

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XII No. 1

February 2006 (No. 59)

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## EDITORIAL

### A film festival with a difference

Vatavaran – 2005, the Environment and Wildlife Film Festival organized by the Centre for Media Studies in November offered many pleasant surprises – least of all the number of films that were submitted. The organizers received a record number of nearly 250 films from across the country. It is proof, perhaps, of two significant developments– that film making technologies have become cheaper and more accessible allowing possibilities that were not there earlier and importantly that there is tremendous interest in the issues related to the environment, development and wildlife itself. This can only augur well in a situation where inspite of the boom in media and access to it there is a perennial shortage of films on wildlife and the environment that inform, question and challenge in a meaningful manner.

But its not about numbers alone. Many of the films were outstanding – a combination of great subject matter, fearless questioning and good technical quality that made for powerful viewing. This was perhaps best highlighted by Praveen Singh's: 'Indian Leopards - The Killing Fields' that won the award for the best film of the festival. The film deals with the issue of human-leopard conflict that has reached serious proportions in certain parts of the country and highlights realities in the Indian landscape that are extremely complex. Similarly 'The Last Flight' by Nutan Manmohan, winner of the best wildlife film award tracked the crisis facing the vulture in the country today in a manner that was both, precise and engaging at the same time.

And then there was 'Vikas, *Bandook ki naal se*' (Development flows from the barrel of the gun) by Ranchi based Biju Toppo and Meghnath. Winner in the category 'Forest for life', the theme of the festival, it was a powerful indictment of the development process that we have chosen to follow. The film tracks the histories of five development projects in the tribal belt of Eastern India, each one of them being forced upon a reluctant local population, where

### Protected Area Update

Vol. XII No. 1 February 2006 (No. 59)

Produced by: [Kalpavriksh](#)

Editor: [Pankaj Sekhsaria](#)

Illustrations: [Madhuvanti Anantharajan](#)

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

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

Email: [pankajs@vsnl.com](mailto:pankajs@vsnl.com)

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

Production of *PA Update* 59 has been supported by **Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)**, Anand. Additional support was provided by

**Greenpeace India**

state repression and the gun have come to embody 'development'. It's a film that's extremely important and has come not a day too soon – a critical wake up call that we must pay heed to. Just the last issue of the *PA Update* had commented upon the mindless mining and mining related activities that are being pushed aggressively in Orissa. Just a few weeks ago 12 tribals protesting take over of their lands for a steel plant in Kalingsnagar in Orissa were shot dead by the police. The film is a grim reminder that Kalingsnagar is not the first and will certainly not be the last – that the threat to wildlife conservation and the survival of tribal communities comes not from each other, but an entirely different, more powerful and ruthless entity. That the festival chose to award this film was significant in itself. Its an indication that all hope may not be lost.

Vatavaran will now be traveling to different parts of the country and hopefully a lot more people will get an opportunity to see the films. Its an opportunity that must certainly not be missed.

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### **Telugu Ganga Canal project to impact Sri Lankamaleswara and Sri Penusila Narasimha Wildlife Sanctuaries**

A recent study by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has revealed that the Telugu Ganga Canal Project will seriously damage critical Jerdon's Courser habitat in around the Sri Lankamaleswara Wildlife Sanctuary (SLWLS) and the Sri Penusila Narasimha Wildlife Sanctuary (SPNWLS) in the Cuddapah district. The right canal will impact SLWLS while the left canal will impact the SPNWLS.

The study points that the canal poses at least three types of threats of the courser:

a) Construction of the canal is likely to destroy the remaining scrub jungle habitat of the courser in the SLWLS

b) The canal will permit the extension of irrigated agriculture in areas outside the sanctuary that are presently scrub jungle and important courser habitat.

c) Extension of agricultural activity will increase human use of the areas in the sanctuary and outside it, increasing pressure on the bird and its habitat.

The study concludes that the construction of the canal will make the conservation status of the Jerdon's Courser even worse in the SLWLS.

The study has made a series of recommendations, including importantly that pending a review of its impact on the habitat of the threatened Jerdon's Courser the construction work of the canal around the Sri Lankamaleswara WLS should be stopped immediately.

Source: P Jeganathan and Dr. Asad Rahmani'. *'Construction of Telugu Ganga Canal in and around two protected areas in Cuddapah District, Andhra Pradesh, India. Immediate threat to the world population of the critically endangered Jerdon's Courser, Rhinoptilus bitoquatus'*. BNHS, December 2005.

