

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XII No. 6

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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

Coastal concerns...

The Sunderbans in West Bengal and the Gahirmatha coast in Orissa are what could be called the stars of mainland India's coastal and marine ecosystems. They are biologically rich and diverse; have a special status under the law for wildlife conservation and are also recognized internationally for their ecological importance

That coastal systems are among the most vulnerable due to the rapidly warming global environment is a well known and understood fact. Small Island Developing States (SIDS), have in fact, been tirelessly campaigning in global fora for urgent steps to deal with the problem lest they be submerged forever.

It might also not be incorrect to say that for India, which is essentially land looking, even land obsessed country the coastal environment has always existed only on the margins inspite of its ecological and economic importance and inspite of the fact that millions of people live here. The problem of rising sea levels and an increasingly threatened coastal system may have been a distant problem so far for the powers that be in the country. Not anymore if one is to go by the reports that have now begun appearing.

Studies by the School of Oceanographic Studies of the Jadavpur University have indicated that if the present rate of sea level rise continues, at least 12 islands in the Sunderbans could go completely under by 2020. An estimated 70,000 people could be turned into environmental refugees if the problem is not recognized and importantly, collective action is not taken to deal with it. The economic and human costs would be unprecedented.

Similarly, forest officers in Orissa have noticed and pointed out large scale erosion of the nesting beaches of the Olive Ridley turtles along the famous Gahirmatha coast. While, any coastal system is extremely dynamic and the process of erosion and beach

formation is a continuous one, the scale of the erosion is reported to have been unprecedented in the last 18 odd months. The causes could be many and while it would be difficult to pinpoint the real reason, there could / should be no denying that global warming would only make the process faster. If this continues unabated we could be watching the decimation of one of the most spectacular natural events experienced on the surface of the earth – the mass nesting of the turtle on these remote beaches.

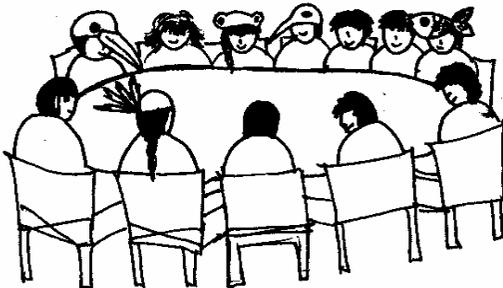
Little is known of the impacts and the changes taking place along other parts of India's coast like in the Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat or even the island groups of Lakshadweep and the Andaman & Nicobar, which would be even more susceptible and vulnerable.

Time is running out fast; not just for the tigers and turtles of the Sunderbans and Gahirmatha respectively, but for a large section of the human population as well. If anything, this is the time to apply the well accepted 'precautionary principle' and initiate urgent action.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Meeting of the State Board for Wildlife



A meeting of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands State Board for Wildlife was held in Port Blair in the last week of October under the Chairmanship of the Lt. Governor of the islands, Lt. Gen (Retd) MM Lakhera.

The issues that were discussed at the meeting included:

1. Survey and monitoring of dugongs and other sea mammals

2. Increasing poaching of wildlife due to non co-ordination between Police and FD.
3. Adequacy of efforts and steps taken to minimize man-animal conflict (feral elephants) in North Andamans.
4. Active promotion of Nature/ eco - tourism in the islands with a time bound action plan and with funding support/expertise.
5. Final notification of Rani Jhansi Marine National Park.
6. Consolidation of the proposal for PAs proposed by the Wildlife Institute of India.

Source: Aparna Singh. Email dated 04/11/06
Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Van Sadan,
Haddo, Port Blair – 744102.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Proposal for Dallai-Ditchu WLS

Wild Survey North East, an NGO working in the states of the North East has suggested the creation of the Dallai-Ditchu Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh. The Forest Department had showed initial interest when the proposal had been first made in 2004, but since then there has been no development. The proposal is for the creation of a 3700 sq. kms protected area comprising Ditchu Reserve Forest, Dallai- proposed reserve forest and Langwanti Village Reserve Forest and some adjoining areas in the northern part of the Anjaw district.

The forests here are home to a wide range of rare species of fauna including the Red panda, Clouded leopard, Snow leopard, Mishmi takin, Red goral, tiger, leopard, Himalayan black bear and the Hollock Gibbon. The human population here is also said to be limited and there are large areas of contiguous forests that are uninhabited.

Source: 'Proposal to declare Dallai-Ditchu as sanctuary gathering dust', *The Assam Tribune*, 10/10/06.

Contact: **Asif Ahmed Hazarika**, Seujpur, 4th Bylane, PO Dibrugarh – 786001.
Email: asifhaz@rediffmail.com
CWLW, Forest Department, Itanagar – 719111. Arunachal Pradesh. Tel: 0360

ASSAM

PA managements facing serious funds crunch

Protected Area managers in Assam are facing a serious funds crunch with the Finance Department not having released funds for many months now. These include, among others, the Kaziranga NP, the Manas NP and the Pobitora WLS.

Kaziranga, for instance has not received any funds for wages and for fuel for six months now. Consequently, the petrol pumps in the area have stopped giving fuel to the park vehicles as the credit limit has crossed Rs. 1.2 Lakh. It has been pointed out that this present state of affairs is in violation of Supreme Court directives that Central funds received by the State Governments should be released by the state within 15 days.

Source: Bibhab Talukdar. Email dated 10/11/06.

'Source of funds hinders forest patrols', *The Telegraph*, 10/11/06.

Contact: **Bibhab Talukdar**, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati - 781 028, Assam. Tel: 0361-636768 / 266087. Fax: 266087. Email: Email: bibhab1@sancharnet.in

Army commandos air-dropped in Dibru Saikhowa to fight ULFA



Army helicopters air-dropped commandos in the Dibru Saikhowa National Park in the first week of October in an effort to flush out militants of the 28th battalion of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA).

The operations have been launched by troops of the 2nd Mountain Division inside the park and also in Arunachal Pradesh. An army cordon was also thrown around the park as part of the operations.

The forests here have been an important hideout for the ULFA. They had moved out temporarily in 2005, but then re-entered in 2006 by taking advantage of the unilateral truce declared by the Centre.

The Army had called off its operations inside the park last year following pressures by the ULFA-appointed People's Consultative Group (PCG)

(Also see *PA Updates* 59, 58, 52, 45 & 30)

Source: Sushanta Talukdar. 'Commandos airdropped', *The Hindu*, 07/10/06.

Contact: **DFO** Tinsukia Wildlife Division Dibru-Saikhowa NP, P.O. Tinsukia - 786125. Assam. Tel: 0374-331472(O), 333083(R)

More tourism schemes for Kaziranga NP

The Assam Minister of Forests and Tourism, Rockybul Hussain, has said that the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) would have a crore rupees worth of tourism schemes under the Agaratoli Range in the near future. He was speaking during a function of the 52nd Wildlife Week held at the Kohora Convention Centre in KNP. He also suggested the development of the neighbouring areas like Bokakhat for tourist promotion.

The meeting was attended by Ajanta Neog, Minister, Social Welfare; Jiten Gogoi, MLA, Bokakhat; the PCCF and CCF, Govt. of Assam and other high-level government officials.

Source: 'More tourism schemes for KNP promised', *The Assam Tribune*, 10/10/06.

Highway realigned to protect Barail WLS; no decision yet on section through Kaziranga NP

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), which is building the 678 km four-lane expressway from Silchar to Srirampur,

has decided to realign the Udarband - Harangajo section to avoid damage to the Barail Wildlife Sanctuary.

The work contracts for the other 27 sections on the East-West Corridor in the state were awarded late last year. NHAI officials said the tenders for the Udarband-Harangajo section, on NH -54, are likely to be now invited in January 2007 after finalisation of the detailed project report (DPR). This section is 31 km long.

In Assam the East-West Corridor originates in Silchar and will pass through Maibong, Lumding, Daboka, Nagaon, Sonapur, Guwahati, Nalbari and Bijni before ending at Srirampur on the Assam -West Bengal border.

