to erect a prefabricated structure next to its luxury tents, and also broke forest laws by making a dirt track inside the reserve to reach the lodge. The DFO in charge of the area subsequently set up a *chowki* under Project Tiger next to the site to stop the group from taking construction material inside. The resort owner, however, has denied all allegations of illegal activities.

Source: Neha Sinha, 'Corbett battles commercialisation to protect its tigers,' *The Indian Express*, 09/08/08

## WEST BENGAL

### North Bengal wildlife information on the web

Wildlife division-II of the West Bengal Forest Department (FD) launched its website [www.jalpaiguriwildlife.org](http://www.jalpaiguriwildlife.org) on July 15<sup>th</sup> to attract tourists to the North Bengal forests. The website features information on the flora and fauna at the Gorumara, Neora Valley and the Chapramari forests, and also carries booking details and tariffs for places of stay.

These include the eco-village at Kalipur in Ramsai, the elephant camp at Dhupjhora, tents at Murti and the inspection bungalows at Gorumara and Neora Valley National Parks and Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary. The Wilderness camp at Panjhora and the Red Panda Camp at Neora Valley also figure in the list.

The website also provides information on boardings run by the West Bengal Forest Development Corporation at Murti, Lava, Samsing and Sunthelakhola, along with information on the itinerary of package tours and road rail and air connectivity.

Source: 'Forest facts at finger tips,' *The Telegraph*, 15/07/08

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

### Pesticide use in tea estates suspected cause of elephant deaths in Mahananda WLS



The West Bengal Forest Department (FD) has suggested that the deaths of three wildlife elephants in the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary in the month of July have been caused by pesticides used in neighbouring tea estates. The bodies of the elephants were found near the Simulbari Tea Estate at Khuklong. Details of the viscera tests were awaited before the final cause of the death was determined. But post-mortem reports did indicate that the animals had died of poisoning.

As an initial precautionary measure, the FD has written to tea garden owners in North not to use pesticides in their plantations to avoid the recurrence of such incidents. It has also been pointed out by the FD and NGOs working in the area that workers applying weed and pest control in the Simulbari tea garden were hospitalized because of the effect of the chemicals at the same times as the animals were found dead.

The Indian Tea Planters' Association, on its part, assured the foresters of the garden owners' co-operation on the pesticide issue, but wanted to know what steps the FD has taken to stop elephants from foraging into the plantations. It is estimated that there are at least 70 tea gardens in the region located close to reserve forests and protected areas including the elephant corridor stretching from Mechi on the Indo-Nepal border to Sankosh on Indo-Bhutan border.

Source: 'Whiff of poison prompts forest letter,' *The Telegraph*, 01/08/08

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](mailto:dfowl1@dte.vsnl.net.in)

## Leopard killed by train dead in North Bengal

An adult male leopard suspected to have been hit by a speeding night train was found dead on the railway tracks near Soongachi Tea Estate in the Dooars in the month of August. The body bore injury marks on one of the hind legs, skull, ears and tail; and was sent for the post-mortem examination at Gorumara National Park.

The railways have denied that the leopard died of collision, arguing that the animal has reflexes too quick to permit such accidents. Hinting at revenge killing instead, the additional divisional manager of the Northeast Frontier Railways at Alipurduar, P.M. Mondal, said that the leopard was probably killed when it strayed into human habitation near the tea gardens to feed on cattle or chickens, and was then dumped on the tracks.

Wildlife experts, however, dismissed this theory, holding that anyone with the intent getting rid of the body could've hidden it in the nearby forests instead.

A number of wild animals continue to be killed similarly in train accidents on this route that passes through five protected areas in the North Bengal region (see *PA Updates* Vol. XIII, Nos. 6 & 3; Vol XII, No. 3 and Nos. 49, 47, 43, 39, 36, 34, 32 & 29).