<http://www.bnhs.org/article.php?cid=MjI%3D&sid=MTg3&aid=MjE0&t=Mg%3D%3D>

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

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

#### **Polavaram Dam to submerge 3267 hectares of forest including 85 ha in Papikonda WLS**

About 3,267 hectares (ha) of reserve forest area spread over 2,820 ha in Khammam, 112 ha in Visakhapatnam, 149 ha in East Godavari, 136 ha in West Godavari and 49 ha in Krishna districts respectively is likely to be submerged by the Polavaram Dam project.

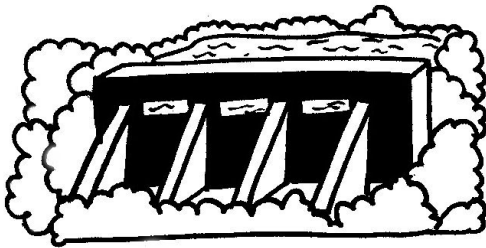
This includes an estimated 85 ha in the

Papikonda Wildlife Sanctuary, where forest officials have identified about 10 patches where habitations of wild animals are likely to be affected.

In lieu of the area being submerged by the project, the revenue authorities have acquired 900 ha land in East Godavari, 1,740 ha in West Godavari and 630 ha in Visakhapatnam for handing over to the Forest Department for compensatory reforestation

Of the total 3,267 ha of forest land to be submerged, the lion's share of 2,640 ha land falls under Rajahmundry circle of the FD. Since revenue land is not available in Khammam district, a large share of land has been taken from the West Godavari district.

Details pertaining to total cost involved in the acquisition of land is being worked out. Proposals have been made for Rs 21.05 crore for taking up catchment area treatment from Polavaram to Bhadrachalam.



Source: 'Clearance for Polavaram soon', *Deccan Chronicle*, 26/11/05.

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

## ARUNACHAL PRADESH

### Now Namdapha loses all tigers

The Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve has reportedly lost its entire population of tigers that had been put at 61 in the last census conducted in 2001-02. Wildlife officials said that at best one tiger survived in the park that is spread over nearly 2000 sq. kms. This

animal too is said to have been spotted by Chakma villagers and not the staff of the Forest Department.

The Field Director of the park said that a clear picture and the real count would be available only after the census was conducted in December. He blamed poor infrastructure and limited frontline staff for the difficulty in the upkeep of the reserve: Each person on frontline duty in Namdapha needs to cover an area of 65-70 sq. kms in comparison to the national average of 15-20 sq. kms per person.

The main reason behind the loss of tigers here is said to be the people of the Lisu tribe, who have settled in the reserve and hunt in the forests here. Originally from Myanmar, official records show that they migrated and set up base inside the tiger reserve in 1987. At present, there are 66 families in three different locations in and around Gandhigram, a village bordering Myanmar. The Arunachal government is said to be in the process of finding their exact numbers and working towards re-settling them outside the reserve, somewhere in the Changlang district.

(Also see *PA Update* 52, 38, 23)

Source: Yudhajit Shankar. 'Namdapha stripped of striped cats', *The Statesman*, 27/11/05.

Contact: **Field Director**, Namdapha NP, PO Miao - 792122, Arunachal Pradesh. Tel: 03807-22249. Fax: 22249

**CWLW**, Forest Department, Itanagar - 719111. Arunachal Pradesh. Tel: 0360 - 222310 (o)/ 224370 @. Fax: 0360 - 222351/223556

## ASSAM

### Two tigers found dead in Orang NP - poisoning suspected

Two adult tigers were found dead in the Orang National Park in the last week of November, triggering fears of either locals poisoning them or of a viral attack in the park. The viscera and other organs had been sent for forensic tests and the results were awaited.

One of the dead tigers was found bleeding from the nose. A buffalo carcass was found near one of the dead tigers, while the body of the other tiger was recovered a day later a few

kms away. Wildlife officials said that there were crows and vultures near the dead buffalo but they did not touch the carcass.

It was suspected that some toxic chemicals or poison was sprayed on the buffalo carcass and so the birds had kept away from it. The two tigers, on the other hand, may have eaten the dead animal and perished subsequently. Wildlife officials were planning to arrest three local villagers being considered responsible for the poisoning.