The NHAI has already got court clearance to cut a total of 1,36,547 trees along the way. The state Forest Department (FD) is the agency entrusted with the task of cutting down the trees after paying the necessary compensation funded by NHAI. The NHAI is also paying the FD for afforestation programmes to compensate for the cut trees.

Four-laning work from Km 22 to 60.5 on NH-54 has not yet been taken up due to non-issuance of forest clearance. In this stretch, there are three locations where elephants cross the highway. The state CCF (Wildlife) has recommended that only a two-lane road is built in the 25 km stretch here. A meeting was held on September 11 last between the CCF (Wildlife) and NHAI officials where it was agreed that the NHAI might acquire land up to 33 metres in this stretch. NHAI is making a proposal, which will be reviewed by the CCF (Wildlife).

Meanwhile, the NHAI proposal to widen the 315 km highway between Nagaon and Dibrugarh into a four-lane one has also run into a hurdle because of the concerns regarding its impact on the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) The highway is to be four-laned under the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme for the North East (SARDP-NE). The DPR is expected to be ready in six months time.

Source: Anujata Talukdar. 'Realignment to protect Barail Sanctuary', *The Assam Tribune*, 05/10/06.

Rs 67.60 lakh for checking erosion at Kaziranga

The Assam State Government has earmarked Rs 67.60 lakh for dealing with the problem of erosion of the Kaziranga National Park. Erosion protection measures will be undertaken along the Arimora stretch from Agoratoli to Burahapahar.

Additionally, a proposal of Rs 8.35 crore has also been prepared for the protection of Bonkual from erosion. Bonkual and Kuruabahi are the worst affected areas in the Bokakhat sub-division. A number of families here have been displaced and have become landless during the last few years. An amount of Rs 45 lakh has also been sanctioned for the protection of Singadoria Gaon from river erosion.

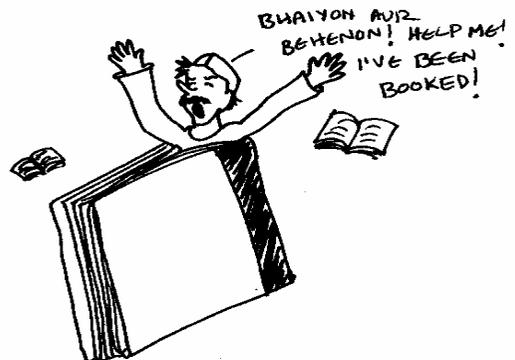
Source: 'Rs. 67.60 lakh for checking erosion at Kaziranga', *Assam Tribune*, 09/11/06

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

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

BIHAR

Ex-minister to be booked for denotification of Kaimur WLS



The Bihar State Government has decided to file criminal charges against a former Minister, a former Chief Secretary and two serving top bureaucrats for denotifying forests of the Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary to allow for the Durgawati reservoir project. The

denotification was allegedly done in violation of the Forest Conservation Act, the Wildlife Protection Act and orders of the Supreme Court.

Those involved in the case include former minister in the erstwhile RJD government Jagdanand Singh, retired chief secretary G S Kang and two serving IAS officials HC Sirohi and V Jayashankar besides some engineers of the water resources department. While Singh was the Minister for Forest and Environment then, the two officials had served in that department and Kang was Development Commissioner when the land transfer was made. The land area involved in the case is 5.44 acres.

An expert team comprising the Chief Conservator of Forests, eastern region, O P Pandey, and the Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam, MC Malakar, were sent early this year for physical verification. The team noticed the violation and also recommended immediate stopping of construction work of the reservoir project.

The state government, had through a notification (65/2002-843(E) VP) on November 11, 2004, denotified 160 acres of land including 5.44 acres of land falling in Kaimur Wildlife sanctuary. The committee submitted its report to the state government in September recommending prosecution of these officials. Subsequently, CM Nitish Kumar sought legal advice from advocate general P K Sahi who recommended prosecution of all those involved in the case.

Source: 'Ex-minister to be booked under forest Act', *The Times of India*, 27/10/06.

Contact: **DFO**, Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary, Shabad Division, PO Sasaram, Dist. Rohtas, Bihar. Tel: 06184-33434

DELHI

Delhi FD sets up Wildlife Cell

The Delhi Forest Department (FD) has set up a Wildlife Cell which will help monitor complaints and also to take calls on animal rescue and distress situations. FD officials said that they were constrained because of a shortage of personnel and the Cell was an effort to invite the public to help them detect wildlife crime. The FD is also going to ask the Delhi Police to depute eight constables with them permanently to deal with the shortage of

staff. The helpline number of the Wildlife Cell is 23378600.

The FD plans to equip the men on call with official mobile phones so that they can be reached at all hours. The Wildlife Protection Society of India is reported to have agreed to sponsor the mobile phones.

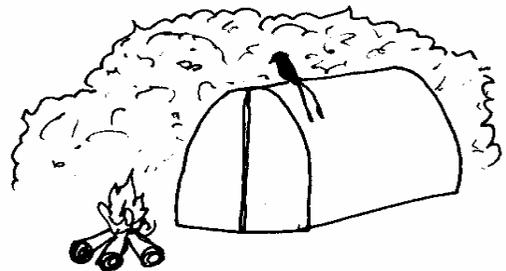
The FD recently also set up a Wildlife Co-ordination Committee for effective implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act. The Committee would have representatives from Railways, Aviation, NGOs and the High Court and the government. The committee is supposed to work on time-bound programmes for protection and preservation of wildlife besides sensitising the public about the Act.

Source: Ravleen Kaur. 'Capital's Forest Dept. sets up wildlife cell', *Indian Express*, 10/10/06.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Government of Delhi, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi.

GUJARAT

Gir East to be developed for tourism



The Gujarat State Board for Wildlife has recommended the development of tourism facilities in Gir East division to ease the tourist pressure at Sasan. It has been decided to set up an interpretation zone in Aambaradi Reserved Forest near Dhari town in Gir East on the lines of the one in Devalia near Sasan.

The additional tourism attractions in this area include the famous Khodiyar dam and temple, which adjoin the proposed site for the interpretation center.

The decision was taken at a recent meeting of the board that was chaired by Chief Minister Narendra Modi in Gandhinagar. Rs 5-crore have also been sanctioned for the project.

Source: Sibte Husain Bukhari. 'State plans for tourists: a roaring time at Gir East', *The Indian Express*, 23/10/06.

Contact: **Bharat Pathak**, CF (Wildlife) Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/ 630051. Fax: 631211

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Renuka project cleared; 49 ha of sanctuary to be submerged

The Supreme Court recently approved the Rs. 1075 crore joint project of the Himachal Pradesh and Delhi State Governments for the Renuka project that is aimed at augmenting the water capacity of the national capital, New Delhi.

The project had been conceived by the Himachal Government in 1990 but had been hanging fire for want of permission from the Supreme Court and its Central Empowered Committee because of submergence of land of the Renuka WLS.

The SC gave permission for the execution of the project after perusing a report of the committee and after the Himachal Government agreed to provide more land in exchange for the 49 hectares that are to be submerged

Source: SS Negi. 'Renuka project gets SC approval', *Deccan Herald*, 18/11/06.

Kol dam project to submerge parts of Majathal WLS; CEC asks state for explanation

The Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has issued notices to the Chief Secretary and the Principal Secretary, Forests of Himachal Pradesh asking them to explain why the state Forest Department concealed information about land of the Majathal WLS to be submerged by the Kol dam project. It has also asked the state government to stop work on the project till the issue is settled.

The CEC has also asked the department to furnish correct data and take action against the officers responsible for the lapse. The issue came up before the court after a non-government organisation filed a public interest litigation.

The FD is believed to have not only concealed the fact that a part of the Majathal WLS was to be diverted but also left out some thickly

wooded forest areas with standing trees worth more than Rs 2 crore from the diversion plan while seeking the mandatory forest clearance from the Centre.

The FD has obtained permission for diversion of 954 hectare of forestland, which did not include the wildlife area under the Shimla Division. Besides, the Harshang forest, spread over 22 hectare, was completely left out and parts of some other forest areas were also not included.