The more recent incidents include two that occurred about a year ago, each of which resulted in the death of an elephant in an accident with the same train (Jhajha-bound Guwahati Jhajha Express) and another one involving a tiger.

Source: 'Leopard dead on tracks,' *The Telegraph*, 13/08/08

Contact: **DFO**, Gorumara NP, Aranya Bhawan, Old Court Campus, Jubilee Park, P.O. & Dist. Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-224907(O), 222838(R). Fax: 03561-223563. Email: wild2@dte.vsnl.net.in

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

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### MigrantWatch enters 2<sup>nd</sup> year

MigrantWatch, India's first citizen science programme for bird migration has entered its second year and now has some 500 participants from across the country. In MigrantWatch, volunteers record and report the dates of arrival and departure of migratory birds. It is hoped that this simple activity, multiplied across many observers from across the country will yield new and important information about bird migration in India, and about the consequences of climate change on this vulnerable ecological process. The data collected is completely open access (through the website), with no restrictions on use.

In its first year, the programme tracked the passage of nine common migrants (see *PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 5). The data collected highlights the potential of this endeavour; for instance, first sightings of the Rosy Starling (*Sturnus roseus*) reported in the second half of 2007 captured quite well its north-to-south arrival.

This year MigrantWatch has expanded the list to include all Palaearctic migrants (close to 300 species). This list, including additional information on 30 widespread and common species, is available on the website to help participants. Over the coming years, the programme hopes to collect good baseline information on avian migration in India and also to monitor changes that are likely to be induced due to climate change.

For more information and to join see <http://www.ncbs.res.in/citsci/migrantwatch/>

Contact: MigrantWatch, Citizen Science Programme, National Centre for Biological Sciences, GKVK Campus, Bellary Road, Bangalore 560065, Karnataka. Email: [MigrantWatch@ncbs.res.in](mailto:MigrantWatch@ncbs.res.in)

### Regulatory mechanism for wetlands

The Union Ministry for Environment and Forests (MoEF) has recently issued a new draft regulatory framework for wetlands in the country. This

would apply to over 67,000 wetlands covering all river basins, lakes, mangrove areas, coral reef belts and regions that recharge ground water.

The draft rules, notified for seeking public comments on July 9, have included all sorts of activities in wetlands, including drawing water and fishing. The draft lists both restricted and regulated activities for wetlands.

It also details the mechanism for seeking permission from the government to conduct any activity in the country's wetlands. The process, including mandatory public hearing to seek approval for commencing a project in wetland areas, has also been detailed in the guidelines. The regulatory functions will be performed by an expert appraisal committee at the Union government level, by an environment impact assessment authority at state level, and by a wetland conservation committee at the district level.

The regulations categorise wetlands into three groups. All wetlands recognised under the Ramsar convention; world heritage sites like Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur; trans-boundary wetlands; and wetlands with an area of more than 1,000 hectare in arid regions, 5,000 hectares in semi-arid, 10,000 hectares in sub-humid and one lakh hectares in humid tropic regions would be regulated by the Union Government.

The water sources for class-A cities like Delhi and Mumbai would also come under Union government's domain. All other wetlands, including the water-sources for class B towns and high altitude wetlands have been put under category B and C, which would be under the state government's jurisdiction.

Apart from regulating the wetlands, the three-tier committees will also recommend measures to the executing agencies on conservation action plans and conducting surveys of wetlands, the draft guidelines state.

It is hoped the guidelines would be formalized in less than a year's time.

Source: 'Coming: Regulatory mechanism for wetlands'

<http://in.news.yahoo.com/32/20080720/1053/tnl-coming-regulatory-mechanism-for-wetl.html>

## **MoEF committee for Conservation and Community Reserves and CCAs**

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has set up a Committee for looking into the management and funding of community reserves, conservation reserves, and other community conserved areas (CCAs). This is with a view to prepare guidelines for assistance to these areas under various centrally-sponsored schemes in the wildlife sector during the 11th 5-year plan period.