Locals residing in the periphery of the park have in recent times complained that tigers had entered their villages and killed several cows and buffaloes. The suspected poisoning could have been a retaliatory measure on part of the villagers.

Source: 'Two tigers feared poisoned to death in Assam park',  
<http://www.newindpress.com/NewsItems.asp?ID=IEP20051125015329&Page=P&Title=Nation&Topic=0>

Contact: **DFO**, Orang NP, Mangaldoi Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Darrang - 784125, Tel: 0914-22065(O), 22349(R)

### **Pressures mounting on Amchang WLS**

Flora and fauna of the recently formed Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary (AWLS) (see *PA Update* 49) are reportedly under severe pressure from poachers and others extracting resources from the forests here.

About 150 to 200 cycle-loads of green fodder and 80 shoulder loads of firewood are extracted from the Amchang side of the sanctuary every day. Each cycle-load of green fodder is worth Rs 40 to Rs 50 whereas each bundle of firewood fetches Rs 25.

The situation is said to be more serious on the northern side of the sanctuary in areas like Birkuchi and Panikhaiti. The timber smugglers prefer this side of the sanctuary because of the location of the Panikhaiti Railway Station. Timber and charcoal are the main items loaded by on to the railway wagons there.

The location of the Narengi Army Cantonment has, however, come as a deterrent to smugglers on the southern side of the

sanctuary. Sources in the FD have said that sometimes even the vehicles of the para-military forces are used for smuggling.

There has been a demand for increasing of the forest posts inside the park to ensure its better protection.

Source: Ajit Patowary. 'Amchang facing threat from poachers', *The Assam Tribune*, 22/11/05.

### **Elephants from Amchang WLS cause serious damage in Panikhaiti area**

Elephants coming out of the Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary have destroyed a large number of houses in and around Panikhaiti on the outskirts of the city of Guwahati. The degradation was reported to have gone on for more than two weeks starting early November.

The majority of those affected were subsistence farmers and wage earners, people who lost their houses and crop fields. Those whose houses have been destroyed were forced to take shelter in homes of relatives or neighbours. Their situation was also made worse because of the setting in of the cold of winter.

According to residents of the area, though the elephants visit the area regularly, the damage caused this time was unprecedented.

Aggrieved villagers have demanded that the Forest Department should intervene with necessary steps. (Also see *PA Update* 50)

Source: 'Depredation by elephants in Panikhaiti area', *The Assam Tribune*, 19/11/05.

### **Villages demand proper arrangements for relocation from Dibru-Saikhowa NP**

Residents of the two villages of Laika and Dadhia located inside the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park (DSNP) staged a sit-in demonstration in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office in November seeking proper arrangements for their shifting and rehabilitation from inside the park.

The Laika Dadhia Mukti Sangram Samity has also submitted a memorandum to the Governor, Chief Minister and the Forest Minister of Assam through the Tinsukia district administration.

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

Source: Anamika Das. 'Rehabilitation of villagers in Laika and Dadhia sought', *The Assam Tribune*, 20/11/05.

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

### **Camera traps installed in Manas NP**

A project for the use of camera traps to research wildlife and its behaviour was recently launched in the Manas National Park. The cameras being used here have been designed by the Indian Institute of Science's Centre for Electronic Design and Technology. The camera contains a motion sensor that triggers its shutter once a movement takes place in front of it.

At present the cameras are gathering images at randomly selected sites inside the national park.

A total of 16 such traps will be eventually installed. Presently five are in place. The project was formally launched by Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury, Deputy Commissioner, Baksa, in November and will be managed by the NGO Aaranyak.

Source: Prabal Kr. Das. 'Camera traps installed in Manas Park', *The Assam Tribune*, 22/12/05.

Contact: **Director**, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd. Dist. Barpeta – 781315, Assam. Tel: 03666 – 261413. Fax: 232253 / 260253  
Email: [abhijitrabha@hotmail.com](mailto:abhijitrabha@hotmail.com)  
**Dr. Bibhab Talukdar**, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati - 781028, Assam. Tel: 0361-2266087 / 2228418. Email: bibhab1@sancharnet.in

### **FD eco-tourism resorts near three PAs**

The Assam Forest Department has taken up a project called '*Amar Atithi*' (Our Guest) for promotion of eco-tourism in three PAs - Kaziranga NP, Manas MP and the Pobitora WLS. The project involves setting up of eco-tourism resorts to be owned and managed by local communities.