The additional area for which forest clearance has not been obtained is 130 hectare with over 44,000 standing trees. Out of this 80 hectare had been diverted under the Forest Conservation Act but not under the Wildlife Protection Act. The faux pas has virtually made the forest clearance granted by the Centre for the project redundant, as trees could not be felled without permission.

Source: 'SC panel tells govt. to stop work on Kol Dam', <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2006/20061024/himachal.htm#1>

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

Wildlife Wing to take up matter of control of sanctuaries with territorial wing

The wildlife wing of the Himachal Forest Department has decided to take up with the State Government the matter of the six wildlife sanctuaries that are still under the control of the territorial wing.

Earlier (see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 3, June 2006), the Central Government had denied resources to the tune of Rs. 1 crore to the State Forest Department because the Tundah, Kugti, Sechu Tuan, Shimla Catchment and the Dhauladhar Wildlife Sanctuaries had not been transferred to the wildlife wing. These six PAs cover an area of nearly 1500 sq. kms and account for 21% of the total protected area of the state.

The Wildlife Wing has argued that not only is the state losing the money that is needed for the management and protection of the sanctuaries, the PAs are also suffering

because the territorial wing is not equipped to manage PAs.

Source: Rakesh Lohumi. 'Forest Dept. to take over wildlife sanctuaries', *The Tribune*, 23/10/06.
Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Himachal Pradesh, Dept. of Forest Farming & Conservation, Mist Chamber, 1st Floor, Khalini, Shimla – 171001. Tel: 0177-223038 / 0191-544575. Fax: Fax 0177-224192 / 223038

KARNATAKA

Problem elephant to be translocated from Hassan to Bhadra WLS

The Karnataka Chief Wildlife Warden has approved a proposal by the Conservator of Forests, Hassan Circle, to translocate one wild elephant, which allegedly killed one person in Bagdalu village of Arkalgud taluk and damaged standing crop in Alur and Arkalgud range. The process of tranquilising and shifting the wild elephant would be undertaken soon after the problem elephant is identified. Initially there was no consensus among the villagers of Alur, Yesalur and Arkalgud range on which was the particular elephant causing the problem.

The department had earlier sent a proposal to the Union Government for capturing 20 wild elephants, which were creating problem in both Hassan and Kodagu districts and translocating them to Bhadra Wild Sanctuary.

The Forest Department has been spending about Rs. 15 lakh annually towards crop compensation and a similar amount was being allotted for scaring operations every year. (Also see *PA Update* Vol XII, No. 4, Aug. 2006)

Source: 'Proposal to translocate wild elephant approved', *The Hindu*, 26/10/06.
Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests**, Bhadra Wildlife Division (Bhadra Tiger Reserve) Chickmagalur – 577101. Tel: 08262-234904(O), 230751(R). Fax: 08262-232799 DCF(T) 235385 DCF(S&D)

Elephants stray from Bannerghata NP

A herd of around 35 elephants strayed into villages on the periphery of Bannerghatta National Park (BNP) in the month of October, creating panic in

the villages of Begehalli, Ramasagara and Nallasandra near Jigani in Anekal taluk, three kms from the park. While there were reports that the herd had destroyed ragi and maize crop, the Forest Department (FD) officials denied it. The elephants also did not attack any one. The FD staff burst firecrackers and chased the animals back into the BNP the following morning.

The elephant-human conflict here has increased significantly in recent times on account of the rapid urbanisation of Bangalore and its suburbs, which have led to mushrooming of buildings and denudation of lush green forests (See *PA Updates* 63, 59, 33 & 32). Herds of elephants migrate from Bandipur towards Bannerghatta and from there to Hassan via Savandurga forests. The changing landscape is now increasingly creating hurdles in this migration route. Grazing in the national park by cattle owned by villagers in the vicinity and dynamiting for stone extraction in the quarries in the area has further complicated the problem.

Source: Elephants stray into villages on periphery of Bannerghata NP', *The Hindu*, 17/10/06.

Contact: **ACF (WL)**, Bannerghatta NP, Bangalore – 560083, Karnataka

Staff shortage at Bandipur

The Bandipur Tiger Reserve is reported to be facing a severe staff shortage. While the requirement is of 400-500 personnel, presently only about 180 are deputed there. Of them too, over 30 are involved in tourism related activities like ferrying tourists in the forests, maintenance of tourism infrastructure and taking care of the VIPs.

Forest officials have said that this has seriously affected management and protection activities leading to increased cattle grazing and theft of timber. Salaries too have not been paid for many months and FD vehicle repairs too have been pending for a long while.

Source: Amit Upadhye. 'Lack of staff hits tiger reserve', *Indian Express*, 13/10/06.

Contact: **Field Director**, Bandipur Project Tiger Reserve, Aranya Bhawan,

Ashokapuram, Mysore – 570008,
Karnataka. Tel: 0821-2480901(O), 2484980
(R).

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3345846. Email: pccfwl@vsnl.com

KERALA

Bird survey in Peezi Vazhani and Chimmony WLSs adds 32 new species

A bird survey conducted in the Peezi Vazhani and Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuaries in Kerala in the month of November has added 32 new species to the list of birds found in the area.

The survey was conducted by ornithologist Dr. P.O. Nameer of the Department of Wildlife Sciences, College of Forestry, Kerala Agricultural University in association with the Kerala Forest Department and the Nature Education Society Thrissur (NEST)

The most significant finding of the survey was the sighting of Lesser Fish Eagle, which until recently was known only from the foothills of the Himalayas. The bird was sighted at both Peechi and Chimmoni during the survey.

The Lesser Fish Eagle was first spotted at Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary in October, also by Dr. Nameer. The sighting of the birds at Peechi and Chimmoni sanctuaries is believed to be only the second such report from Kerala.

The present finding has a special significance as it goes to establish that the three contiguous wildlife sanctuaries in central Kerala, Peechi-Vazhani, Chimmoni and Parambikulam are acting as an important conservation zone for this globally threatened specie. Other significant sightings during the survey included those of the Large Hawk Cuckoo, Broad-billed Roller, House Martin and Ashy Minivet. The earlier bird surveys in the sanctuaries were done in 1991 in Peechi and in 1992 in Chimmony.

Source: '32 rare birds sighted in Thrissur forests',
The Hindu, 17/11/06.

Sanctuary for *Kurinji* habitat

A gazette notification has been issued by the Kerala government declaring 3200 ha of the *Kurinji* habitat in Idukki district as the Kurinjimala Sanctuary. The area falls in the Survey No. 58/1 of Kottakkamboor village and Survey No. 62 of the Vattavada village. Private lands have, however, been excluded from the sanctuary. The sanctuary has been constituted for the long-term protection of the Neelakurinji *Strobilanthes kunthiana* that blooms once in 12 years.

The announcement was made by the State Forest Minister during the three day Neelakurinji Festival that was organized in Munnar in the first week of October. (See *PA Update* Vol. XII, No 5, October 2006).

This area is one of the last few remaining abodes of the *Kurinji* and it also supports a diverse range of other wildlife including elephant, deer, gaur and the Nilgiri Tahr. A two decade old campaign has been going on to declare these shola grasslands as a sanctuary, which will now also ensure protection of the corridor connecting the Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary and the Anamudi and Pampadum Sholas.

Source: Roy Mathew. 'Sanctuary for the Kurinji declared', *The Hindu*, 08/10/06
Roy Mathew. 'A victory for nature lovers', *The Hindu*, 09/10/06

Kattampally IBA under threat

The Kattampally Wetland in North Kerala, an Important Bird Area (IBA) is facing a threat from large-scale reclamation. Work on an Ayurveda health resort has commenced on a 15-acre plot near Varam Kadavu that forms part of this wetland. A portion of the plot has been reclaimed by a trust headed by the former Forest Minister K.P. Nooruddin.

The wetland supports a large number of wetland bird species and is believed to be the only place on the Indian west coast where the rare Oriental Pratincole is known to breed.