The Committee would be required to suggest broad categories of CCAs, which require priority action and assistance from wildlife schemes; suggest broad management strategies for CCAs and to submit its report to the MoEF within three months of its constitution.

The committee is chaired by the Additional Director General of Forests (WL). Other members include the Inspector General of Forests (WL); Director, Wildlife Institute of India; Sujatha Arora, Addl. Director, MoEF; Ashish Kothari, Kalpavriksh; Ravi Chellam, ATREE and Pramod Krishnan, Joint Director (WL) who is the Member-secretary

The first meeting of the committee was held on August 13, 2008 in New Delhi.

Contact: **Ashish Kothari / Neema Pathak,**

Kalpavriksh (editorial address). Email:

[ashishkothari@vsnl.com](mailto:ashishkothari@vsnl.com);

[neema.pb@gmail.com](mailto:neema.pb@gmail.com)

## **Drugs firms warned against selling diclofenac**

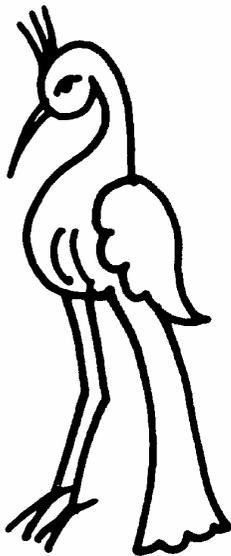
The Indian government has ordered a crackdown on companies selling diclofenac that is said to be the drug responsible for the near-extinction of vultures. A letter from the Drug Controller General of India, Dr Surinder Singh, has warned more than 70 drugs firms not to sell the veterinary form of the drug, and to mark human diclofenac containers 'not for veterinary use'.

The Central Government had taken a decision to phase out the veterinary use of diclofenac in early 2006 following evidence that it responsible for the catastrophic fall in vulture populations in the country. The government has also issued a gazette notification prohibiting the manufacture, sale and distribution of Diclofenac and its formulations for animal use. The

notification was issued on July 4, 2008 under Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

Source: 'Drug firms told to do more to prevent vulture extinctions',  
firhttp://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/08/indian\_drug\_announcement.htm  
1 27/08/08

### National peafowl count on the anvil



The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has proposed a project for a comprehensive assessment of the numbers of the country's national bird.

The plan is not to do an actual country wide count but to create an index of encounter rates (for eg. per hour in a particular landscape), in order to provide a benchmark data-set to monitor whether such encounter rates are increasing or decreasing. This would also be important in determining peafowl flock sizes and the male to female to chick ratio during the non-breeding and breeding season.

The peafowl population is estimated to be stable in most part of its distribution range except for areas adjoining cultivated land, where the birds often feed on crops. It is also believed that the population of the bird is stable in national parks and sanctuaries.

Serious threats to the national bird, however, still exist in the form of excessive use insecticide and pesticide, decreased number of roosting trees and increasing predation by feral dogs.

Source: 'Peafowl count on the anvil,' *The Statesman*, 18/08/08

## SOUTH ASIA

### Workshop held on the 'Himalayan Wetlands Initiative'

A 'Regional Technical Workshop on the Himalayan Wetlands Initiative' was held in Kathmandu in the first week of September to discuss the importance of conserving and facilitating sustainable use of the region's valuable wetlands. The workshop was organised by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), and was co-hosted by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation along with the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Nepal.

Representatives from six countries - Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan participated in the Workshop. Representatives from the RAMSAR Convention Secretariat for Wetlands, Wetlands International, WWF, IUCN and ICIMOD also participated.

One of the main outcomes of the workshop was the agreement to create a Himalayan Wetlands Initiative Strategy that would support the implementation of the RAMSAR convention on wetlands among countries sharing the Himalayan region. These include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Tajikistan. Once approved by member governments of the region, the strategy will be presented at the 10th International Conference on Parties (COP 10) of the RAMSAR Convention for Wetlands, to be held in Changwon, South Korea in October 2008.

