

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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LIST OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Going down memory lane...

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

Assam

Task force to look into stone quarrying in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Elephant Reserve
River dolphin population in Assam – 240
Opposition to naming national park in Orang after Rajiv Gandhi
Manas, Laokhowa and Dibru-Saikhowa identified for rhino translocation
Proposal for bird sanctuaries at Missamari and Sengamari

Gujarat

Rise in neelgai population causes concern
Rs. Eight lakh projects for Nal Sarovar

Haryana

Wildlife census in January 2006

Himachal Pradesh

Fight for control over state wetlands
Census counts over 70,000 pheasants in state

Karnataka

Staff in Bandipur and Nagarhole NPs not paid since April
Rabies threat to Nagarhole wildlife
October inauguration for Butterfly Park in Bannerghatta NP

Madhya Pradesh

Protected Areas in Narmada Valley run into trouble
Ken Betwa river link to submerge parts of Panna
Ex-servicemen for protecting wildlife
Out-of-turn promotion proposed for wildlife staff

Maharashtra

Mobile Health clinic for tribals around tiger reserves

Census puts tiger nos. in state at 268

Great Indian Bustard Census held

2	Ganesh immersions allowed in Sanjay Gandhi National Park	
	<u>Meghalaya</u>	12
3	Monitoring elephant movement in Garo Hills	
	<u>Orissa</u>	13
	Dolphin sanctuary at Satpada in Chilka New counting method for Tiger census in Simlipal 16 cheetal deaths in Bhitarkanika in August	
	<u>Punjab</u>	14
	<i>Shramdaan</i> to clear Kanjli Lake of water hyacinth	
	<u>Rajasthan</u>	14
	Rains cause cheetal to flee Keoladeo National Park; over 50 die due to various reasons	
5	State Empowered Committee on Forest and Wildlife management submits report Tigers to be re-introduced to Sariska	
6	<u>Tamil Nadu</u>	16
	Demand to include Singara forest range in Mudumalai WLS	
6	<u>Uttaranchal</u>	16
	Special training for Shivalik Elephant Reserve staff Supreme Court Allows Joint Inspection of Corbett Bypass	
	<u>West Bengal</u>	17
	Floating check posts in Sundarbans	
	<u>NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA</u>	17
	New Tiger Reserves	
9	Guidelines to Prevent Wildlife Electrocutions Call for comprehensive legislation on Conservation and Restoration of Wetlands	
	<u>UPCOMING</u>	19
	Workshop on Biodiversity in Pakistan South Indian Bird Watchers Fair	
	<u>INTERNATIONAL</u>	19
	Proposal for a China-Laos-Myanmar cross border Nature Reserve	

<u>OPPORTUNITIES</u>	19
Faculty positions at TISS	
Senior Programme Officer – Wild Enforcement and Law at WTI	

<u>SPECIAL REPORTS</u>	
<u>Statement on Avian Influenza</u>	20
<u>The Tiger Task Force</u>	22
<u>In the Supreme Court</u>	25
<u>NBSAP</u>	26

EDITORIAL

Going down memory lane... 11 years of the Protected Area Update

This issue marks the completion of 11 years of the *Protected Area Update* that took birth as the ‘*JPAM Update*’ in November 1994. A two page dot matrix printout was all that it began with– an outcome of a ‘Workshop on Exploring the Possibilities of Joint Protected Area Management’ held a couple of months earlier in September 1994.

Initial days

Edited by a team comprising Neena Singh, Saloni Suri and Ashish Kothari, the first item in Issue No. 1 was, yes, about Sariska! We could have presumably done with the Tiger Task Force then itself!?

An output of and from the Indian Institute of Public Administration in New Delhi, the *JPAM Update* initially concentrated, as the name suggests, on issues of ‘joint management’ of the protected areas of the country.

Protected Area Update

Vol. XI No. 5 October 2005 (No. 57)

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The reporting was informal: about processes, initiatives and the then fledgling efforts being made to make wildlife and protected area management in the country more participatory. Nothing much appears to have changed!

Thumbing through the A-4 sized, now yellowing pages (yes, they’ve already started yellowing) of those initial issues is quite an experience. The initial issues reported on many a ‘path breaking’ and key initiatives related to protected areas, some of which may have even faded from our memories - prominently the Jungle Jeevan Bachao Yatra, that started from Sariska in January 1995, and the Indian People’s Tribunal on Environment and Human Rights (IPT) report on Rajaji National Park.

Refining focus

The newsletter too continued to grow. The two pages of November 1994 had become 12 pages by May 1996. The broad categorization of the information presented was also in place – something that we are using even today: News from specific protected areas, National News, International News, Upcoming, What’s Available...

The first editorial, interestingly, came only two years into the existence of the *Update*, in September 1996 (No. 11). The initial comment here actually dealt with the changing profile of the *Update* itself. “*Regular readers*”, the editorial reads, “*will notice that JPAM Update has been going through changes in format, and has also started providing information on protected areas in general, not just strictly restricted to what can be narrowly be defined as joint management issues. Sri Kishore Rao, of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has rightly asked: why this dilution of focus? We have increasingly been feeling that it is difficult to define a clear boundary between people-wildlife issues and other issues facing protected areas, including commercial threats, management threats and research activities. Hence the expansion of scope, though we are continuing to keep out certain items like purely biological research...*”

The other important developments occurred in August 1997 (No.14) when the *Update* moved to Pune and then Issue No. 21, (July 1999), when the name was changed to the

present one – ‘*Protected Area Update*’. It was in this period, in July 1998, that I myself joined the editorial team. By April 1999 I had moved on to take primary responsibility of its compilation and editing, something that I have continued to do since. It has been without doubt, an extremely rewarding and educative experience.

The challenges ahead

The endeavor of the *PA Update* has been to keep itself and its readers abreast of the various developments related to wildlife, wildlife management and protected areas in the country and in South Asia. Its actually amazing - the kind and amount of information on these issues that one can find in our mainstream press. We’ve also tried to develop other channels of information including contacts with people in the field – researchers, forest officers, activists, NGOs or just citizens who are interested in and follow these issues. The newspapers, however, do continue to be our main source of primary information.

While a detailed analysis still needs to be done, there are very interesting and noticeable trends in the reporting of the *PA Update* itself. Certain states like Assam and Karnataka are well represented in most issues. Similar is the case with high profile PAs like Kaziranga, Gir or the Sundarbans. At the same time, states like Andhra Pradesh, though big and with a number of PAs as well have only a marginal presence. Is it a statement on the press in this region, of the general interest and concern for wildlife and PAs in the state, or simply that the *PA Update* has not identified the right sources for the information?

These and many more questions related to the content, context and format of the *PA Update* need to be asked if we are to be relevant in a fast changing and increasingly dynamic world. We’ll look forward to hearing from our readers on this. What do you think about the style and presentation, about the content, the sources that we use, the editorials...What do you think we should focus on? What changes do you think are needed?

Our gratitude

Before I conclude, there are two sets of people and institutions that I must acknowledge and

thank. As the present editor, otherwise, I would be failing in my duty. The *Update* has been fortunate to have someone supporting its compilation and publishing right through. The IIPA in the initial years, then the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) for a while, followed by the South Asian Conservation Foundation, then the Foundation for Ecological Security (since June 2001), and with Greenpeace being the latest.

And finally here is a roll call (in the order they appeared in the *Update*) of all those who have served on the editorial team; who’ve been part of this journey for the last 11 years, who made it happen – Neena Singh, Saloni Suri, Ashish Kothari, Priya Das, K Christopher, Suniti Jha, Farhad Vania, Vishal Thakre, Sangeeta Kaintura, Virender Anand, Kheema Rawat, Anuprita Patel, Aanchal Kapur, Yashodhara Vidya, Roshni Kutty, Peeyush Sekhsaria and Madhuvanti Anantharajan.

Here’s hoping, then, to at least another 11 years of the *PA Update*!

Pankaj Sekhsaria

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ASSAM

Task force to look into stone quarrying in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Elephant Reserve

Following complaints about the stone quarrying operations within the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Elephant Reserve (see *PA Update* 56), the State Government has asked the Elephant Task Force to look into the matter and submit a report. It is possible that the Assam Government might suggest an alternative site to Railways.

The Chief Wildlife Warden of the State has however said that the Task Force will find out if the decibel level is really affecting the elephants. He also said that it would have to be verified whether the disturbance was being caused by the blasting itself or by the people working in the quarries.

The Task Force that is comprised of Dr. Anil Goswami (Chairman), Parbati Barua, Dinesh Choudhary, Dr. Padmeshwar Gogoi

and Bhupen Talukdar visited the area in the first week of August. More details are not known.



Source: Sushanta Talukdar. 'Task force looking into quarrying in elephant corridor', *The Hindu*, 24/07/05.

'Elephant Task Force visits Numaligarh stone quarry', *The Sentinel*, 07/08/05.

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

Dr. Bibhab Talukdar, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati - 781028, Assam. Email: bibhab1@sancharnet

River dolphin population in Assam – 240

A 10 month survey supported by British Petroleum has revealed that the river dolphin population in Assam is about 240. The survey was carried out by five monitoring groups of 15-20 members each that worked in the major dolphin habitats in the states - Saikhowa and Guijan in Tinsukia district, Janjimukh and Dikhowmukh in Sivasagar district and Neematighat in Jorhat district.

The study was initiated at Tengapanighat near the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border and ended on the Indo-Bangladesh border. While dolphins are killed for meat and fat, bi-catch was found to be the major threat faced. (Also See *PA Update* 46)

Source: Ripunjoy Das. 'Dolphin statistics scream extinction', *The Telegraph*, 07/09/05

Opposition to naming national park in Orang after Rajiv Gandhi

The decision of the Assam State Government to rename the Orang National Park as the Rajiv

Gandhi National Park has elicited considerable opposition from various quarters. The announcement for renaming of the park was made during the celebrations of the Rajiv Gandhi Abhay Urja Divas on August 20.