The concept involves the setting up of five units, comprising 10 cottages each, adjacent to the protected areas with high tourist inflow for six months. The cottages with attached toilets, power supply and other modern amenities, would have a common restaurant, a grocery shop and a souvenir shop. The persons manning the resorts would be from the local community and would be trained for the purpose. Two units have been earmarked for Kaziranga and Manas each while there will be one in Pobitora.

Each unit, inclusive of cottages, restaurants and souvenir shops would cost about Rs 36.5 lakh to build. The Forest Department has already sent the project details to the State Tourism Commissioner with the request that it be passed on to the Union Ministry of Tourism for funding support.

Source: Prabal Kr Das. 'Forest dept. bit to set up eco-tourism resorts', *The Assam Tribune*, 07/11/05.

### **NEWS FROM KAZIRANGA**

#### **Tourists throng Kaziranga on New Year's Day**



An estimated 6000 tourists are said to have visited the Kohora and Bagori Ranges of the Kaziranga National Park on January 1 to celebrate the start of the new year. Most of the visitors were from the Jorhat, Golaghat and Nagaon districts. The visitors arranged picnics at different spots inside the park.

It was found, however, that visitors in such large numbers were causing an adverse impact on the forests and the wild animals in the park. Disposable dishes and glasses too were left behind in substantial quantities.

It has been pointed out that though the number of tourists visiting Kaziranga have increased, there has been no corresponding increase in tourist facilities. Many visitors are not able to get accommodation and many are also unable to enjoy the elephant safaris.

A total of 38,140 local and 2102 foreigners visited the park from April to December 2005. The total revenue collected was a little more than Rs. 33 lakh. This has grown from a figure of a little more than Rs 30 lakh that was collected in 2004. The visitor numbers for 2004 were 29,879 local visitors and 2672 foreigners.

Source: Sanjoy Hazarika. 'Thousands throng Madan Kamdev, KNP', *The Assam Tribune*, 03/01/06.

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

### **No plan to divert National Highway presently passing through Kaziranga NP**

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has denied the possibility of diverting traffic on the national highway passing through the Kaziranga National Park. The Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways, KH Muniyappa recently clarified this while answering a question in parliament.

He said that presently there was no proposal for diverting traffic or for controlling speed by putting up speed sensors or speed guns.

The issue of the National Highway 37 passing through Kaziranga has continuously been in the news particularly for wild animal deaths in road accidents during the monsoons. (Also see *PA Updates* 58, 50, 49, 47, 45, 44, 38, 34 & 29)

Source: 'No plan to divert NH and KNP', *The Assam Tribune*, 14/12/05.

### **Assam Assembly employment review panel visits Kaziranga**

The 13 member Employment Review Samity (ERS) of the Assam State Assembly recently

visited the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) and held a meeting at the Kohora convention hall. The problems of unemployment were reviewed here in light of the appeal by the Director of the park for the reinstatement of 160 forest workers who had been discharged from service.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Paniram Rabha, who is the Chairman of the ERS. Others attending the meeting included Jatindra Basumatary, MLA, Chidly; R Phukan, P Das, JC Paul, Joint Director, DRDA, and CM Malakar, Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife, Assam.

Mr. Rabha also inaugurated a mela of self-help groups (SHGs) at Kaziranga where the DRDA, Golaghat district had arranged different types of Assamese local dresses, food and handicrafts.

Source: 'Assam assembly employment review panel team visits Kaziranga', *The Assam Tribune*, 01/01/06.

### **Biswanathghat – Kaziranga NP river cruise**

A month long river cruise program from Biswanathghat near Biswanath Chairali to the Kaziranga National Park was inaugurated on December 20, 2005. The initiative was part of the Biswanath Utsav 2006, and will allow residents on the North Bank of the Brahmaputra an easier opportunity of visiting the national park. Earlier they could come to Kaziranga by road through Tezpur which was a long and expensive journey.

The two tier 40 seater mechanised boat would leave Biswanathghat to Kaziranga National Park at 6 am and at 10 am. In this river cruise 'package tour' the rate per adult in the upper deck was fixed at Rs 400 and lower deck at Rs 350, while children below 12 years would be charged Rs 350 and Rs 300 each for upper and lower decks respectively. The package tour included travel to and from the park, lunch and entry tickets.