Contact: **Valdemar Holmgren**, Integrated Water and Hazards Management/ICIMOD, Khumaltar, Lalitpur, GPO Box 3226, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: +977-1-5003222, Fax: +977 1 5003299. Email: vholmgren@icimod.org

## AFGHANISTAN

### Foreigners threaten Afghan snow leopards

Recent investigations have indicated that foreigners involved in rebuilding war-torn Afghanistan have become the biggest threat to the survival of the highly endangered snow leopard here. Despite a complete hunting ban across Afghanistan since 2002, snow leopard furs regularly end up for sale on international military bases and at tourist bazaars in the capital. Foreigners have ready cash to buy the pelts as souvenirs and impoverished Afghans break poaching laws to supply them. The going price for a single pelt is between US \$ 300 and 1500, depending on the size and its quality.

Destruction of infrastructure, movements of refugees, modern weaponry, extreme poverty and a lack of law enforcement together with drought and deforestation are some of the factors that have devastated Afghanistan's flora and fauna. There are now only between 100 to 200 snow leopards estimated to be left in Afghanistan, mainly in the extreme northeast of the country, in the remote Wakhan Corridor which separates Tajikistan from Pakistan and extends all the way to China.

The United States embassy along with the Wildlife Conservation Society have been working on educating military and civilian staff, in particular those in charge of mail services, on how to recognise endangered and threatened animal furs as well as conducting "raids" on US military bases. Within two weeks of their first training session on a US base just outside Kabul, the military had managed to "virtually eliminate" any trade of these products on the base. Local traders who offer their wares on military bases have been issued warnings if they are caught selling the furs, and are barred from returning if caught again.

Reaching out to the rest of the international community however has been far more difficult.

Source: 'Foreigners threaten Afghan snow leopards', *The Times of India*, 28/06/08.

## UPCOMING

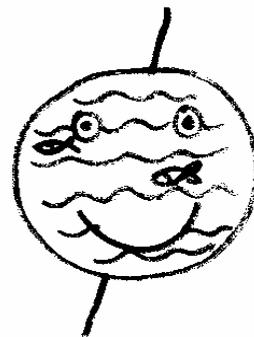
### Lake 2008: Symposium on Conservation and Management of River and Lake Ecosystem

The Biannual Lake Symposium – Lake 2008: Conservation and Management of River and Lake Ecosystems will be held from December 22 to 24, 2008 at the Indian Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

The symposium will focus on Conservation and sustainable management of river and lake ecosystems to bring in awareness among school students, teachers and the general public. It would provide a platform for interaction among researchers, policy makers, academic, researchers and NGOs

Contact: **Dr. T.V. Ramachandra**, Convener, Lake 2008, Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, Bangalore 560012, Karnataka. Tel: 080 - 22933099 / 23600985 (Extn: 215/232). Fax: 23601428 / 23600683 [CES-TVRR]. Email: E mail: lake2008@ces.iisc.ernet.in, [cestvr@ces.iisc.ernet.in](mailto:cestvr@ces.iisc.ernet.in) Web: <http://wgbis.ces.iisc.ernet.in/energy>

### International Marine Conservation Congress



The Marine Section of the Society for Conservation Biology will be hosting its first stand-alone meeting, the International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC), from 20-24 May 2009 at George Mason University near Washington D.C. This will be an interdisciplinary meeting that will engage natural and social scientists, managers, policy-makers, and the public. The goal of the IMCC is to put conservation science into practice through public

and media outreach and the development concrete products (e.g., policy briefs, blue ribbon position papers) that will be used to drive policy change and implementation.

The major themes that will be addressed during the Congress include global climate change; the land-sea interface; ecosystem-based management; and poverty and globalization. Cross cutting issues to be discussed include marine protected areas; education, outreach and capacity building; governance arrangements; fisheries and aquaculture; and economics.