Source: Praveen J. Email dated 12/10/06.
Contact: **Praveen J.** Email:
paintedstork@gmail.com

MADHYA PRADESH

No GIB sighting in Karera, Ghatigaon WLSs



There has been no report of the sighting of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) in the Ghatigaon and Karera Wildlife Sanctuaries in the last one year.

The government had initiated a reward scheme last year for the protection of the bird. Rewards of Rs 1000, Rs 2000 and Rs 8000 respectively were offered under the scheme if anyone was able to show a GIB, its eggs or chicks.

Posters informing villagers of the scheme were pasted in the villages and around Rs 1.5 lakh were spent for advertisements and messages on radio as well. This has however not yielded any positive outcome. Officials did receive information of the presence of about a dozen eggs, but found nothing when they reached the specific spot. The birds are reported occasionally from the Tighara, Devkho and Yavapathava areas.

The lack of success has meant that the fund clearance for the scheme for the next year would also become difficult.

The officials here have continuously claimed the presence of six GIBs in the area. There were 17 birds in the area of 512 square km at the time of establishment of the sanctuary.

Source: 'Sone bird fails to appear', *Central Chronicle*, 10/10/06

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

Tourism campsite at Delabadi in Ratapani WLS

The Madhya Pradesh Eco-tourism Development Board in collaboration with the MP Tourism Board and the Forest Department has decided to

develop Delabadi in Ratapani Sanctuary as a tourism campsite.

The Board has made arrangements for erecting temporary accommodation, a food court, tracking facilities and fishing for tourists who come camping. Additionally, there would be outdoor activities like bird watching, wild life spotting and cycling trails.

An amount of Rs. 28 lakhs has been sanctioned for the project which is expected to be popular on account of its proximity to two world heritage sites - Bhimbetka and Ginorgarh.

The authorities have said that the camp would be fully manned and managed by members from the local community, who would have a share in the profits generated.

Source: Biswajit Jha. 'Campsites to promote eco-tourism at Delabadi', *The Pioneer*, 08/11/06.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Ratapani WLS, P.O. Obeidullaganj, Dist. Raissen, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07480-24062.

CEC asks for stoppage of sand mining in the National Chambal Sanctuary

The Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has asked the Madhya Pradesh Government to ensure that no sand mining is carried out in the National Chambal Sanctuary in violation of the apex court's orders. The CEC is reported to have written to State Chief Secretary raising the issue of illegal sand mining here and has asked the State Government to comply with the Supreme Court's earlier order in this regard.

It has been alleged that the sand mining is being carried out inside the sanctuary in violation of the Supreme Court's order dated 14.2.2000 in IA No. 548 W.P. (C) No. 202/95. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XII, No. 4, August 2004)

Source: 'Madhya Pradesh asked to stop illegal sand mining', *The Hindu*, 20/09/06.

Contact: **DFO**, WL, National Chambal Wildlife Division, Mau Van Block, Agra, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0562-2320091

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

MAHARASHTRA

Metal detectors to trace traps in Tadoba

The Maharashtra Forest Department will be attempting the use of metal detectors to trace traps laid out for wild animals by poachers in the forests of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. It is hoped that the detectors will be able to locate the long chains that are attached to the traps and buried under the ground.

A preliminary trial carried out here recently gave positive results, encouraging the Dept. to try out the method further.

The FD has however said they want to be absolutely sure of the success rate of the method before its full application. Each detector that is to be procured from a supplier in Mumbai costs Rs. 15,000.



Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'In a first, state to use metal detectors to trace tiger traps', *Indian Express*, 14/10/06.

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

ORISSA

Turtle nesting beaches being eroded along Gahirmatha coast

Large-scale erosion of the beaches has been reported off the Gahirmatha coast raising fears of

the long term implications for the nesting of the olive ridley turtles here. While the erosion of the beaches is a regular phenomenon, forest officials say its intensity has gone up over the last 18 months. Nesting grounds near the Nasi-1 and Nasi-2 islands are reported to be the worst hit. The situation is similar at the rest of the nesting sites such as Agarnasi, Pentha and Babubali along the coast here.

The forest bungalow located at Ekakula also faces a threat. The structure which was about 500 metres away from the sea till recently is now only 100 meters away. The FD jetty at Barunei too has also been damaged by the action of the sea waves.

The only part that remains unaffected is the two-km stretch near the Defence Research Development Organisation's Wheeler's Island Intermediary Test Range center which appears to have been protected because of the sea wall erected for the defence installation project.

Source: 'Shrinking beach a threat to Olive Ridley turtles', *The Statesman*, 07/11/06

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

Fishermen arrested for violating rules

Twelve fishermen were arrested and two trawlers were seized in the coastal waters of Jagatsinghpur by forest officials in the first week of November as they were caught fishing in the no-fishing zone in violation of the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act

The act prohibits fishing within a radius of 20 km from the sea coast between November 1, 2006 and March 2007 to ensure for Olive Ridley Turtle conservation.

Source: 'Fishermen arrested for violating rules', *The Statesman*, 08/11/06.

Six elephant deaths within a week

At least six wild elephants were reported killed in different parts of Orissa within a period of a week in the month of October.

The first death was reported in the first week of the month when the skeleton of an elephant with its tusks chopped off was found inside the Simlipal National Park. It was found at a spot five kms from Lulung which is a popular picnic spot. Villagers suggested that the tusker may have been shot dead by poachers or was killed by poisoning the salt pools, which the elephants frequently visit. Four villagers were subsequently arrested with ivory weighing 5.2 kgs from the Phasore village in the area. It is not clear, whether the ivory was from the poached elephant.

A few days later two elephants were found dead near Joda in the Keonjhar district and this was followed by the death of three more (one female and two calves) near the Penthabahal forest area under Rairakhol Forest Division in Sambalpur district. Their bodies were found in a paddy field at a close to the Khalasuni Project Elephant area.

According to the Forest Department, three elephants died after coming in contact with a live electric wire, which villagers are alleged to use to protect their field from raiding elephants.

It is believed that professional elephant poaching gangs are active in almost all elephant habitats in Orissa including Narsinghpur, Kapilas, Athmalik, Satkosia, Rairakhol, Boudh, Baisapalli, Simlipal, Keonjhar, Deogarh, Sambalpur, Lakhari valley and Kotagarh. (Also See *PA Updates* Vol XII, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol. XI, No. 6 & 4; Nos. 49, 47, 46, 41, 39, 34, 32 & 29).

Source: Prabudda Jagadeb. 'Forest find casts poaching shadow', *The Telegraph*, 09/10/06.

'Three elephants found dead in Rairakhol', *The Pioneer*, 18/10/06.

Rs. 10 crore tourism project in Simlipal

The Simlipal National Park and its adjoining areas are to be developed as a major eco tourism destination. Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik recently inaugurated the Simlipal Tourism Development Project which is to be undertaken at a cost of Rs 10 crore.

A blueprint has been prepared for the project for which the Orissa Tourism Department will spend Rs 5 crore. The Centre and the State will contribute Rs 3 crore and Rs. 2 crore respectively to make up the rest.

Arrangements are to be made as part of the project to ensure tourists get a clear view of the waterfalls in at Barehipani, Joranda, and Gudgudia.

Chief Minister Patnaik also inaugurated the eco-tourism centre at Jashipur which has been constructed at a cost of Rs 40 lakh. The State Government has also announced other tourism promotion initiatives at Chilika Lake, Satkosia Tiger Reserve and at Bhitarkanika.

Source: 'Simlipal set to be eco-tourism destination' *The Pioneer*, 7/10/06

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

Probe held into January 2006 killing of fisherman in Gahirmatha waters

Mr. RP Singh, Inspector General of the State Human Rights Protection Cell recently conducted an inquiry into the killing of a Kakdeep based fisherman, Ganesh Das in police firing on January 2, 2006 (See *PA Update* Vol. XII, No. 1, February 2006). The inquiry was conducted with the help of Additional Tehsildar of Rajnagar, the OIC of Rajnagar Police Station, forest officials and the district administration on directions of the National Human Rights Commission.