Bhargab Kumar Das, Honorary Wildlife Warden resigned from his post in protest. A number of organizations including the Green Society, the Aranya Suraksha Samiti, the AASU, the AJYCP, the Dalgaon Forest and Wildlife Conservation Society have condemned the move and asked the government to refrain from mixing wildlife issues with politics.

The organizations have asked the government to instead work for the upkeep of the park by sanctioning the required funds, increasing the strength of the staff, improving the road condition and tourist facilities and taking up special measures to improve living standards the people in the fringe areas. It has also been pointed out that Rajiv Gandhi was not involved with the park in any way.

The authorities of the Bodo Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD) too have come in for criticism for granting formal permission to rename the park.

Orang had been declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1985 and was made a national park in 1999. A similar move to rename the then sanctuary as the Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary by the Congress Government in 1992 had also provoked similar opposition, forcing the government to revoke the move.

Source: 'Locals up in arms over renaming of Orang National Park in Rajiv Gandhi's name', *The Sentinel*, 23/08/05.

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

Manas, Laokhowa, Orang and Dibru-Saikhowa identified for rhino translocation.

The rhino translocation task force of the Assam government has identified Manas National Park, Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary, Orang National Park and the Dibru Saikhowa National Park as areas where rhinos could be translocated from Pobitora and Kaziranga.

The task force will chalk out an operational plan and decide on the safeguards and measures to be taken during the experiment. A minimum three-year period was decided upon for the translocation to take place. The decision was taken at a meeting of the task force that was held in Guwahati in the month of July. It was attended by officials of the Assam government, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Wildlife Trust of India.

For the project to go ahead the government will have to formulate a rhino translocation protocol in line with that of the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

A number of committees have been set up to look into various aspects of the relocation programme. One committee has been constituted for studying the security aspect of the habitats, while another will look into issues related to food and habitat.

(Also see *PA Updates* 56, 52 & 36)

Source: 'Rhino project moves ahead', *The Telegraph*, 09/07/05.

Sushanta Talukdar. 'Task force mantra for rhino translocation', *The Hindu*, 11/07/05.

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

Proposal for bird sanctuaries at Missamari and Sengamari

The Assam Forest Department is said to be working on a proposal to create bird sanctuaries at Missamari and Sengamari, two large water bodies in the Jorhat district. The suggestion that the water bodies are important hosts for migratory waterfowl and some kind of protection should be given is said to have come from the Bombay Natural History Society. A survey conducted last year had counted over 1000 bar-headed geese, 1300 brahmini ducks and nearly 1000 pelicans in the area.

The FD is also said to be dredging the two water bodies that have become narrow and shallow over the years due to siltation caused by the flooding of the River Brahmaputra. Two

NGOs, Prakritee and Keteki were working with the FD in this process.

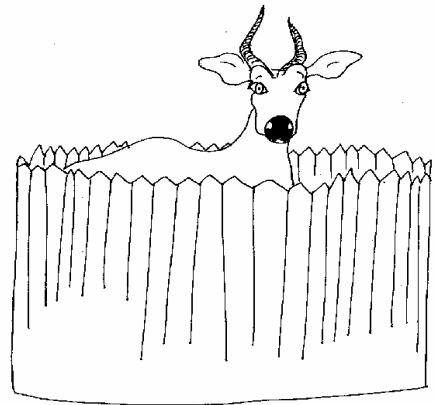
Source: Govt steps to promote bird sanctuaries in State', *The Sentinel*, 26/08/05.

Contact: **Dr. Asad Rahmani**, Director BNHS, Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai 400 023 Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2821811. Fax: 2837615. Email: bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in

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GUJARAT

Rise in *neelgai* population causes concern



A recently conducted census of the *neelgai* (blue bull) in Gujarat has indicated that the population of the animal has risen from about 50,000 in the year 2000 to nearly 67,000 now. This rise in number has led to serious concern in the agriculture sector, particularly in the districts of Bhavnagar, Amreli, Surendranagar Ahmedabad, Patan and Mehsana

The state government is now said to be taking active steps to deal with the problem. The Forest Department has decided to create big sheds in the problem areas to keep problem animals that are captured. The first two of such sheds are to come up in Amreli and Patan and Rs. 35 lakhs has already been sanctioned for their maintenance. The FD has also purchased a big net worth Rs. Three lakhs for the purpose of trapping the animals.

There are also plans to create fences around farms to keep the rampaging animals from entering the fields. About 1200 kms of such fencing has already been completed in Saurashtra. Additionally, Gujarat Agricultural University experts have been asked to conduct research on plants like 'Kunvarbhatha' that *neelgais* do not consume.

(Also see *PA Update* 43)

Source: Anil Pathak. 'Neelgais on a bull run', *The Times of India*, 10/07/05.

Rs. Eight lakh projects for Nal Sarovar

Various projects amounting to a total expenditure of Rs. Eight lakhs are being implemented in Nal Sarovar. These include the construction of a jetty from where tourists will be taken into the water body. Now the boats would start only from the jetty into a half a km long channel to be created specifically for the tourists.

Besides, special training is also to be given to boat operators. A new parking lot is also being created.

(Also see *PA Update* 49. *The Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Ltd had proposed a Rs. 221.5 crore tourism project in the periphery of Nal Sarovar*)

Source: 'Rs. 8-lakh facelift planned for Nal Sarovar', *The Times of India*, 09/08/05.

Contact: **Asst. Conservator of Forests**, Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, At & P.O. Vekaria, Tehsil Viramgam, Dist. Ahmedabad. Tel: 079-2122430. Fax: 079-2122430

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

HARYANA

Wildlife census in January 2006

The Haryana State Wildlife Department will conduct a comprehensive wildlife census in January 2006. It will be carried out over a 950 sq km forest area, including the Kalesar Wildlife Sanctuary and its surrounding areas like Kalsia

in Yamunanagar, Morni, Bir Shikargah and the Raipur Rani area in Panchkula and the Aravali forest belt in Gurgaon and Mahendragarh.

State wildlife officials recently had a meeting in this context with officials of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). The main purpose was to work out a training programme for wildlife staff to be conducted by the WII.

The state department has also sought Rs. 28 lakhs from the Centre for the census. The money sought is to be used for buying two pick-up vans for the census staff, a global positioning system, binoculars, cameras and other infrastructure, including tented accommodation for use during the 10-day census period.

A census of wildlife in Haryana was done in 2002 (see *PA Update* 36), and again in 2003-04. However, both the census reports have not been published. The 2002 census had been accepted by the department, except those for the leopards and other wild cats. The pugmark traces of these big cats collected on plaster moulds were not accepted by the Wildlife Institute of India. The 2002 census estimates put the number of sambar at about 740, barking deer at 1031, wild boars at about 2300, gorals around 2850, *cheetal* at 54; 311 chinkaras and about 250 langurs. The *neelgai* population was estimated to be 38,000, which was considered to be on the higher side. The 2003-04 census data could not be compiled because of frequent changes in officers assigned to do the task.

Source: Ruchika Khanna. 'Haryana seeks Rs. 28 lakhs for wildlife census', *The Tribune*, 13/09/05.

Contact: **CWLW**, Haryana, Van Bhawan, Forest Complex-C-18, Sector-6, Panchkula – 134109, Haryana. Tel: 0172-2561224(O), 2569033(R). Fax: 2564782

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Fight for control over state wetlands

Two major state government agencies – the Forest Department (FD) and the State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (SCSTE) have been caught in a row over the control of wetlands in the state.

In a letter dated July 16, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests – Wildlife and Chief Wildlife Warden of the state is said to have written to the Principal Secretary – Forests, suggesting that the State Wildlife Board had taken a decision to declare the Wildlife Wing of the FD as the nodal agency for developing and mapping the wetlands of the state. The meeting of the board had been chaired by the Chief Minister (CM), Mr. Virbhadra Singh.

The FD has also argued that the wetlands are rich in biodiversity and home to migratory birds and therefore a special focus was required to manage these habitats. It has also argued that fisheries growth in the wetlands was vital not only for the livelihood of fisherfolk but also for the migratory bird population and that in this context it was the FD that had the necessary management expertise and know-how.

Officials of the SCSTE have refuted the claim, saying that the proceedings of the State Wildlife Board meeting do not indicate that the issue of the control of wetlands was discussed at all. They have further said that wetlands is purely an environmental issue and therefore their control and management should remain with the Council.

The State Forest Minister has supported the claim of the FD. He is reported to have said that the file for the control of all kinds of wetlands been moved after discussions with the CM. Talks had also been held in this regard with the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). The Minister however pointed out that the matter would be brought before the Cabinet before any decision was taken.

Important Wetlands in Himachal Pradesh

High altitude Wetlands: Bhrigu Lake, Chander Nahar, Chandertal, Prashar Lake, Ghadasaru, Lama, Mahakali, Mani Mahesh, Nako, Sereolsar and Surajtal.

Mid Altitude Wetlands: Dal Lake, Kaveri, Khajjar, Kumserwali, Kalasar, Kunt-Bhyog, Rewalsar and Sukhsar.

Low Altitude Wetlands: Renuka and Suketi

Man-Made Reservoirs: Gobind Sagar, Pandoh and Pong Dam

Small Reservoirs: Cutcha Tank, Kalistan, Talital Tank, Pucca Tank, Parshuram Tank, and Ranital

Source: Suresh Khatta. 'A tug of war over control of wetlands in Himachal', *Indian Express*, 18/08/05.