Source: 'Biswanathghat – KNP river cruise from today', *The Assam Tribune*, 20/12/05.

## **Stone quarry proposed at Mikir Chang near Kaziranga NP**

The Assam Forest Department (FD) is reported to have invited tenders to open a stone quarry at Mikir Chang, not far from the Kaziranga National Park. The new quarry would see the extraction of 10,000 cubic metres of stones to be used primarily in the Bogibeel project.

The site where the 2.5 km long quarry is proposed is an important migratory corridor for elephants moving between Kaziranga NP and Nambor Doigrung Wildlife Sanctuary and between Nambor WLS and the Garampani WLS. Other endangered species of wildlife including the tiger, leopard, Clouded Leopard, Himalayan Black Bear, Hoolock Gibbon, Capped Langur, Indian Bison, King Cobra, Slow Loris, Greater Pied Hornbill, Pallas's Fishing Eagle, and the Winged Wood Duck have also been reported in the area where the quarry will be started.

The move has been opposed by wildlife researchers and environmentalists who say that this will have a very negative impact on the wildlife in this region. Those who have voiced their concern and opposition include Padmeswar Gogoi, Member, Elephant Task Force, Assam; Arup Goswami, Honorary Wildlife Warden and Dr. Bibhab Talukdar of the wildlife NGO, Aaranyak.

This quarrying proposal is different from the earlier one that has also been suggested for extraction of stones for the Bogibeel project (see *PA Updates* 57 & 56)

Source: Prabal Kr Das. 'Concern over move to open quarry near Kaziranga', *The Assam Tribune*, 07/01/06.

Contact: **Dr. Bibhab Talukdar**, Aaranyak, see above

## **Efforts on to eradicate mimosa from Kaziranga**

The Wildlife Trust of India with the support of the International Fund for Animal Welfare and in collaboration with the Assam Forest Department has launched a program for the eradication of the mimosa weed from the grasslands of the Kaziranga National Park.

It has been estimated that in 2002-03, the weed covered about 2.13 sq. kms of the park. All the four ranges of the park – Agaratuli, Kohora, Bagori and Burapahar were said to be infested in varying degrees.

As part of the eradication program about 130 hectares (ha) were cleared of mimosa in 2004 followed by 72 ha in the first phase of 2005.

The WTI has also recently released a report titled 'Silent Stranglers' that documents the threats posed to the park by this weed. (Also see *PA Updates* 45, 40, 34 & 30)

Source: 'Mimosa weed posing threat to Kaziranga', *The Assam Tribune*, 21/09/05.

## **Program for dealing with human-elephant conflict in Manas and Kaziranga**

Two new projects for dealing with the issue of human-elephant conflict in and around Manas and Kaziranga NPs respectively have been launched recently. The projects are being funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Services and will be implemented by field zoologists of Aaranyak under the guidance of senior technical authorities.

The project to be implemented in Manas National Park will stratify the entire park according to the habitat strata of elephant using Remote Sensing and GIS techniques. It would seek to understand seasonal variation in habitat utilization by elephants in the park through regular monitoring of known elephant herds. Besides this, it would also help develop elephant deterrent alternative cash crops in affected villages on an experimental basis.

The goals of the project to be carried out in Golaghat include surveying the current status of the elephant – their approximate numbers, movement, distribution and major threats in Golaghat and adjoining areas of Karbi Anglong districts. The project also aims to motivate affected villagers to change the existing crop pattern with some high yielding elephant repellent crops on an experimental basis, besides exploring diversified livelihood options. It is also proposed to establish Crop Protection Committees (*Sashya Suraksha Samitis*) to check crop raids, property damage by elephants and to monitor movement of elephants in those areas.



Source: 'US Consul General launches projects to fight elephant menace', *The Assam Tribune*, 10/11/05.