According to official sources the forest patrolling team had caught the fishermen from the Chinchiri River mouth area while they were fishing illegally by entering into the prohibited area of Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary with a deep-sea trawler on January 2. The Forest Department along with Rajnagar police constituted a team led by the Additional Tehsildar of Rajnagar, Sasanka Sekhar Das and together they conducted a raid. 12 to 15 mechanised trawlers that had assembled attacked the forest patrolling boat and started firing by cordoning them. In order to disburse the trawlers from the prohibited area of Gahirmatha the Additional Tehsildar of Rajnagar, who was the magistrate at that time ordered firing under Section 130 of CrPC. One person was killed and another was seriously injured.

Later, 14 persons, including the minor son of Ganesh Das, were produced before the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Court of Pattamundai under Sections 147,148, 332, 333, 307, 427, 379; 149 IPC, 25 and 27 Arms Act and 27 and 29 Protection of Wildlife Act -1972 and then forwarded to jail custody.

The outcome of the inquiry is not yet known.

Source: 'IG holds probe into killing of fisherman on January 2', *The Pioneer*, 31/08/06

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

Proposal for peacock conservation reserve in Ganjam

The Ganjam Mayur Suraksha Samiti (GMSS) has proposed the creation of a conservation reserve for peacock conservation in the area around the Karanjei hills near Aska in Ganjam district. The GMSS is an organisation formed by villagers of the Pakidi area and has played a key role in the protection of the peacock from poachers and also the bird's habitat here.

The villages that are supporting this initiative include Sobhachandpur, Kerikerijhole, Ambuabadi, Bharatapalli, Chatradhepa, Karnandi, Chermaria and Shelliguda.

Source: 'Orissa may get a peacock sanctuary', *The Pioneer*, 12/10/06.

Forest guards to be recruited on contract basis

In a move aimed at filling up the vacant posts of Foresters and Forest Guards in the state, the Orissa State Government has decided to recruit them through contractual agreements. 1451 such posts for Guards and Foresters are to be filled up in this manner for a period of 11 months.

Wildlife groups have opposed this move saying that the posts should be filled up through the normal recruitment process. It has been pointed out that the posts of the Foresters and Forest Guards are recognised by the Orissa Forest Act, 1972 and the rules made under it. They have also been empowered to open fire as per the last amendment carried out in 2003. Doubts have been expressed that forest guards working under

contract may not be able to exercise the duties and powers to their best capacity and the need of the situation because of the fact that theirs is a temporary posting.

Orissa is divided into 281 Forest Ranges, 1,001 Sections and 3,674 Beats and at least 10,000 guards are required for protection of the forests of the state. The present strength is only about 4500.

It has also been estimated that Rs 1,000 crore worth of forest produce, including timber, firewood, kendu leaf, sal leaf, minerals and banned NTFP items is smuggled out of the forests here annually. Similarly, smuggling of iron ore from reserve forests of Sundargarh and Keonjhar districts has also become a big business of a well-organised mining mafia. There is also rampant illegal trade in wildlife products like ivory, tiger skin, tiger bones, skins of reptiles, live species of wildlife like birds and bears.

Source: 'Contractors to be recruited as forest guards', *The Pioneer*, 06/11/06.

Contact: Biswajit Mohanty, Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack – 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671 – 334625. Fax: 610980. Email: biswajit@cal.vsnl.net.in

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

RAJASTHAN

Traders oppose notification of Mt Abu Wildlife Sanctuary

Traders in the popular temple town of Mt Abu have opposed the notification for the declaration of the Mt. Abu Wildlife Sanctuary. A three day bandh was organized by them starting November 14. The trade and hotel associations have come together to form the Abu Bachao Samiti and have demanded that the area they operate in should be exempted from the notification. The present notification includes parts of Mt. Abu Municipality and rural Mt. Abu within the sanctuary limits.

The traders have expressed concern that inclusion in the sanctuary would adversely affect their business and they will be prevented from selling their property or from constructing new buildings.

The Revenue office had stopped accepting any sale deed for registration in November and locals had been asked to provide details of their property by the first week of December.

S K Mittal, Sihori District Collector however said that the protests were politically motivated. He pointed out that only an initial notification had been issued, that objections too had been invited and there was no need for the kind of protests that had been organized.

(Ed: Mt Abu had been declared a sanctuary under the Wild Animals and Wild Birds Protection Act, 1965. The present process, perhaps, is the initiation of its notification under the WLPA, 1972.)

Source: Palak Nandi. 'Notification on sanctuary status for Mt. Abu puts traders in tizzy', *The Indian Express*, 14/11/06.

Contact: **DCF – Wildlife**, Mount Abu WLS, Mount Abu, Dist. Sirohi, Rajasthan. Tel: 02974-43211(O) 02974-38900.

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

SIKKIM

Army proposal for eco-battalion for Sikkim

The Indian Army will be proposing the creation of an 'eco-battalion' and the 'Sikkim Scouts' to the Sikkim State Government for the protection of the state's biodiversity. The announcement was made in Gangtok recently by General PK Rampal, GOC 9 Corps and Colonel of 11 Gorkha Rifles.

The full details of what is proposed and the response of the state government are not known

Source: 'Bijoy Gurung, 'Army plans eco-battalion', *The Statesman*, 16/11/06.

TAMIL NADU

WII to prepare management plan for Gulf of Mannar NP

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department has said that the Wildlife Institute of India has been asked to prepare a management plan for the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve and National Park.

The Chief Wildlife Warden of the State said that the plan document would also include a new monitoring protocol to review the implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act and further, it would highlight the techniques that should be adopted to restore the damaged coral reef ecosystem.

The draft plan is expected to be placed before a high-level advisory committee headed by the Chief Wild Life Warden in December. The document would subsequently be finalized in January.

Source: 'Plan to manage Gulf of Mannar marine resources', *The Hindu*, 18/11/06.

Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust re- starts work

After a lull since its inception, the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust (GMBRT), a statutory body set up by the Government of Tamil Nadu with the support of Global Environment Facility (GEF) to preserve the ecology of Gulf of Mannar, has started implementing various projects in the coastal villages of Ramanathapuram and Tuticorin districts.

Though the office of the Trust started functioning three years ago, implementation of the project made little progress because of administrative and other problems. Nearly 50% of the officials and field staff deputed from various departments were reported to have shown little interest in taking up their new assignments citing inadequate facilities in Ramanathapuram.

Moreover, the targeted beneficiaries of the project also felt that the project could pose a possible threat to their traditional livelihood. After a series of confidence-building measures among the fisherfolk and

solving administrative problems to a certain extent, the GMBRT has started various micro-financing projects aimed at giving alternative employment.

A sum of Rs 4.5 crore has been earmarked for this year. Of the total project cost of Rs.140 crore, GEF funding is around Rs.40 crore. (Also See *PA Updates* 40 & 30).

Source: C Jaishankar, 'Biosphere work takes off after a lull', *The Hindu*, 07/10/06.

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

TRIPURA

Seven spotted deer die of pneumonia at Sepahijala WLS



Seven spotted deer were reported to have died of pneumonia at Sepahijala WLS in West Tripura district in the month of September. The animals had been

suffering from pneumonia due to continuous rains. Officials said that the place was unable to accommodate the 200 spotted deer here because their numbers had increased over the years.

Source: '7 spotted deer die of pneumonia', *The Assam Tribune*, 26/09/06.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Tripura, Aranya Bhawan, Nehru Complex, Agartala – 799001, Tripura. Tel: 0381-225223. Fax: 0381-225253/224013, 2422249

WEST BENGAL

Wildlife tourism booming in North Bengal

Statistics available with the Cooch Behar forest division show that an increasing number of tourists are visiting the forests and protected areas in the Dooars region

The footfall in all tourist spots across the Dooars — including the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, the Kunjanagar Eco-Tourism Centre

and the South Khayerbari Nature Park have shown a significant increase in the last two years.

Source: 'Tourism boon for forest villagers', *The Telegraph*, 04/11/06.

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

Initiative to tackle wildlife trade in the Siliguri corridor



A joint mechanism to tackle trade in forests and wildlife products through the Siliguri corridor was launched recently by the Forest Department, Police, District Revenue Intelligence and Customs as part of an initiative launched by the World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF).