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

Census counts over 70,000 pheasants in state

Following a first of its kind census conducted in May, earlier this year, the Wildlife Wing of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has put the number of pheasants in the state at 71,290. The birds counted include the Red Jungle Fowl, Khaleej Pheasant, Koklass, Western Tragopan, Himalayan Monal, Indian Peafowl and the Cheer Pheasant.

The Red Jungle Fowl was the most abundant with nearly 28,000 birds followed by the Khaleej Pheasant (24,831), Koklass (6,533) and the Indian Peafowl (6,418). The number of the Himalayan Monal, which is the state bird of Himachal Pradesh was 3,812 while the Cheer Pheasants were 1,664.

The census only counted 284 Western Tragopan, a majority of which (105) were found in the Chamba Forest Circle, followed by the Rampur Forest Circle (50), Shimla Forest Circle (38), Shimla Wildlife Circle (26), Dharamsala Forest Circle (25) and Dharamsala Wildlife Circle (21). Additionally 10 birds were reported from the Great Himalayan National Park, seven from the Mandi Forest Circle and two from the Kullu Forest Circle.

The Himalayan Monal too was found in large numbers in the Chamba Forest Circle followed by the Dharamsala Wildlife Circle (438), Shimla Wildlife Circle (415), Kullu Forest Circle (393), Rampur Forest Circle (358), Shimla Forest Circle (337), Great Himalayan National Park (336), Dharamsala Forest Circle (227) and Mandi (101).

Source: Suresh Khatta. 'First – ever pheasant census reveals 71, 290 in Himachal', *Indian Express*, 17/08/05.

KARNATAKA

Staff in Bandipur and Nagarhole NPs not paid since April

Forest guards and personnel of the anti-poaching camps in Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks have not been paid wages since the beginning of the new financial year in April. Senior officials of Project Tiger too were not paid for nearly two months, forcing them to go to New Delhi to underline the urgency of the situation.

Field staff was forced to operate by procuring provisions and rations on credit. Safari vehicles for tourists in Bandipur too were running on petrol and diesel obtained on credit from local petrol stations.



'Procedural delay' is said to be the main reason for this crunch. The Ministry of Environment Forests is reported to have sanctioned the funds, but these had not been released. These funds have to be then routed through the

treasury in Nagpur from where it is transferred to the State treasury in Bangalore before it finally reaches the field level.

Bandipur will receive Rs. two crores while Nagarhole is likely to get Rs. 1.5 crores against their combined requirement of at least Rs. Five crores.

Source: R Krishna Kumar. 'Guards have not received wages since April', *The Hindu*, 12/09/05.

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

Rabies threat to Nagarhole wildlife

There are reports of an outbreak of rabies in villages bordering the Nagarhole National Park raising fears of the threat this could pose to the wildlife here. The outbreak was reported from G M Halli on the border of Antharasanthe Forest Range in the park in the first week of September. Initial reports said that at least four domestic cattle had died, and another 25-30 had already been affected. Two street dogs which apparently ate the carcass of an infected animal have also died.

It is feared that the infected cattle would stray into the forest areas spreading the infection to carnivores that might prey on them or feed of an infected carcass.

The local veterinary department is said to be ill-equipped to handle such an emergency. It is neither aware of the total number of domestic animals infected, nor is there information whether other areas have also reported the infection. It has been pointed out that the veterinary department can spend up to Rs 25,000 on vaccinating the cattle against rabies and that it alone cannot handle the problem unless the Animal Husbandry Department takes equal responsibility.

The Forest Department had earlier thought the infection to be the foot and mouth disease. It was later confirmed as 'rabies'. The Antharasanthe Forest Range has taken measures to prevent entry of domestic cattle inside the forests. It will post its men to keep a strict vigil on the borders so as to prevent cattle from straying into forests for grazing as a precautionary measure.

Source: Shankar Bennur. 'Rabies outbreak: Nagarhole wildlife in danger', *Deccan - Herald*, 09/09/05.

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

Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993 / 3345846. Email: pccfwl@vsnl.com

Response from Dr. Aniruddha Belsare...

The issue here is not about the carnivores carrying rabies because of eating infected carcass. Rabies is not transmitted in this manner. Albeit, rabies will be prevalent in all populations of unvaccinated carnivores wild, feral or captive. The threat is threefold:

1) Domestic and feral animals as disease reservoirs: Not only rabies but also canine distemper, anthrax, foot and mouth disease (FMD) etc. Also feral dogs regularly hunt animals the size of sambar and *cheetal*.

2) Wrong diagnosis on the part of authorities due to lack of resources and experts: The way post mortems are conducted and the cause of death concluded is extremely dicey. e.g. cause of death for a leopard in Maharashtra was starvation (because the stomach was empty!!!). The authorities expect an immediate conclusion regarding the cause of death on doing a post mortem examination. This is not possible in many cases as the histopathological, microbiological and toxicological examinations have to be done and such facilities are seldom available. Also in the present case the epidemiological characteristics of rabies should be considered before arriving at any conclusion.

3) Wrong interventions on the part of authorities: This, by far, is the most serious issue. We have reports of some Forest Departments following a practice of 'water hole treatment'. Packets of drugs like tetracycline are put in the water holes or streams to control a disease in the wild population. This is very unscientific for obvious reasons. There are published reports boasting of success with homeopathic medicines and antibiotics added to waterholes in a national park! Such practices and interventions might be very dangerous for the ecosystem.

Contact: **Dr. Aniruddha Belsare**, B-3, 26, Sarita, Vaibhav, S.No.119/2, (Part) Parvati, Pune-411030, Maharashtra. Tel:020-24250300. Email: anyadoc@gmail.com

October inauguration for Butterfly Park in Bannerghatta NP

The Butterfly Park in Bannerghatta National Park, said to be the largest in Asia, will be inaugurated in October by the President of India. The park is a collaborative effort of the University of Agricultural Sciences, the Zoo Authority of Karnataka, the Karnataka Forest Department and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), with support from the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India (see *PA Updates* 44 & 40)

The park has a walk-thru glass dome, which will exhibit 10 to 15 species of butterflies. It will also have a museum dedicated to butterflies and insects. The park will also have a butterfly-theme gift shop.



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MADHYA PRADESH

Protected Areas in Narmada Valley run into trouble

The proposed protected areas in the vicinity of the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) projects have run into trouble because of differences between the Forest Department (FD) and the NVDA.

The State had decided to set up two sanctuaries and a national park in the regions around the Omkareshwar and Indira Sagar dams in a move to provide an alternative habitat to the

wildlife that would be affected due to submergence caused by these dams. Consequently, the FD had earmarked 293.56 sq km for the Omkareshwar National Park and 69.24 sq km and 178.21 sq km respectively for the Mandhata and Surmanya Wildlife Sanctuaries.

The protected areas have been running into numerous hurdles right from the time they were proposed. The NVDA was to fund the setting up of the protected areas and had earmarked Rs 37 crores for the project.

The latest issue over which the FD and the NVDA are at loggerheads is that of fishing rights in the water body that would come within the national park. The NVDA foresees a huge revenue loss if fishing rights are suspended.

The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet has now set up a sub-committee under the Chairmanship of Dr MK Ranjitsinh to examine the issue. Officials in the FD have said that they were not hopeful that the cabinet sub committee would give a report in favour of setting up the protected areas in their present form – particularly because it would entail displacement of people residing in these areas.

Source: Rahul Noronha. 'National park in NVDA runs into rough waters', *The Pioneer*, 06/09/05.

Ken Betwa river link to submerge parts of Panna TR



The Rs. 4000 crore Ken – Betwa River Linking Project which includes a dam on the river Ken and a 231 km canal linking it to the Betwa will submerge significant forest areas including parts of the Panna Tiger Reserve. The feasibility report of the project says that the project will

submerge some 100 sq km in Panna, Chatarpur and Damoh districts — including 19 villages and about 37.5 sq km of forestland - as well as a 30-km stretch of the Gangau-Shahpura road in Madhya Pradesh.

The agreement for the project was recently signed by the Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Ministers, Babulal Gaur and Mulayam Singh Yadav, and Union water resources minister Priya Ranjan Das Munshi in New Delhi in the presence of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Source: Tapas Chakraborty. 'Ruin roar goes up over river-link', *The Telegraph*, 27/08/05

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

Ex-servicemen for protecting wildlife

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department's initiative to employ ex-servicemen for wildlife protection appears to be paying off. The FD has said that forest officials and ex-servicemen patrolling the Pench Tiger Reserve recently nabbed a gang of poachers from village Tikari in the South Seoni Forest Division.

The Forest Department (FD) had thought of employing ex-servicemen after it was found that the department was facing a staff crunch. The ex-servicemen were also found to be much fitter than the average forest guard. The FD entered into an agreement with the District Sainik Welfare Board that made the manpower available. The funds were provided by the Project Tiger Directorate. The net outflow on every ex-serviceman is Rs 6,345 out of which Rs 5,200 is paid to the ex serviceman while the rest is deducted as insurance charges.

The deployment of the ex-servicemen is governed by the area of the PA and its terrain. 27 ex-servicemen have been deployed at Kanha, 31 in Satpura, 26 in Panna, 15 in Pench and 19 in Bandavgarh. They not only patrol areas by vehicles but also on foot. The ex-servicemen are also establishing an intelligence network by working closely with NGOs, Forest Committees and Gram Raksha Samitis.

PCCF Wildlife, Mr. PB Gangopadhyay has said that employing ex-servicemen has had

multiple benefits. The sight of gun toting ex-servicemen in fatigues was acting as a deterrent, and helping in wildlife protection. At the same time the State Government was also helping the cause of ex-servicemen by providing them employment.

Source: Rahul Noronha. 'Posting of ex-servicemen as foresters pay off', *The Pioneer*, 03/09/05.