Contact: **Dr. Bibhab Talukdar**, Aaranyak..  
**Chief Wildlife Warden** – Assam,  
Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam.  
Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386

## GUJARAT

### New Egroup for Gujarat Birdwatchers

'Gujarat Birds', a new egroup has been started for issues related to birding in Gujarat. The web address for the group is [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Gujarat\\_Birds](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Gujarat_Birds)



Contact: **Hiren Soni**, 29 Yogiswami Society,  
Bhalek Road, Anand – 388001, Gujarat.  
Tel: 02692 - 251217 (R), 9426023901  
(M) E-mail: [hirenseni@yahoo.com](mailto:hirenseni@yahoo.com)

## HIMACHAL PRADESH

### Rs 1,800 cr project for Pong sanctuary

The Himachal Pradesh State Government has formulated a Rs 1,800 crore integrated project for the ecological rehabilitation of the Pong Lake Sanctuary and tapping its vast potential for nature tourism.

An area of 110 sq km has been earmarked as conservation zone in which facilities such as a bird hospital, a rescue centre and nesting sites for birds would be developed. In the rehabilitation zone spreading over 56 sq km, channelisation of nullahs and streams, soil

conservation work and afforestation would be carried out. An area of 50 sq km had been selected for tourism activities, which would be mostly carried out by the private sector. The activities would include bird watching, boating, camping and angling.

Source: 'Rs. 1,800 cr project for Pong sanctuary', *The Tribune*, 15/12/05.

Contact: **DFO (Wildlife)**, Pong Lake WLS  
Chamba Division, Chamba - 176 310,  
Himachal Pradesh. Tel:01899-22639.  
Email: [cfchamba@nde.vsnl.net.in](mailto:cfchamba@nde.vsnl.net.in)  
**Chief Wildlife Warden**, Himachal  
Pradesh, Dept. of Forest Farming &  
Conservation, Mist Chamber, 1st Floor,  
Khalini, Shimla – 171001. Tel: 0177-  
223038. Fax: Fax 0177-224192 / 223038

## KARNATAKA

### Jungle Lodges and Resorts plans expansion

Jungle lodges and Resorts (JLR), a Karnataka State Government undertaking has planned two new destinations at Anshi National Park and Dubare Forest Camps. This is following a decision not to increase rooms in the existing properties. JLR recently also launched its Bhadra Camp for tourists visiting the Bhadra Tiger Reserve.

Further new projects planned include those at Chincholi in Gulbarga District and Baindoor and Anejari in the Udupi District.

Source: 'Jungle Lodges and Resorts plans to introduce two new destinations', *The Hindu*, 28/10/05.

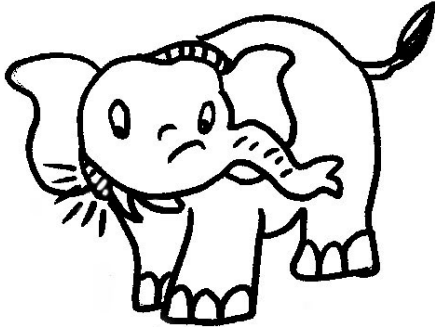
### Bannerghata NP elephants to be radio-collared

The Forest Department has planned to track the elephants of the Bannerghata National Park with the help of Geographical Information System (GIS) based radio collars. This is expected to help the FD take precautionary measures whenever an elephant approaches a 'conflict zone' like human habitations or farm lands.

Priority for radio-collaring is being given to the Bannerghata elephants as human-elephant conflict here has reached serious levels.

Karnataka would then become the 2<sup>nd</sup> state in the country after West Bengal to take up such a measure (see *PA Updates* 33 & 32).

The collaring of the elephants will be supervised by Dr. R Sukumar of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). Teams of the IISc and the Forest Department will first identify the elephant herds in and around Bannerghata. The dominant animal in the herds as also lone animals and strays will be first radio collared.



Source: 'Tracking the wild elephants', *The Hindu*, 13/12/05.

Contact: **Dr. R Sukumar**, IISc, Bangalore-560012, Karnataka.  
Email: rsuku@ces.iisc.ernet.in  
CF, Bannerghatta NP, Bannerghatta, Dist. Bangalore – 560083, Karnataka.  
Tel: 080-28428540(O), 28428572(R).  
Fax: 28428540

## KERALA

### Ganja mafia prospers around Silent Valley

Ganja cultivation by a powerful mafia is reportedly flourishing on the fringes of the Silent Valley National Park. In a single raid conducted in the first week of December 2005 nearly 37,000 ganja plants worth nearly Rs. 37 crore were destroyed by the Forest Department. It has been further estimated that Ganja and ganja plants worth nearly Rs. 141 crores has been destroyed in 43 raids conducted by the FD in the recent past (see *PA Update* 46).