At the first meeting of the initiative that was held on November 9 at Sukna it was decided to form an inter-department core committee which will meet regularly, share information and pool in resources to keep a tab on illegal traders. WWF will also help frontline staff in wildlife crime detection and control and technical and legal experts would be brought in for the purpose.

The initiative has been funded by the UK Asian Big Cats Project.

Source: Anuradha Sharma Lakhotia. 'Plan to save forest goods', *The Pioneer*, 10/11/06.

Contact: **WWF- I**, West Bengal State Office, 5th Floor, Tata Centre, 43, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta 700071, West Bengal. Tel: 033 – 2889530. Fax: 2883761.

Conservation, Education and tourism facility to be created for East Kolkata Wetlands

The West Bengal State Government plans to set up a park with world-class conservation, education and tourism facilities at the East Kolkata Wetlands. The plan was conceived after a delegation led by Chief Secretary, Mr Amit Kiran Deb recently visited the Hong Kong Wetland Park which is also a Ramsar site.

The authorities of Hong Kong Wetland Park have reportedly agreed to give the technical know-how and all other support for the setting up of the park.

Source: Pranesh Sarkar. 'Park to come up on East Kolkata Wetlands', *The Statesman*, 13/11/06.

12 Sunderban islands to go under by 2020

A study by the School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University has suggested that if the annual 3.14 mm of rise in sea level continues as present, 12 islands in the Sunderbans could go under by 2020. An estimated 70,000 residents could be turned into environmental refugees as a consequence.

Already some 7000 people have been displaced from their original homes in the Sunderbans over the last three decades due to various reasons that include sea-level rise, coastal erosion, cyclone and coastal flooding.

Among the most vulnerable presently are the islands of Ghoramara and the thickly populated Sagar. Around 28,000 people may be forced to migrate soon from various parts of Sagar Island as the island could lose nearly 15 per cent of its land over the next 14 years.

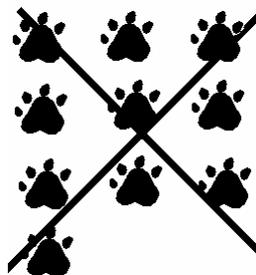
Source: Mohammed Safi Shamsi. 'By 2020, 12 more Sunderban islands set to go under water', *The Indian Express*, 30/10/06.

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

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

UTTAR PRADESH

More than 10 big cat deaths in Dudhwa/Katerniaghat since June 2005



At least 10 big cats including leopards and tigers are reported to have died of unnatural causes in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary since June 2005.

The latest incident occurred in the first week of October when activists of the Van Gram Adhikar Manch (VGAM) reportedly nabbed a poacher at Bichhia Railway Station while trying to smuggle away the skin of a freshly killed tiger.

Local villagers in the area led by the (VGAM) have been agitating against the deaths and have volunteered to keep a vigil in the area.

(Also See *PA Updates* Vol. XII, No. 3 and Nos. 56, 44 & 34).

Source: Manjari Mishra. 'UP jungles a killing field of big cats', *The Times of India*, 12/10/06.

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

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

PIL challenges National Tiger Conservation Authority

The Supreme Court has sought a response from the Central Government in the matter of the creation of tiger reserves in the already existing national parks and sanctuaries by bringing amendments in the Wildlife (Protection) Act.

The direction from the apex court came in response to a Public Interest Litigation filed jointly by the Bombay Natural

History Society, the Wildlife Protection Society of India, Wildlife First and the Conservation Action Trust, challenging the government's September 4 notification for constituting the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

The PIL had in particular objected to inclusion of new chapters, namely IV B and IV C, for the establishment of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the tiger and other endangered species crime control bureau.

The advocate appearing for the NGOs contended that the new additions in the legislation diluted the existing provisions, which were specifically incorporated for the protection of the wildlife and its habitat.

Source: 'SC notice to Centre on PIL on tiger reserves', *ZEE News*, 13/11/06.

Govt to set up all powerful Environmental Tribunals

The Central Government is reported to be in the process of constituting fully empowered National Environmental Tribunals with wide ranging and sweeping powers. The tribunals will have the right to review orders passed under the prevailing environment protection laws covering wide-ranging subjects such as water, air, wildlife and prevention of cruelty to animals. No other court or authority may enter into the jurisdiction of these tribunals. Non-compliance with any directions of the tribunal shall be treated as an offence, punishable with a fine up to Rs 10 crore. The tribunals have been suggested on the basis of the Law Commission's recommendation and after incorporating comments from various ministries.

The tribunals will be empowered to regulate their own procedure. They will not be bound by the code of civil procedure laid down by the Code of Civil Procedure 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice and subject to other provisions. These tribunals can take cognizance of any order passed by the Centre, states and public authorities; evoking the Water (P&CP) Act 1974, the Water (P&CP) Cess Act 1977, the Air (P&CP) Act 1981, the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960 and any other existing law related to environment protection and improvement of environment.

Appeals against the orders of environment tribunals can be made in the Supreme Court within 30 days, which can be extended by another 30 days. With the implementation of the new legislation, the National Environment Tribunal Act, 1995, and the National Environment Appellate Authority (NEAA) Act, 1997, would be repealed. The National Environment Appellate Authority, established under the NEAA Act, would also be abolished.

A two-tier structure has been proposed for the Tribunals. There will be a National Environment Tribunal (NET) at the Centre and Regional Environment Tribunals (RETs) for groups of states. The number of tribunals could be increased or decreased. The NET will have a chairperson and nine members.

Besides the chairperson and one member, who are judicial members, eight experts from the fields of physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, engineering, environmental economics and social sciences (either sociology of cultural anthropology) and forestry will constitute the tribunals.

The draft legislation for the tribunals is expected to be approved by the Cabinet soon.

Source: A Rajeev Jayaswal & MK Venu. 'Now, green tribunals to look into protection laws', *Economic Times*, 10/11/06.

Meeting of Forest Ministers of southern states

A meeting of the Forest Ministers of the five southern states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry was held in Thiruvananthapuram in November.

Key issues discussed in the meeting included exchanging intelligence on timber smugglers and poachers; joint conduct of anti-poaching operations; considering national parks and sanctuaries in the region as part of a larger landscape and not disjointed entities; evolving a mechanism that will allow range forest officers posted in border areas to meet on a monthly basis; sharing information on fighting forest fire and making the southern Forest Ministers' meeting an annual affair

Concern was also expressed that the funds now being provided to the states by the Centre were grossly inadequate, and that the states were finding it difficult to meet even the basic needs of their Forest Departments such as payment of salary. It was proposed to take up this matter with the Prime Minister.

A subject that was of immense interest, especially to Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, was the depletion of sandalwood harvest that has come down from around 3000 tonnes an annum 20 years ago to just over 10 tonnes in 2005-06. According to officials, while States such as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka (which together account for over 90 per cent of all available sandalwood) have laws curbing the felling of sandalwood, Puducherry (which has a number of sandalwood factories) has none.

Puducherry was urged, in the spirit of cooperation, to consider enacting laws curbing sandalwood smuggling.

Source: 'Bangalore to host next meeting of Forest Ministers', *The Hindu*, 13/11/06.

Forest officers call for national eco-tourism policy

Senior Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers from different parts of the country have called for a national policy for the implementation of eco-tourism programmes in forest, wildlife and other natural eco-system areas in the country. Draft recommendations for the purpose were adopted at a workshop for the IFS officers held recently at the Periyar Tiger Reserve. The workshop on 'Rising stakes of local community in conservation of forests and wildlife: Institutionalisation of eco-tourism involving local communities' was organised by the Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and sponsored by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests. The course director of the workshop was Anil Kumar Bhardwaj, head of the WII's Department of Wildlife Management and Conservation Education.

The IFS officers noted that though a few states had come out with their own policies on eco-tourism, a national level policy was necessary to address the ecological needs of the forest and environment, create people's involvement giving due regard to their ethnicity and culture so that

they feel involved, promoted and empowered. Such a policy would ensure that eco tourism programmes were not hijacked by vested interests.