Out-of-turn promotion proposed for wildlife staff

The Wildlife wing of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has proposed a scheme to allow for out-of-turn promotion for field staff that make a mark for themselves in managing wildlife. Field staff of the Forest Department posted in every circle are eligible for out-of-turn promotions.

The idea was discussed in the meeting of the Tiger Cell held on August 24, where Mr. MP Dwivedi, IG CID and in-charge of the Tiger Cell said that the police personnel who have exemplary feats to their credit are given out-of-turn promotion. He suggested that a similar system be evolved in the wildlife wing so that field staff, including Forest Guards, Foresters and Deputy Rangers who do good work in protected areas can be rewarded with out of turn promotions.

PCCF Wildlife, Mr. PB Gangopadhyay is said to have written a letter to the Chief Conservator in-charge of Administration for necessary action in the matter.

Since the field staff of the department are engaged in a number of tasks such as forestry extension, research, minor forest produce collection and regulation of mining, apart from managing wildlife, it has been pointed out that the field staff that are engaged in non-wildlife management tasks have managed to corner most of the out-of-turn promotions till date. Mr. Gangopadhyay said that proposals for out-of-turn promotions for field staff in the protected areas would be routed through the wildlife wing and that this would improve their chances of securing the promotions.

It is being hoped that this initiative will act as an incentive for staff involved in wildlife management and protection to perform better.

Source: Rahul Noronha. 'Wildlife wing moots out-of-turn promotions for performing staff', *The Pioneer*, 01/09/05.

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

MAHARASHTRA

Mobile Health clinic for tribals around tiger reserves



Nature Conservation Society, Amravati (NCSA) has recently started a mobile health clinic for the welfare of tribal communities living in and around five tiger reserves in Central India – including Tadoba, Pench, Melghat and Bori-Satpuda. It was inaugurated in the month of May at Hataru in the Melghat Tiger Reserve.

The clinics are to be run by the NCSA in collaboration with respective tiger reserve authorities and partner NGOs working there. The initiative has been funded by the Born Free Foundation.

Source: 'Mobile health clinic for tribals', *Indian Express*, 01/06/05.

Contact: **Kishore Rithe**, Pratishta, Bharat Nagar, Akoli Road, Near Sai Nagar, Amravati, Maharashtra. Tel: 0721-2672359. Fax: 2670308. Email: ncsa@bom3.vsnl.net.in

Census puts tiger nos. in state at 268

The four yearly census conducted in May has put the tiger numbers in Maharashtra at 268, up from 238 counted in the 2001 census.

243 of these tigers were counted in the Vidarbha region alone. 95 tigers were found outside the protected area network in the state. This number too has increased from the 85 reported in 2001.

The total number of leopards counted during the census was 717. Of these 317 were in Vidarbha.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Panchpute's tiger count cuts a sorry figure', *Indian Express*, 03/08/05.

Great Indian Bustard Census held

A census of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) was undertaken by the Maharashtra Forest Department on July 17 across all potential habitats of the bird in the state. A preparation workshop was conducted before the census for volunteers and forest department officials to equip them with information necessary for the census. They were provided information about the bird, its habits and were also instructed on mapping techniques and filling up the proforma. Nearly 70 people attended this workshop that was held at Nanaj in the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary in Solapur district.

The result of the census is not yet available.

Source: 'Stage set for headcount of Great Indian Bustard', *Indian Express*, 14/07/05.

Contact: **Mr. Parihar**, Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) – Pune. Tel: 09422516649

Ganesh immersions allowed in Sanjay Gandhi National Park

Public pressure forced officials of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) to overturn their decision prohibiting immersion of Ganesh idols in a water body in the national park. Nearly 3500 idols are immersed in a small pond near the Borivali entrance of the park and this had to be allowed this year as well following requests

of the police and the municipal authorities that a law and order problem could be created otherwise.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has assured the FD that they would make arrangements for a new artificial water body for the immersions next year.



Source: 'Immersion back at Natl park', *The Times of India*, 09/09/05.

Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests**, SGNP, Borivili (East), Mumbai – 400066, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-28860362, 28860389(O), 8862780(R) Email: sgnpb@rediffmail.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

Monitoring elephant movement in Garo Hills

The movement of the wild elephants in the Garo Hills is being monitored as part of a project taken up by the NGO, Samrakshan Trust. Local people are being trained for the purpose. As part of the initiative, a 'record-keeper' is being appointed in each A'king (a tract of land belonging to a particular clan) to make a note of elephant movement and presence in the respective areas in a prescribed format.

As a pilot activity, this exercise has been being undertaken in five A'kings: Amapangre,

Alokpang, Halwa Atong, Gongrot and Panda. The Trust intends to eventually expand its scope to all thirty-three A'kings that constitute the Balpakram Baghmara Community Conservation Landscape (BBCCL). The idea behind the exercise is to obtain information, in a structured manner, over a period, about the areas within the Akings used by the elephants. This is pertinent as there is lack of information on presence and distribution of elephants in the landscape.

The BBCCL is the informal name given to an area of approximately 300sq kms in area in the South Garo Hills Dist. Its boundaries have been roughly designated as follows Simsang river (West); West Khasi Hills district (East); Balpakram National Park (North); India-Bangladesh international border (South). The area provides refuge to a diverse array of wildlife including elephant, gaur, tiger, clouded leopard and hoolock gibbon. In conjunction with the Balpakram National Park the BBCCL (total area of roughly 600 sq. kms) it is possibly the largest tract of habitat in Meghalaya that has the best long-term possibility of conservation of wildlife in general and mega fauna such as elephants in particular.

Source: 'Pachyderm movement in Garo Hills being monitored', *The Assam Tribune*, 29/08/05.

Contact: **Nimesh Ved**, Samrakshan Trust, Bolsalgre, PO Baghmara, Dist South Garo Hills – 794102, Meghalaya. Tel: 03639-222187 / 094361-56458. Email: nimesh@samrakshan.org

Chief Wildlife Warden, Meghalaya,
Lower Laichumiere, Risa Colony,
Shillong – 793001, Meghalaya.

ORISSA

Dolphin sanctuary at Satpada in Chilka,

The earlier proposal of the Orissa State Government to create a dolphin sanctuary in the Satpada zone of Chilka lake (see *PA Update* 56) has reportedly been cleared. The decision was taken at a meeting held in September that was presided over by the CM, Naveen Patnaik.

The meeting was attended among others by, Chief Secretary Subas Pani; Agriculture Development Commissioner, R N Bohidar; Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, Bijay Kumar Patnaik; Principal Secretary in the Revenue Department, T K Mishra; Principal Secretary in the Forest and Environment Department, S P Nanda; Principal Secretary in the Commerce and Transport Department, Rajalakshmi, Tourism Secretary, Ashok Kumar Tripathy, Secretary in the Fisheries Department, Benugopal Sharma and Chief Executive of Chilka Development Authority (CDA), Ajit Kumar Tripathy.

It was decided that motorized boats then would not be allowed into this part of the lake as these have been the main cause of large-scale dolphin mortalities in the last few years (See *PA Updates* 54, 52, 49, 41, 36 & 29). Only traditional boats will be allowed.

The Chief Minister also directed the Tourism Department to prepare a tourism package for Chilka. A team comprising Director, Tourism, Chief Executive CDA and collectors of the districts concerned have been assigned this task.

Source: 'Govt to declare Satapada a dolphin sanctuary', *The New Indian Express*, 14/09/05.

Contact: **DFO (WL)**, Chilka, 1865/66 Nuasahi Nayapalli (near Sub PO), Bhubaneswar – 751012, Orissa. Email: bravo_123@satyam.net.in

AK Patnaik, CDA, BJ-45, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 – 434485. Email: ajitpatnaik@hotmail.com
Website: www.chilika.com

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

New counting method for Tiger census in Simlipal

The tiger census to be conducted in Simlipal Tiger Reserve in the last week of December will use a new method to count the tigers. The 'line transect' method that has been developed by scientists of the Wildlife Institute of India,

will replace the pug mark count method that has been followed since 1972.

The reserve area will be divided into three categories depending on tiger densities. Under the new method, a sample stretch would be selected for the study. A jungle beat will be considered as a sampling unit for the purpose of the census and areas within the beat that have the maximum potential tiger occupancy will be intensively searched. At least three to four persons, who know the terrain and the habitat of the beat well, will be engaged to help the search for tigers. Pugmarks, scat, scraps, rake, vocalisation and direct sighting will also be recorded to increase the accuracy of the count.

The method will be also used to ascertain the population of leopards, wild dogs and wolves.

Source: 'Simlipal to use method to count tigers', *The Pioneer*, 10/09/05.

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

16 cheetal deaths in Bhitarkanika in August

At least 16 cheetal were reported dead in the Bhitarkanika National Park in the month of August. Though the exact reason of the deaths has not been ascertained, it was feared that these had occurred because the animals were affected by pneumonia.

The viscera of the dead animals has been sent to the Veterinary College of the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology for examination.

In a similar incident 12 deer had died last year in a very short span of time and investigations had revealed that the death had been caused by pneumonia.

Source: Surendra Patra. 'Now, spotted deer deaths in Orissa', *Tehelka*, 27/08/05.

Contact: **DFO**, Bhitarkanika NP, At/PO Rajnagar, Dist. Kendrapada – 745225. Orissa. Tel: 06729-272460/64. Fax: 06727-220775.
CWLW– Orissa, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneshwar – 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674-513134 / 515840. Fax: 512502

PUNJAB

Shramdaan to clear Kanjli Lake of water hyacinth

An eight-day *shramdaan* program for clearing the Kanjli Lake of water hyacinth was proposed from August 21. The lake, which is one of the three Ramsar sites in Punjab, had been completely choked by the plant.

Some fish had also reportedly died due to the suspected mixing of pollutants in the water. This activated the administration into taking up the cleaning of the lake.