Contact: **Dr. Ellen Hines**, Department of Geography and Human Environmental Studies, San Francisco State University, 1600 Holloway Ave, San Francisco, CA 94132, USA. Email: [IMCCprogram@conbio.org](mailto:IMCCprogram@conbio.org); [ehines@sfsu.edu](mailto:ehines@sfsu.edu) Web: <http://www.conbio.org/IMCC>

## OPPORTUNITIES

### **Narendra Babu Ecological Research Initiative Grant**

The Narendra Babu Ecological Research Initiative Grant (NBERIG) is a small grant designed to encourage young wildlife biologists and conservationists by supporting field-based projects that have a clear scientific or conservation agenda. The grant aims to support research studies that will add to the current scientific knowledge of species or habitats as well as projects that will offer and execute conservation solutions based on existing scientific knowledge. The grant is administered by the Ecology, Behaviour and Conservation Group of the National Institute of Advanced Studies.

The grant which will not exceed Rs. 50,000 per year will support scientific wildlife research as well as research based wildlife conservation and outreach activities in India. It will provide funding to students and to researchers for short-term projects or for small independent components of larger projects. A

preference will be given to proposals on wild dogs.

Last date for the receipt of completed proposals is October 30, 2008.

Contact: Email: [nberig@gmail.com](mailto:nberig@gmail.com) Web: <http://www.nias.res.in/NBERIGdetails.htm>

### **Convenor – The Academy of Conservation Science and Sustainability Studies**

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) is looking for a Convenor for the new Academy of Conservation Science and Sustainability Studies, located at Bangalore.

The Academy will have two broad programmes that serve to build capacities of various stakeholders in conservation and sustainable development, namely the doctoral degree programme and short courses for professionals from non government and other organizations, universities, colleges and school teachers. These programmes are designed with the intent of bridging disciplines across formal and informal pedagogies.

The Coordinator will lead and coordinate the function of the Academy, work with the Centre Convenors and faculty to develop short-certificate courses for various leadership groups, be responsible for managing the courses, work in building synergy with the Ph.D. programme in the courses offered, develop necessary processes and systems to ensure quality and relevancy of the courses offered, be responsible for working with the Director in raising resources for the Academy.

The application should preferably be a Ph.D. with at least 5 years of work experience, have adequate experience as a researcher and teacher in any field in the natural and social sciences, related to environment or natural resources and have demonstrated leadership skills.

Contact: **Director**, ATREE, Bangalore. Email: [director@atree.org](mailto:director@atree.org)

## **WTI looking for Trainers for its Van Rakshak division**

The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) is looking for trainers for its Van Rakshak division to assist in the anti-poaching training program for frontline field staff of protected areas

Languages for trainers are currently needed are Hindi, Bangla, Assamese, Oriya, Malayalam, Kannada, Khasi, Garo and Mizo

Desired Qualifications for Potential Trainers are as follows:

### **1. Law module**

- Graduate in Law (LLB/BL) with specialization in wildlife/forest/environmental laws

- Preference to lawyers practicing in Lower court on criminal matters.

### **2. Field craft module**

-Post Graduate in Life Science/ Zoology/Botany/Wildlife Sciences/Environmental Sciences with

extensive knowledge of wildlife and its conservation in India

-Experience of working in the wildlife areas of the region/state and conversant with conservation and management issues of those

-Practical knowledge of field craft like identification of animal signs, calls and their significance etc.

### **3. Crime prevention module**

-Graduate/Postgraduate in any discipline including Criminology with some specialization in detection and investigation of wildlife crime.

-Preference to Serving/Retired Forest Officers/Police personnel who have extensive experience and proven record of wildlife crime prevention .

Contact: **WTI**, Human Resources Division, B-13, Second Floor, Sector-6, NOIDA, Uttar Pradesh-201 301. Email: [jobs@wti.org.in](mailto:jobs@wti.org.in)  
Web: [www.wildlifetrustofindia.org](http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org)

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