The officers wanted eco tourism programmes to find a place in forest management and working plan provisions. The thumb rules for an eco tourism programme, it was suggested, should be minimum investment on infrastructure, maximum benefit to the local communities, a link between the programme and the local communities and respect to local culture and traditions. It was recommended that in ecologically sensitive areas, the principle of high value, high adventure and low volume tourism should be followed.

Source: 'Forest officers call for national eco-tourism policy', *The Hindu*, 14/10/06.

International Earthcare Award for Dr. Ullas Karanth

Dr. Ullas Karanth, Scientific Advisor of Wildlife First and Director of Wildlife Conservation Society's India Program was recently awarded the Sierra Club's International Earthcare Award 2006 for his "unique and outstanding contribution to environmental protection and conservation."

Previous recipients of the Award, established in 1975, include Andres Perez, President of Venezuela and Gro Harlem Brundtland Prime Minister of Norway.

Source: 'International Earthcare Award for Dr. Ullas Karanth', *The Hindu*, 26/09/06.

Contact: **Ullas Karanth**, Wildlife Conservation Society, India Programme, 403 Seebo Apts, 26/2 Aga Abbas Ali Road, Bangalore - 560042, Karnataka. Tel: 080-5591747 / 5591990. Email: ukaranth@vsnl.com

Directory of 'Green' films

The Centre for Media Studies ENVIS Centre has produced a Directory of Green Films that is a compilation of audio-visuals on wildlife and the environment.

Thematically classified, the directory provides details of documentaries, public service messages, animation films and feature presentations, along with contact details of the filmmakers and concerned organizations. The 2000 films details have been categorized into eleven segments — arranged alphabetically. These categories are Agriculture and Pesticides, Biodiversity and Forestry, Eco-tourism, Energy, Environmental Education, Industry and Environment, Livelihood, Solid Waste Management, Toxics and Climate Change, Water and Wildlife. Subject-wise and title-wise index have been included to facilitate search for required information.

The Directory is priced at Rs. 1000.

Contact: **Rohit Singh**, CMS Environment Team, Tel: 011-26864020, 26851660; Fax: 26968282. Email: rohit@cmsindia.org, webmaster@cmsindia.org;

Wildlife Rehabilitators Emergency Relief Network

The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) has initiated a network called the Emergency Relief Network (ERN) for exchange of information among the rehabilitators stationed in different parts of India.

An online community / group has been created where rehabilitators can send in information and interact with each other.

Contact: **Dr. Prajna Paramita Panda**, ERN, WTI, A-220, New Friends Colony, New Delhi – 110025. Tel: 011-26326025/6. Email: wren@wti.org.in Web: www.wti.org.in

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

Poachers electrocute three rhinos in Royal Chitwan NP

Three women living on the edge of the Royal Chitwan National Park were arrested and charged with the killing of three one-horned rhinos in the last week of October.

The arrests were made by a team comprising members of the anti-poaching unit of the national park and personnel from the Nepali Army. Local people were reported to have given information about the suspected poachers and during preliminary investigations, the arrested women admitted that they had used electric wires to electrocute and kill the rhinos.

At least 23 rhinos are reported to have been killed by poachers in Chitwan over the last 18 months. Another 10 were said to have died of natural causes.

Source: 'Three Nepali women arrested over rhino poaching', *AFP*, 01/11/06.

Locals to Manage Kanchenjunga Conservation Area

The Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) was recently handed over to the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council (KCAMC) as part of Nepal Government's plan to devolve power to local communities in the field of natural resources and equitable sharing of benefits.

Formed in the year 2000, the KCA Management Council represents all stakeholders selected from seven Conservation Area Users' Committees, 44 Users' Groups, and 32 Mothers' Groups.

The Kanchenjunga Conservation Area Management Plan, submitted by the council to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation in July 2004, was approved by the cabinet on August 31, 2006. The management plan aims to ensure benefits to local communities by letting them manage the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area.

As part of the larger Sacred Himalayan Landscape, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) will support the KCAMC for five years.

Source: 'Locals to Manage Kanchanjanga Conservation Area', <http://www.thehimalayantimes.com/fullstory.asp?filename=aFanata0vfqzpa4a1Ra5sa.axamal&folder=aHaoamW&Name=Home&dtSiteDate=20060923>

SRI LANKA

National Policy to protect wild elephants



The Sri Lankan Ministry of Environment has prepared a national policy for the protection of wild elephants. The policy outlines short and long term strategies to protect the fast dwindling wild elephant population in Sri Lanka by covering six aspects of the problem.

The policy was developed by a committee of 17 members. Details of what the policy contains, however are not known.

Source: 'Sri Lanka prepares National Policy to protect wild elephants', *Colombo Page*, 02/09/06.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

CITES notice to China

A meeting of the Standing Committee (SC) of CITES was held in Geneva in the first week of October.

The SC requested China to submit a report to the Secretariat by 31 January 2007, on its efforts to combat the illicit trade in Appendix-I Asian big cat species. China should also report upon any existing or intended domestic use of Asian big cat parts and derivatives, and this report should be published on the CITES website. The Secretariat, should, thereafter, conduct a verification mission to assess the results of China's enforcement work and report at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties on this subject. The Standing Committee recommended that the Conference of the Parties review the reports of China and the Secretariat and decide whether additional measures, including measures to address non-compliance, where necessary.

Source: Ashok Kumar. Email dated 18/10/06.

Contact: **Ashok Kumar**. Email: ashok@wti.org.in

UPCOMING

National Seminar on Plant Resources of Western Ghats

The Karnataka Biodiversity Board (KBB) in association with other governmental and non-governmental organizations is organizing a two-day 'National Seminar on Plant Resources of Western Ghats' in Bangalore on December 7 & 8.

Following are the main themes of the seminar:

- a) Plant Resources of Western Ghats: Diversity, Distribution and Quantitative Assessment of NTFPs and Livelihood, Ethno-Botany and bio-prospecting
- b) Vegetation and Landscape of Western Ghats: Vegetation mapping, unique plant habitats
- c) Plants in ecosystem stability of Western Ghats: Plant-animal interactions, invasives and ecological stability
- d) Threats Mitigation and active conservation strategies of plant resources.

Contact: **Dr. Sathyanarayana Bhat**. KBB, Vanavikas, 18th Cross, Malleswara, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-23448783. Fax: 23440535. Email: kbb.kar@gmail.com

Regional Conference on Natural Resource Conservation, use and sustainability in Drylands

The Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology (GIDE) in collaboration with the Kachch based Nav Nirman Abhiyan is organizing a Regional Conference on Natural Resource Conservation, use and sustainability in Drylands in Bhuj from December 18 to 20, 2006

The Conference will focus on the following themes:

- 1) Dryland Management – Problems and Solutions – An Overview
- 2) Natural Resource Enhancement, Use and Sustainability

- 3) Indigenous knowledge and Case studies on Dryland management
- 4) Dryland Biodiversity and its conservation

Contact: **GIDE**, PO Box, 83, Opp. Changleshwar Temple, Mudra Road, Kachch – 370001, Gujarat. Tel: 02832-329408 / 290334. Fax: 290335. Email: secy@drylandconference.in

27th International Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation

The 27th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation is being held at the Kingston Plantation on the Atlantic Ocean in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, USA from February 22 to 28, 2007.

The Symposium will have a special session on sea turtle projects in the Carolinas that will emphasize the work and commitment of volunteers and other participants in the monitoring of sea turtles in the North & the South. There will also be a special plenary session entitled "Tracking of Marine Vertebrates for Conservation".

Contact: **Michael S. Coyne**, President, International Sea Turtle Society,
E-mail: mcoyne@seaturtle.org

9th International Wildlife Law Conference

The 9th International Wildlife Law Conference will take place on January 26-27, 2007 at Stetson University's College of Law in Gulfport, Florida, USA. The conference is sponsored by the American Branch of the International Law Association's International Wildlife Law Committee; the American Society of International Law's International Environmental Law Interest Group, and Stetson University College of Law.