The proposed clean up was to be done with the involvement of all parties including the administration, NGOs, panchayat members and students and staff from nearby schools.

Additionally, the canal wing of the Irrigation Department is said to be in the process of buying its own tractor-trailers, motorboats and conveyor belts for cleaning of the lake and Rs. 10.8 lakhs had been released for the purpose by the Department of Science and Technology.

Source: Deepkamal Kaur. 'Shramdaan to revive Kanjli wetland', *The Tribune*, 18/08/05.

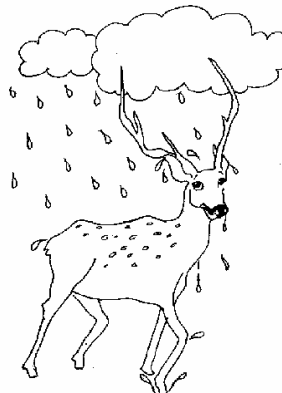
Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Punjab, SC No. 2463-64, Sector 22-C, Chandigarh - 160022. Tel: 0172-2705828(O), 2675661(R). Fax: 2705828

RAJASTHAN

Rains cause cheetal to flee Keoladeo National Park; over 50 die due to various reasons

Following incessant rains in July and the collapse of boundary walls of the Keoladeo National Park, 100s of cheetal were reported to have moved into areas outside the park. The Forest Department

(FD) first said that these animals were not from the park and may have drifted into the area from neighbouring Uttar Pradesh. A departmental inquiry set up following the instructions of the



Additional PCCF however revealed that the animals had indeed strayed from the park.

Following this a team headed by Forest Ranger Rajendra Gupta was assigned the task of catching the animals to bring them back. The team was able to catch about 150 animals, but of these 51 are reported to have died.

The FD has said that 22 died because they had been injured by dogs in the villages. 18 died on the truck when they were being brought back, presumably, because of shock and exhaustion due to running continuously. The cause of the death of the other 11 is not yet known.

The park authorities are also reported to have taken a decision to move all the deer from Keoladeo NP to the Keladevi Wildlife Sanctuary to avoid such a situation in the future.

Source: Sandipan Sharma. '3000 cheetals flee park, 40 die when trapped', *The Indian Express*, 06/08/05.

Kounteya Sinha. 'Rescue by officials kills 51 cheetals', *The Times of India*, 19/08/05.

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

State Empowered Committee on Forest and Wildlife management submits report

The State Empowered Committee (SEC) on Forest and Wildlife management that was appointed by Rajasthan Chief Minister, Vasundhara Raje Scindia in February has recently submitted its report.

Titled 'Securing the Future', the recommendations of the report include relocation of tigers to Sariska from the Ranthambore and Kanha Tiger Reserves (see report below) and the removal of all villages from inside the Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary.

Regarding Ranthambore, the SEC has asked for immediate action and fixing of responsibility for decline in tiger numbers here from 47 in 2004 to 26 in 2005. For Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur the report has recommended the reservation of suitable water in the Panchana dam for the park. It has discouraged any efforts to make piped water the

mainstay for the wetlands, as it would cause irreparable damage to the eco-system (see *PA Update* 54 & 53).

The full report can be accessed at http://www.wii.gov.in/tiger_report/index.htm

Source: Rajasthan panel on wildlife wants tigers relocated', *Indian Express*, 09/09/05.

Tigers to be re-introduced to Sariska

The Rajasthan government is said to have taken a decision to re-introduce tigers to the Sariska Tiger Reserve. According to the plan, tigers from Ranthambore TR or from the Kanha TR in Madhya Pradesh would be shifted to Sariska but only after Sariska was made safe for them. No timeframe, has however, been fixed for this re-introduction.

The Chief Wildlife Warden of the state has said that the plan would be implemented with the help of experts and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), which has suggested that five tigers be introduced into the forests here. He also pointed out that certain steps would have to be taken before the tigers can be brought here. These include diverting of road traffic from some of the prime areas inside the reserve and the relocation of villages that are presently inside.

Sariska has 28 villages and 15 are to be shifted in the first phase of relocations. The government is said to be working on a five-year plan to remove all villages from the sanctuary. (Also see *PA Updates* 55 & 50)

Source: Saurabh Sinha. 'Rajasthan plots return of big cats', *The Times of India*, 09/09/05.

Contact: **Director**, Ranthambore TR, Sawai Madhopur – 322001, Rajasthan. Tel: 07462-220223 / 222004 / 221139 / 221142
Director, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Sariska, Alwar – 301022, Rajasthan. Tel: 0144-241333 (O)
Chief Wildlife Warden, Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, Jaipur - 302005, Rajasthan. Tel: 0141-2380832 / 2540531. Fax: 2380496/ 23808

TAMIL NADU

Demand to include Singara range in Mudumalai WLS

Environmentalists have appealed to the State Government to revive the pending Government Order (GO) MS No. 216 dated July 23, 1998 (Environment and Forests) to merge the 'Singara Forest Range' with the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary. Plans for the expansion of the Mudumalai WLS were abandoned eight years ago, when political pressure was applied in support of the settlers, who were said to have encroached upon the forest area in Masinagudi.

As per the GO, around 18,000 hectares of Segur Forest Range and 6,000 hectares of the Singara Forest Range should be brought under the control of the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, on the recommendation of the then Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF).

The plan was first mooted during the previous AIADMK regime. Later, the DMK Government had issued orders to that effect. The GO was signed by the then secretary to the State Government, K S Sripathy.

If the GO materializes, lands presently under government and private ownership as also the revenue generated by them would come under the control of the sanctuary. The GO was not effected because of opposition to the move by the local population.

(Also see *PA Updates* 56 & 50)

Source: 'Demand for merger of Ooty forest ranges', *The New Indian Express*, 08/09/05.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Mudumalai WLS, Mahalingam Bldgs, Coonor Road, Udhagamandalam- 643001 Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0423-244098
CWLW, Tamil Nadu, 6D, Panagal Building, No.1, Jeenis Road, Saidapet, Chennai - 600015. Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044-24321738 / 22353589. Fax: 2433707/24321738

UTTARANCHAL

Special training for Shivalik Elephant Reserve Staff

The Uttaranchal Forest Department (FD) along with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) has put together a special training program to deal with wildlife crime and forest protection for staff of the Shivalik Elephant Reserve. 780 personnel will be trained as part of the programme that is to be conducted in several divisions of the reserve covering areas of Dehradun, Haridwar, Landsdown, Haldwani, Ramnagar, Champawat and Narender Nagar.

Additionally, 13 newly recruited forest range officers - five from Himachal Pradesh, three from West Bengal, two from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and three from Karnataka - are also participating in the programme.

The Shivalik Elephant Reserve constitutes three protected areas: Corbett National Park, Rajaji National Park and the Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary, apart from other forest divisions. It and is home to over 1000 elephants.

Source: 'Effort to stop poaching in Shivalik reserve' <http://www.eians.com/stories/2005/08/11/1jeff.shtml>

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP, 5/1 Ansari Marg, Dehradun - 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-2621669 Fax: 2621669
Rakesh Singh, WTI, A-220, New Friends Colony, New Delhi. - 110065. Tel: 011-26326025/6

Supreme Court Allows Joint Inspection of Corbett Bypass

The Supreme Court of India has recently allowed a joint inspection of the proposed road alignment that will bypass Corbett National Park. If this alignment is finalized, it will serve to connect the two major regions of the state of Uttaranchal while avoiding damage to the park.

The latest alignment has already been endorsed of by the Uttaranchal (UA) and Uttar Pradesh (UP) state governments and the SC has now allowed the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) to inspect it as well.

The controversial road project was suggested in 2001 by the newly created state of Uttaranchal to directly connect its Kumaon and Garhwal regions. The SC had stayed the project in response to a Public Interest Litigation pointing out that the proposed alignment would slash through the park (see *PA Update* 30).

Over the past two years, various other alignments were proposed and shot down: mainly by UP protesting that the stretch of road in its territory would seriously damage the few forests it had left. Finally, in July 2005, the two state governments agreed to an alignment that will shift part of the road south, avoiding damage to Corbett National Park and contiguous Reserve Forests in UP.

This new alignment is now to be jointly inspected by UA, UP, the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the WPSI.

(Also see *PA Updates* 41 & 36)

Source: WPSI. Email to nathist dated 29/07/05.

Contact: **Field Director**, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar –244715, Nainital, Uttaranchal. Tel: 05947 – 85489. Fax: 51376
WPSI, S-25, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi – 110017. Tel: 011-51635920/21. Fax: 51635924. Email: wpsi@vsnl.com

CWLW, Uttaranchal, 85, Rajpur Road, Dehradun, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-744225 / 679817. Fax: 675138/747669

WEST BENGAL

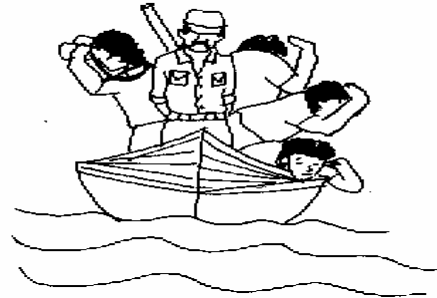
Floating checkpoints in Sundarbans

Authorities in the Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve have launched floating checkpoints to deal with illegal fishing and trade in forest produce here. The first batch of these checkpoints has been deputed in creeks surrounding Tirkhali, Habati, Milmlia, Kakmari and Chilmari areas in Gosaba block.

Each floating checkpoint consists of an accommodation boat for around 10 people and a mechanized boat for chasing operations. There was initially a staff shortage, but the state government helped by deputing two – three armed forest guards per checkpoint. Services of six – eight villagers from the local forest

protection committees have also been sought. The villagers are chosen on a monthly basis and given a remuneration of Rs. 65 per day. The employment is on a rotational basis ensuring that everyone has a chance to earn.