The four panels at the conference will focus on: Antarctic conservation and management regimes; the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species; the Ramsar Convention; and the Impacts of Climate Change on Species and Institutional Responses.

Contact: **Dr. Wil Burns**, 1702 Arlington Blvd., El Cerrito, CA 94530 USA. Email: jiwlp@internationalwildlifelaw.org Web:

<http://www.law.stetson.edu/international/biodiversity/IWLC.pdf>

Conference - "Averting Biodiversity Meltdown in the Asian Tropics "

The Asian Chapter for the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) in association with the French Institute of Pondicherry is organising a conference - 'Averting Biodiversity Meltdown in the Asian Tropics', in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu from March 6 to 8, 2007. Specific themes of the conference are as follows:

- a) Botanical gardens for plant conservation
- b) Conservation in the Western Ghats/Sri Lanka biodiversity hotspot
- c) Conservation in Human-Dominated Landscapes
- d) Endangered Ecosystem Services
- e) Ecosystem and species dynamics
- f) Forest dynamics and permanent plots

The conference organizers have invited abstracts not exceeding 300 words before December 15, 2006.

Contact: **Dr. Priya Davidar**, Convenor, ATBC Asia Conference, Department of Ecology and Environmental Science, Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Pondicherry-605014, Tel: 0413-2654322. Email: pdavidar@gmail.com; atbc_asia@yahoo.com; atbcasia@gmail.com Web: www.atbio.org

'Lake 2006' Environment Education and Ecosystem Conservation Symposium

The 'Lake 2006' Environment Education and Ecosystem Conservation Symposium is being organized in Bangalore from December 28 to 30, 2006.

The main objective of the symposium is to bring out the current trends in ecosystem conservation, restoration and management including the hydrological and the biophysical aspects, peoples participation and the role of non-governmental, educational and the governmental organisations and future research needs for restoration, conservation and sustainable management.

This symposium will introduce the major types of ecosystems - characteristics, diversity and importance; describe the main physical and biological processes important in several major types of ecosystems, and their consequences for community structure and function; and outline some problems of management and conservation in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

Contact: Dr. T.V. Ramachandra, Energy & Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore 560012. Tel: 080 2360 0985 ext 215/232 Email: lake2006@ces.iisc.ernet.in

OPPORTUNITIES

Small grants for conservation in the North East

Aaranyak has announced its small grants program for conservation work in the North East.

Contact: **Grants Manager**, Aaranyak Small Grant, Aaranyak, 50, Samanwoy Path, Survey, Guwahati-781028, Assam. Tel: 0361-2228418.
Email: grantsmanager@aaranyak.org
Web: www.aaranyak.org

READERS WRITE

Problematic evaluations of Tiger Reserves

With reference to the item, "Kanha declared India's best tiger reserve' (*PA Update* Vol. XII, No. 5, October 2006)"; it needs to be recognized that this is not accurate reporting. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has made no declaration about any best or worst tiger reserve and the exercise was not carried out through the IUCN.

In July 2004, the Project Tiger Directorate appointed eight monitors to undertake an assessment of all 28 Tiger Reserves in India. This was completed in 2005 (although the illustrated version of the report was only recently released and tabled in Parliament). The Project Tiger

methodology was based on a Management Effectiveness Assessment Framework (MEAF) that was developed by the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA). But a very crucial point needs to be taken into account: the MEAF was developed as a tool for managers to self assess and monitor the effectiveness of their management activities. Project Tiger (PT), however, misuses it to compare one park with another and imply that a high rating means all is well with the wildlife in that reserve.

Although missed in the listing was the fact that the second highest scorer after Kanha was the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, with 154 points. For those who are aware of the complex problems suffered by this reserve, this result, along with Palamau - in the top six with 141 - perhaps shines the strongest light on the limitations of these assessments and their misinterpreted results.

As the MEAF developers wrote about their methodology: the "*tracking tool (was) developed to provide a quick overview of progress in improving the effectiveness of management in individual protected areas. As such it is clear that there are strict limitations on what it can achieve: it should not for example be regarded as an independent assessment*"; "...*the tracking tool also has strict limitations in terms of allowing comparison between sites*". The WCPA also says, "*Clearly, however good the management is, if biodiversity continues to decline, the protected area objectives are not being met.*"

What then is the relevance of the high score given to the Panna Tiger Reserve, when, at the time of the assessment, over 80% of the breeding tiger population there had disappeared and no cubs had survived for several years?

It should be noted that the 'independent assessors' visited the areas for only two days and would inevitably have had to rely on secondary information, mostly provided by the Forest Department, for their conclusions. Accuracy could be questionable.

Here are a couple of small examples from Panna. It is strange that Panna scores a top 5 out of 5 for 'Trust between local people and TR management' when the Reserve had seen several major demonstrations of the local

community against the reserve management serious enough to warrant police intervention! Indeed the assessors themselves hint at it being less than perfect when in the context of village relocation, they say that “confidence building of the villages (sic)...requires to be enhanced”.

It may also be mentioned that around the same period that the assessors were giving Panna the thumbs up, “very good” result, the Central Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court had found that the then management had violated the Wildlife (Protection) Act and were pursuing seriously flawed management activities that included felling trees and mining stone within the core area.

The PT methodology was reviewed by the Bangkok Regional office of the IUCN in November 2005. PT subtly talks of them ‘reviewing’ the assessment as though this automatically implies endorsement; and of their commending the effort as though this were praise for the assessment results. In fact while congratulating the efforts of the programme and the use of “independent” assessors, their 6,500 word document is more of a critique; here are some brief examples:

“it would appear that different evaluators were not consistent in their application of the evaluation methodology...”

...The criteria used need to be reassessed to include specific, identified criteria for measuring (estimating) management outcomes...

...in order to be able to add the different scores and make inferences about the ‘total’ score, it is necessary to have the variables with the same levels of the ranking scale (from 0 to 3, for instance)...

...The evaluation process at the Reserve level should involve all stakeholders, and should take into account the actual tiger population.”

The results also need to be viewed through a lens that includes an understanding of the politics of the conservation scene in India and the monolithic nature of our Forest Department, especially when most of the ‘independent’ assessors were retired forest officers. Independent evaluations could certainly play a very positive role in our conservation management; these assessments are most useful when performed with integrity and in a transparent atmosphere, preferably by experts from outside the system. It should also be remembered that the objective is

“improving management effectiveness for securing the tiger’s futures”, which cannot happen if managements’ shortfalls are overlooked or obscured. The outlook for wildlife conservation will be bleak unless we can move towards a professional, open, transparent, and accountable management system.

As a concept, evaluation is commendable but the execution and interpretation of results are key components that define its worth.

(Both the evaluation and IUCN review may be found on the Project Tiger website: <http://projecttiger.nic.in/report.asp>)

- **Joanna van Gruisen**
Email: baavan@airtelbroadband.in

The PA Update is very useful

Thanks for the latest issue of the *PA Update*. It would be of great help in our work at enforcement and law programme of the Wildlife Trust of India.

- **Amlan Dutta**, WTI, A-220, New Friends Colony, New Delhi - 110065.
Tel: 011 - 26326025/26. Fax: 26326027

IN THE SUPREME COURT

A list of matters related to protected areas that came up before the SC appointed Central Empowered Committee on September 13, 2006

- 1) Seeking Permission for construction Of Madhya Ganda Canal Project Stage 11; Route falling within Reserve Forest Land and the Hastinapur Wild Life Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh.
- 2) Regarding a NOC for the construction of the Kalindi By Pass through the Okhla Pakshi Vihar, Uttar Pradesh.
- 3) Seeking permission for the construction of Baghdad Dhawaiya Lift Irrigation Scheme on 0.37 ha. private land within the Sone Ghadiyal Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh.

- 4) Permission for laying Optical Fibre Cable in the Madhav National Park and Sonchirya WLS along NH-3 between Gwalior and Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh
- 5) Permission for laying Optical Fibre Cable in Mahananda Wild Life Sanctuary along NH 31 between Siliguri and Melly Bazar, West Bengal.

'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

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