The members on the checkpoint undertake a thorough check of every boat crossing the channels and apprehend anybody without a permit. Any illegal material found, is reported to the nearest BSF or police post.



These floating checkpoints are reported to have brought down illegal fishing considerably. This has also helped in gaining support of the local population that initially considered the checkpoints to be a major hinderance. With the success of these five posts, a few more are to be introduced in other important creeks.

Source: Subhra Priyadarshini. 'Floating forest checkpoints', *The Indian Express*, 03/06/05.

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

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

New Tiger Reserves

The Steering Committee of Project Tiger has recently granted in principal approval for the inclusion of a number of protected areas under Project Tiger.

These include the Indira Gandhi WLS and NP (Tamil Nadu), Parambikulam WLS (Kerala), Udanti, Sita Nadi and Achanakmar WLSs (Chattisgarh), Satkosia WLS (Orissa),

Kaziranga NP (Assam), Dandeli-Anshi WLS and NP (Karnataka), and Sanjay NP & Sanjay Dubri WLP (Madhya Pradesh).
(Also see *PA Updates* 56, 55, 54 & 53)

Source: Press Release, MoEF, 29/07/05.

Contact: **Dr. Rajesh Gopal**, Director, Project Tiger Annexe No.5, Bikaner House, Shah Jahan Road, New Delhi 110001.
Email: dirpt-r@hub.nic.in

Guidelines to Prevent Wildlife Electrocutions

The Central Electricity Authority has recently issued a set of guidelines on 'the laying of transmission / distribution lines in areas critical from the wildlife point of view.

The guidelines, issued to various State Electricity Boards and Forest Departments (FD) include directions to install guard spikes to discourage animals from rubbing against poles, strengthen security to prevent poaching by wire tapping, joint inspections by Electricity Departments and FDs, and careful planning and consultation with the FD while stringing wires in forest areas.

The guidelines were issued in response to a petition filed by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) before the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of the Supreme Court of India. The petitioners presented data on wildlife electrocutions of nearly 15 years, including both accidental deaths as well as deliberate poaching. Instances included a wide range of cases - from groups of elephants being accidentally electrocuted to poachers running live wires into water holes during summer.

It is hoped that this will go a long way in preventing wildlife deaths due to electrocution.

Contact: **WPSI**, see above

Call for comprehensive legislation on Conservation and Restoration of Wetlands

The Union Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) and Environment & Forests Department, Government of J&K jointly organized a 3-day workshop on "Ramsar Sites in

Northern Region: Present Status and Future Potentials" in the month of June.

The workshop was attended by eminent legal luminaries, senior officers of the Government of India as well as the J&K, army officers, senior academicians, eminent scientists, wildlife experts and representatives of various NGOs involved in wetland conservation and restoration.

The various issues discussed in the workshop included Identification of Legal and Administrative Problems in Wetland Management; Existing Institutional and Legal Frame Work for Wetland Management; and the Institutional Impediments in Resolving the Problems Faced in Wetland Conservation. The emphasis in the discussions was placed on the adequacies/inadequacies of the provisions of the existing legislations in addressing the concerns of wetland management, conservation, restoration, wise-use and sustainable development of lakes and wetlands.

The acts examined and discussed included the Indian Fisheries Act, 1857, the Indian Forests Act, 1927, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Water Prevention and Control of Pollution Act, 1974, the Environment Protection Act, 1986 and the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 in so far as they relate to the subject of Wetland Conservation and Management.

There was a general consensus that in the present scenario there is no specific enactment/guidelines which addresses all the concerns raised as regards wetlands and therefore it was found that there is an urgent need to bring about a specific legislation on Wetland Management which takes into account not only issues of wetland conservation and restoration but also incorporates provisions as regards integrated river water management so that the wetlands are able to secure their due share of water from its catchments areas.

The members of the workshop unanimously adopted the following declaration: "Having regard to the peculiar features pertaining to wetlands, it is imperative that the Central Government brings out a comprehensive legislation on the subject of Conservation and Restoration of Wetlands in the Country". The declaration is known as the "Srinagar Declaration on Wetlands 2005".

Source: 'State declaration on wetlands suggests legislation for protection of wetlands', http://webjk.nic.in/newsline/news_item.asp?NewsID=9133, 30/06/05.

UPCOMING

Workshop on Biodiversity in Pakistan

The Ministry of Environment, Government of Pakistan is holding a two-day seminar on the main topic of Biodiversity. The dates have not been finalized, but it is to be held somewhere between October and December 2005.

The thematic areas being covered in workshop will include: Status, threats and trends in the components of biodiversity; Introduction to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its status in Pakistan; Trophy Hunting – A tool for biodiversity conservation; Introduction to the biodiversity related conventions in Pakistan; Equitable benefit sharing of biological resources; Access to biological resources and benefit sharing; Private sector in biodiversity conservation in Pakistan; Genetically modified crops in Pakistan; Bio-safety rules of Pakistan and the Cartagena Protocol; Man Eaters in Ayubia National Park and their impact on conservation of wildlife and biodiversity: The challenges, policies and strategies to protect human life and wildlife; water and soil conservation issues.

Contact: **Sajid Nazir Malik**, Section Officer (IC-D), Ministry of Environment, CDA Block-IV, Civic Centre, Islamabad. Tel: 9209249 Fax: 9202211. Email: snmalik96@yahoo.com

South Indian Bird Watchers Fair

The Palani Hills Birds Watchers Society (PHBWS) is organizing the 1st South Indian Bird Watcher's Fair in Gandhigram, Dindigul from February 2-5, 2006.

The fair will include among other things, field trips led by guides, stalls and displays on birds and insects, bird ringing

demonstrations and presentations on various aspects of bird life and conservation.

Contact: **Joe Homan**, PHBWS, Lake Side Guest House, Athoor, Dindigul – 624701. Tel: 0451 – 2556762. Email: joehoman@yahoo.co.in

INTERNATIONAL

Proposal for a China-Laos-Myanmar cross border Nature Reserve

Renowned botanist, Pei Shengji of the Kunming Botanical Research Institute in China has proposed the creation of a Nature Reserve that will straddle the boundaries of the three countries of China, Laos and Myanmar.

Dubbed the 'green triangle', the proposal, if implemented, could help protect one of the largest areas of rain forest in Asia. This would include the province of Yunnan in southwest China, which borders Laos and Myanmar, and has rich forest and wildlife resources, especially in areas like Xishuangbanna, Dawei Mountain, Watershed and Huanglian Mountain.

The border areas of China, Laos and Myanmar, already have seven natural reserves covering a total area of 50,000 sq kms with extremely rich faunal and floral resources.

Source: 'Botanist proposes 'green triangle' cross-border nature reserve', http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-07/02/content_3167371.htm, 03/07/05.

OPPORTUNITIES

Faculty positions at TISS

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) is seeking well qualified and committed faculty possessing qualifications and experience as per the stipulations of the University Grants

Commission for the positions of Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor holding Ph.D. degrees with publications and proven excellence in teaching and research in Social Work, Anthropology, Economics, Political Science, Geography, Ecology, Law, Psychology, Education, Philosophy, Information Technology & Communication, Engineering, Medical/Health Sciences, and Management who can strengthen the work of the Institute in the following areas: Agricultural Economics / Rural Economics; Globalisation; International Finance and Development; Environment, Biodiversity and IPR regimes; Geography; Planning and Development: Law, public policy and social justice; Entrepreneurship, Management Sciences; Technology (IT, water and energy) for Development; Health and Social Sciences, Public Health, Health Management; Social Anthropology and Ethnography; Social Movements, Political Philosophy and Politics of Nation-State; Media and culture; Elementary Education Policy, Planning and Implementation; Criminology and Criminal Justice; Disaster

management; and Methodologies for and facilitation of Lifelong Learning

Contact: **TISS**, Post Box No.8313, Deonar, Mumbai 400 088 Website: www.tiss.edu

Senior Programme Officer – Wild Enforcement and Law at WTI

The Wildlife Trust of India has advertised for the position of a Senior Programme Officer – Wild Enforcement and Law.

Qualifications and Experience needed: Master's Degree or equivalent in Wildlife Science or enforcement experience. A minimum of seven years experience in field or programmatic work is recommended.

The contract period will be upto March 31, 2006.

Contact: **Human Resource Division**, WTI, A-220, New Friends Colony, New Delhi – 110065. Email: jobs@wti.org.in (Mention the name of the post applied for on the envelope or in the Subject)

Wetlands International **Position Statement on Avian Influenza**

Since 1997, the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) of the H5N1 strain in east, southeast and central Asia has been increasingly recorded through recurrent outbreaks in poultry and through infections in people. This has resulted in the deaths over 60 people and culling of several hundred million domestic poultry and ducks. HPAI can be spread through movement of poultry, eggs, meat and bird products, poultry and live bird markets, illegal trade of wild birds, movement of humans and machinery between poultry farms, the religious practice of "merit release" of wild or pet birds and substandard poultry vaccines.

In 2005, a few species of migratory waterbirds were affected by the virus with mass die offs observed in two locations in China and Mongolia. Due to their migratory nature, wild birds are perceived by some groups as a potential threat in spreading the disease along

their migratory routes that cross national boundaries across Asia, Australasia, Europe, Africa and the Americas. At the same time wild birds are victims of this disease and thus under threat. As the role that wild birds could play in spreading HPAI is far from clear, Wetlands International urges that more research is urgently done and a world wide system for monitoring HPAI in wild birds be put in place. Practical measures to be taken to limit the risk of spreading the virus should focus on the control of movements of domestic poultry and on improved bio-security practices in poultry production enterprises.

Considering our present knowledge about Avian Influenza H5N1 and the potential role of wild birds in spreading the disease, Wetlands international asks special attention for the following:

1. Avian Flu is a serious disease which is fatal for

- humans, domestic poultry (including chickens, ducks and geese) and wild birds. This means that human health, economic interests and nature conservation are at stake.
2. The conditions under which low pathogenic strains (LPAI) viruses mutate into HPAI viruses are poorly understood. However, it is likely that mutations to HPAI are especially facilitated by situations in which domestic poultry is kept, i.e. in large numbers, at high densities and in unhygienic situations.
 3. At present there are no instances documented of HPAI being transmitted to humans by wild birds. Instead, all human cases have been associated with close contact with infected poultry.
 4. The role of wild birds in the spread of HPAI-H5N1 over large parts of the Asian continent is unclear and unproven. However, the role of wild birds in outbreaks in Russia is speculative.
 5. Several measures can be taken in order to control HPAI as is suggested e.g. by the Food and Agricultural Organization, the World Health Organization and many others. Such measures should focus on strengthening surveillance for the disease especially in risk countries, better control on wild bird markets and movements of domestic poultry and a reduction of close contacts between humans, domestic poultry and wild birds through better management and improved bio-security practices in production enterprises.
 6. For several reasons culling of waterbirds, or destroying their habitats, is not an option in controlling HPAI. Such actions are immoral and in many cases illegal. Moreover, they should be regarded counterproductive as they would interfere with the normal movements of migratory birds and can lead to unpredictable dispersion of individuals.
 7. There is little known about the potential risks of migratory waterbirds in spreading HPAI. This refers to the behaviour of the virus in wild birds and in the aquatic habitat, the chance of infected birds covering large distances, the timing of migration and the migratory routes of risk species and the chances of transmission at places where waterbirds concentrate during moulting, staging or during the non-breeding period

- (northern winter season). It is urged that these subjects are studied in detail and at the earliest.
8. The various programmes for monitoring, sampling and analysis of the viral subtypes of avian influenza found in wild birds should be intensified and included in a well co-ordinated monitoring network. Data should be centrally managed and made widely available.
 9. The assessment of the risks involved in a world wide spread of HPAI should be carried out by a multidisciplinary team of research workers including virologists, biologists, veterinarians, molecular biologists, epidemiologists, public health officials and other relevant disciplines.

Wetlands International has taken the initiative to bring virologists, ornithologists and modellers together, in order to develop a world wide system for monitoring Avian Influenza in wild birds and to unravel possible mechanisms of disease transmission. This initiative is developed in close contact with the European Union (EU), World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) as well as with international nature conservation bodies such as the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), BirdLife International and International Council for Game & Wildlife Conservation (CIC). We seek cooperation with like minded bodies to enhance this important work.

Wetlands International has established a website devoted to providing information on AI and wild birds:
<http://www.wetlands.org/iwc/avianflu>

Contact: **Dr. Taej Mundkur** Wetlands International - South Asia A-25, 2nd Floor, Defence Colony, New Delhi - 110 024, India Tel/Fax: +91 20 25283372 / 9850584334. Email: taejmundkur.wi@vsnl.net

THE TIGER TASK FORCE

The Tiger Task Force (TTF) appointed by the Prime Minister (See *PA Update* 55) submitted its report in August. Following is the Press Release that was issued at the time

Press Release

- **Tiger Task Force submits report to prime minister Manmohan Singh**
- **Presents an action agenda to save the tiger the Indian way, where forests are not wilderness but also the habitats of people**

-- Comprehensive report lists immediate and long-term action

-- Says the current approach of guns, guards and fences is not working

-- Says conservation must share benefits with local communities if tiger has to be safeguarded, as some parks have shown

New Delhi, August 5, 2005: India is protecting its tigers against all odds; the biggest threat to the tiger today is not poaching per se, but a deadly combination of the poachers' guns and the growing anger of people who live in and around tiger habitats, says *Joining the Dots*, the report of the Tiger Task Force submitted to prime minister Manmohan Singh today.

In its assessment, the Task Force says, "While the good news is that not every tiger reserve in India is facing a Sariska-type crisis, it is also clear that a Sariska-type crisis haunts every protected area in India. The tiger is under attack from poachers, miners and other exploitative activity. Worse, it is also under siege from the people who co-inhabit its land, who have never benefited from conservation and continue to face daily harassment." Their much increased numbers face hardships from denial of resources and loss of forest-based livelihoods. Traditional benefits stand

drastically curtailed and enforcement leads to harassment. In addition, inadequate per capita and sub-optimum rural development and tribal welfare inputs have done little to arrest their impoverishment. Continues the report: "In these circumstances, if the defences are down, protection will fail. Like it did in Sariska. The challenge is to ensure that the siege can be lifted so that tigers can survive."

The Task Force recommends a series of actions – from the setting up of the wildlife crime bureau and strengthening of the criminal provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to convict poachers, to institutional reform and strategies of coexisting with people.

The five-member Task Force was constituted in April 2005, following the shocking disappearance of tigers from Sariska tiger reserve in Rajasthan

Can tigers and humans coexist?

The dissent note from one Task Force member, included in the report, primarily concerns the issue of coexistence: humans and tigers living together. In her response to the dissent note, the chairperson of the Task Force explains that the fact is the country has no choice in this matter. She says the report, in fact, outlines strategies in which areas will be made 'inviolable' for the tigers; there have to be other areas where people and tigers will have to coexist. The basis of this strategy is the data the Task Force has collected on the numbers of people who have been relocated from reserves and those that remain inside. The Tiger Task Force places this data in the public domain for the first time.

"The facts are devastating," says the chairperson in her response to the dissent note. In the last 30 years, only 80-odd villages have been relocated from all 28 reserves. There are another 1,500 existing inside, of which 250 are within core areas of tiger reserves, which must be relocated. Relocating them will cost Rs 660

crore at the minimum, in terms of the meager relocation package government works with today, and without accounting for land costs. If this is taken into account, then the estimated cost is Rs 11,000 crore. What is suggested is a time-bound programme to identify those villages that must be relocated if they are located inside crucial tiger habitats. It is also suggested that, unlike the past, this relocation must be done speedily and sensitively, with careful consideration of the needs of people.

But the report says that clearly there is no way, given the past track record and the logistical hurdles of relocation, that all villages can or will be relocated. In this case, the country has no choice but to make peace with the communities that share the tiger's home. If not, we will lose the 'war of conservation', tiger by tiger. This must be done in a variety of ways – from "preferential shares in tourism, to collaborative management involving communities". There is no other way to secure the tiger's future.

On Sariska

The Task Force recommends that tigers must be reintroduced into this crucial habitat in the Aravalli, which is today under threat from miners. But this must only be done after corrective action has been taken to 'fix' the problems. The Task Force assessment of what happened in Sariska points to:

- i. Complete breakdown in the internal management system of the park;
- ii. Faulty and fudged system to count the number of tigers, as a result of which tigers were disappearing in the reserve but appearing in the census reports of the park authorities;
- iii. Complete breakdown in the relationship between villagers and the park management. The latter talks about relocation, but little has been done. The one village that was relocated has come back, because the work was done shoddily. People face daily harassment because they are treated as illegal trespassers in their own land. In this scenario, they are friends of the poachers, not the tiger.

All this must change says the report. Relocation of key villages needs to be done after full consultation with people. The

remaining villages must be given the benefits of conservation. There must be reciprocal arrangements between villagers and tiger managers so that, in return for protection, they get livelihood benefits.

More guns and guards?

The Task Force has analysed data from across the country to understand what needs to be done to increase protection of tigers. It finds that the current approach of guns, guards and fences is simply not the solution. Sariska and Ranthambhore, both important reserves that have been in the news lately for tiger losses, are cases in point.

Sariska, on protection has spent an astounding Rs 1 crore on every tiger (presuming the reserve had 22 tigers) in the last 25-odd years. In comparison, the rest of the reserves, on average, spent roughly Rs 24 lakh per tiger over the same period. In other words, Sariska has invested Rs 2.58 lakh per sq km of its area, as compared to Rs 1 lakh on an average that has been spent in other reserves. But still the tigers have gone. (see table below)

Ranthambhore has similarly not lacked funds. The Rajasthan Armed Constabulary guards its territory. It has fenced its borders. But the 'war of conservation' here continues, and tigers are the losers. The fact is that people who live around this reserve have never benefited from it, but have lost their livelihood and grazing grounds. But others have gained. The Task Force has estimated Rs 22 crore as the annual turnover of the top 21 hotels near the park. The problem is that since some conservationists have interests in this business, the anger of people gets intensified for they see the tiger being protected for a few, against the interests of all.

What has to be done then?

The detailed recommendations of the Tiger Task Force aim to do the following:

- a. To improve management and scrutiny by reinvigorating institutions of governance;
- b. Within the country, combat poaching and convict criminals by strengthening protection, amending the criminal provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act,

1972, and by setting up the crime bureau; internationally, working with China to break the illegal trade network in tiger skins and tiger body parts;

- c. To expand the inviolate spaces for the tiger by minimising human pressure in these areas;
- d. To repair the relationships with the people who share the tiger's habitat by building strategies for coexistence;
- e. To regenerate the forest habitats in the fringes of the tiger's protective enclaves by investing in the forest, water and grassland economies of the people. The ambit of such co-managed and ameliorated forests must be enlarged steadily in favour of both people and the tiger.

The action agenda is comprehensive but it is within reach. It is clear that there is no quick-fix to tiger protection, says the report.

Given the urgency of the situation, the report was completed within the three-month time period allotted to the Task Force. Says the chairperson: "Our effort has been to listen to and incorporate the views of as many concerned people as possible from across the country. It is essential that informed knowledge drives the process of conservation." She adds the problem with tiger conservation is that it has become the 'exclusive' preserve of a few. This must change, as the tiger needs all the friends today.

- To download this press release, the complete Tiger Task Force report, and other related material, please visit: <http://projecttiger.nic.in/TTF2005/index.html>

PM accepts seven recommendations

The following seven key points and requests placed before the Prime Minister were reportedly accepted by him.

- 1) The Prime Minister to head the Steering Committee of Project Tiger for a period of 2-3 years
- 2) The Project Tiger Directorate to be converted into a statutory authority under the MoEF. This will give it greater autonomy and ability to coordinate with state governments
- 3) The Wildlife Crime Bureau to be created immediately under the MoEF
- 4) The next census (planned for November) of tigers and habitat to be done using the new methodology suggested by the MoEF and endorsed by the Tiger Task Force. Independent audit report also to be presented to parliament in six months, which will rate state performance on different criteria
- 5) The plan for relocation of villages from key tiger habitats to be finalized within one year, with its financial and logistical implications and completed within 2-3 years
- 6) The plan for coexistence to be prepared by each tiger reserve with one year so that the benefits of conservation can be shared with local communities
- 7) The benefits of tourism to be shared with local communities using the recommendations of the Task Force.

For more details:

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IN THE SUPREME COURT

Denotification of Periyar Tiger Reserve

One of the issues that dominated the Supreme Court in the month of August was the application filed for the de-notification of the Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala

The matter was related to the de-notification of 12.65 hectares of the Periyar Tiger Reserve (see *PA Updates* 55 & 54) and the matter came up for discussion thrice. The Travancore Devaswom Board had sought the permission of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) for approval under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. According to the applicant the de-notification was required for improving the pilgrim facilities at Pamba, Marakkatum and Sannidhanam. The applicant prayed that the diversion of 12.65 hectares of land of Periyar Tiger reserve be allowed for providing facilities based on the outline of the master plan prepared for the purpose. The proposal includes making of a sewage disposal plant and a queue complex

The NBWL sent Dr. Darshan Shankar from Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT) for a site inspection before allowing for the de-notification. The report of Dr. Darshan Shankar gives detailed recommendations on the safeguards needed before the de-notification is allowed.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests counsel sought time on 12-8-2005 to respond to the application of the Travancore Devaswom Board. The Court granted one weeks time. The matter came up for hearing on 18-8-2005 wherein the Amicus Curiae sought time to examine the proposal as well as raised the issue of the inadequate master plan.

During the next hearing dated 25-8-2005 the Supreme Court allowed for the de-notification but directed the Travancore Devaswom Board to respond to the specific

suggestions of the CEC within four weeks.

Following is the text of order of the Supreme Court order in the matter dated 25/08/05. .

- I.A. No. 1373: De-notification of Periyar Tiger Reserve

The Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) has conveyed its approval for use of 12.675 hectare of forest land in Periyar Tiger Reserve in favour of Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) for development of Sabrimala Temple in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala, as stated in the communication dated 20.5.2005 of MoEF to the Principal Secretary, Forest & Wildlife Department, Government of Kerala.

We have examined the matter and heard view point of CEC regarding the comment of CEC filed in Court today. The applicant Board may respond thereto within four weeks, but, in the meanwhile, as prayed in the application, the Government of India is permitted to issue orders for diversion of the aforesaid land.

Put up this application after the Board has responded to the comments of CEC.

'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 (see *PA Update* 49). It is produced with the support of the Foundation for Ecological Security, Anand. **Forest Case Update Editors:** Ritwick Dutta (Court Office), 69, Lawyers Chambers, Supreme Court, New Delhi-110001. Kanchi Kohli, (Coordinating Office) Email: forestcase@yahoo.com All issues of the Forest Case Update are uploaded on <http://www.geocities.com/forestcase/forestcaseupdate.html>

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY AND STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Media briefing

October 4, 2005

Release of the Technical Coordinator's Report of the NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY and ACTION PLAN (NBSAP)

Citizens Report on India's Biodiversity recommends Radical Steps for Conservation and Equity

India's most comprehensive report on biodiversity, titled *Securing India's Future: The Final Technical Report of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan* (as submitted by its Technical Coordinator)" is being released, after a four-year process of consultations across the country. Originally supposed to have been an official report of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), it is being made public as a citizens' report, as the Ministry has failed to act on it for almost two years.

Why this Citizens' Release?

From January 2000, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) facilitated the NBSAP process, starting with the unusual step of giving its technical coordination to a NGO, Kalpavriksh, working in conjunction with a 15 member Technical and Policy Core Group. Administrative coordination was carried out by Biotech Consortium India Pvt. Ltd (BCIL), and funding was given by the Global Environment Facility through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In a significant departure from usual practice, the national report and recommendations were drafted only at the end of the planning process. Over 70 local, state, inter-state, and thematic action plans were prepared by communities, academics, government officials, students, and others, through widespread grassroots consultation involving public hearings, biodiversity festivals, workshops and seminars, foot marches and boat rallies, questionnaires, and outreach through mass and folk media. Well over 50,000 people participated in an

influential way, making this the largest such exercise ever undertaken in India and perhaps the world.

The final national report went through several rounds of public comment and peer review. Based on these, the final report was submitted to MoEF at the end of 2003. Till then, MoEF had indicated that this report would be the National Action Plan. Subsequently, however, and till now, MoEF has been dragging its feet in giving approval to this document or coming up with its own action plan

These decisions are totally at variance with the open and transparent process by which the draft National Action Plan was formulated. They also ignore the energy and inputs that thousands of people have put into the process. Unfortunately, even the approval of the various painstakingly prepared state, local, ecoregional, and thematic plans has been held back, thereby holding up their implementation.

Therefore, this Final Technical Report is being released by Kalpavriksh on behalf of a Technical and Policy Core Group that coordinated the NBSAP process. This move is also aimed at providing public access to the 100-plus other documents produced in the NBSAP process, including over 70 local, state, ecoregional, and thematic action plans, and 35 sub-thematic papers on a wide range of subjects. Together, these constitute India's most comprehensive compilation on biodiversity and related matters.

What does the Report Say?

The report points out that India is fortunate in having one of the world's greatest diversity of ecosystems, wild plants and animals, micro-organisms, and crops and livestock. But it notes

that a lot of this diversity is being lost due to human activities....over half of its forests and many of its wetlands have been destroyed, more than 40 species have gone extinct, thousands of crop varieties are lost in the field, and all 18 of its indigenous poultry breeds are threatened!

The report demonstrates that the greatest threats to biodiversity are from a destructive process of development, from strong vested interests, and from a political system in which decisions are in the hands of a few powerful people. There are many ongoing heroic attempts to stem biodiversity loss, but it has continued.

The report therefore recommends radical measures to conserve biodiversity, and to ensure the livelihood security of millions of people whose lives depend critically on this diversity. It lists over 100 strategies (many of which can be implemented by citizens without waiting for government to act), including:

- more decentralized governance and administration;
- a national land and water use plan;
- re-orientation of agriculture, industry, infrastructure, and other development sectors;
- expansion of areas and species under conservation; and
- central involvement of communities most dependent on biological resources.

The report specifies that the report's strategies and actions can be implemented through:

- relevant authorities or boards at local, state, inter-state, and national levels, starting from empowered communities closest to the ground;
- a committee under the National Biodiversity Authority (Chennai), with sufficient non-governmental representation;
- a National Biodiversity Network that builds on the network created in the NBSAP process;

- specially designated officers to handle biodiversity matters in each Union Ministry.

Overall, the national report advocates that the focus of all planning and decision-making in India should be to achieve the twin objectives of ecological security (including conservation of ecosystems and species) and livelihood security (especially of the most under-privileged sections of society).

The Government Needs to Act!

On behalf of the thousands of people involved in the NBSAP process, the groups releasing this report urge the Government of India to come out with the national action plan which in spirit and content respects the citizens' report. The threatened plants and animals of India, and the threatened cultures and livelihoods of people living amidst these plants and animals, deserve nothing less than such a bold initiative.

(Ashish Kothari / Kanchi Kohli / Seema Bhatt)
on behalf of: Kalpavriksh and the NBSAP
Technical and Policy Core Group

Contact:

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To order/obtain copies of the report:

Swati Arjunwadkar (Pune): kvbooks@vsnl.net (020-25654239; 25675450)

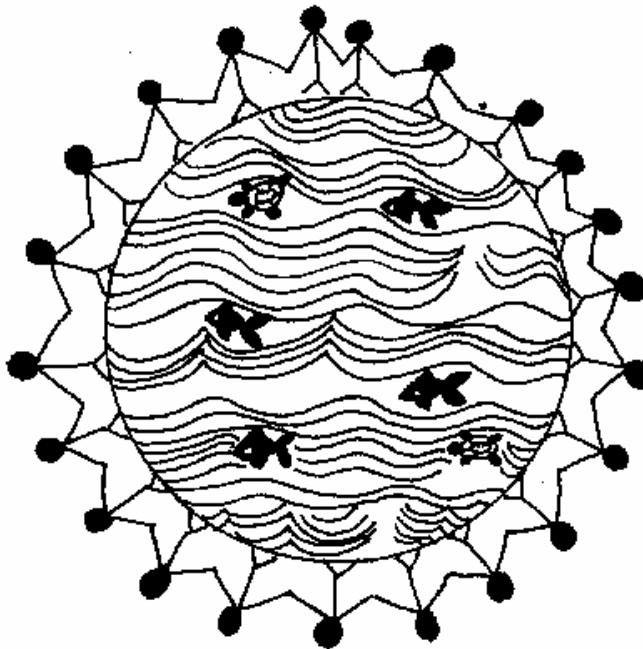
Also Available: Securing India's Future: On the Trail of the NBSAP – a 46 minute film Contact: **Vijendra Patil**. Email: vppatil@vsnl.com; vijendra.patil@gmail.com

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