The population of over 600 Kurumba tribals in the 10 settlements on the eastern fringes of the park have also been badly impacted. There are reports of their murder and rape and of their lands being taken forcibly by

the ganja mafia. They have been stripped of their cultivable lands leaving them with no source of livelihood. Nearly 90% of the tribals here are now said to be on the payroll of the mafia. Work on ganja fields fetches the tribals a lot of money but it has robbed them of their traditional strengths. Cases of depression, addiction to ganja and illicit liquor and suicide are reported to be on the rise here.

Activists say that these tribals do not know that ganja cultivation is an offence. They are lured to work in ganja plantations and also act as carriers of the contraband. According to the police, the hamlets which are situated in the most obscure areas of the dense forests here are used as storage places and hideouts by the mafia.

The number of non-tribals flocking to the area too is said to be on the rise. They are not land-seeking settlers, but come here for ganja farming.



Source: Ganja mafia prospers around Silent Valley', *The New Indian Express*, 28/10/05.

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

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

## MADHYA PRADESH

### Controversy over shepherd death in Gandhisagar WLS

Shepherds from Rajasthan are embroiled in a controversy with the Forest Department (FD) in Mandsaur over the death of one of their fellow shepherds, allegedly by a FD vehicle within the Gandhisagar WLS in Mandsaur district. The

incident took place is in August 2005.

A forester was being arrested by the police in connection with the death but the shepherds are demanding the arrest of 11 more persons. The FD, on the other hand, claims that the complaint against its staff is motivated and is a result of the action taken against the shepherds who were grazing their animals within the sanctuary.

Shepherds had filed a complaint with the Neemuch Police that one of their fellow shepherds died when he was knocked down by a white Maruti Gypsy assigned to the DFO in the Gandhisagar Sanctuary in August. During investigation, the FD told the police that they do not have a white gypsy in the area where the shepherd died. Moreover, the Collector and SP said that the DFO was with them when the incident took place.

However, recently the police suddenly swung into action and arrested Forester Ram Gopal Soni on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

The FD has in fact collected Rs 4 lakh as fines from the shepherds in the recent past. The shepherds have now said that if those responsible for the death are not brought to book, they would launch an agitation.

(Also see *PA Update* 58)

Source: 'Shepherds on warpath with sanctuary', *The Pioneer*, 15/12/05.

Contact: **DFO Mandsaur**, Incharge - Gandhi Sagar WLS, Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07422-241519. Fax: 241519

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

## MAHARASHTRA

### Leopard gecko found in Melghat TR

Members of the Nature Conservation Society, Amravati (NCSA) recently spotted a Leopard Gecko in the Melghat Tiger Reserve, making this the first record from the Satpura Range.

The NCSA team spotted the gecko while at Tarubanda for de-siltation work of the village tank. The specimen was photographed

in June 2005 and later confirmed as the Leopard Gecko by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

Source: 'Leopard gecko found in Melghat', *Indian Express*, 21/12/05

Contact: **Field Director**, Melghat Tiger Reserve, Amravati- 444 602 Maharashtra. Tel: 0721 – 2662792 / 2551766. 07223 – 220214 / 222643. Fax: 0721 – 2662792. Email: [ati\\_meltiger@sancharnet.in](mailto:ati_meltiger@sancharnet.in)

### Water tunnel proposed through Pench National Park

The Maharashtra Government has proposed the de-reservation of 4.56 hectares (ha) of land of the Pench National Park (PNP) for a tunnel to provide water through the Sagara Nallah for irrigation is a cluster of eight villages located around the park. The land is needed for the tunnel which is 2.88 kms. long and for an approach road of about 3.2 kms. It will also include 2.4 ha of land for some construction work related to the project. The land to be de-reserved lies in Compartment No. 528,529,531 of the park.

A two member committee appointed by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) comprising of Dr. Darshan Shankar, Member, National Board for Wildlife and Dr. Asha Rajvanshi of the Wildlife Institute of India, visited the site on November 26. They met with the Maharashtra PCCF (WL) Mr B Majumdar, PNP Field Director, Mr Jarnail Singh and also had a meeting with local people at Sillari to discuss the impacts of the proposed project. Local political leaders also met the committee and reportedly tried to convince them of the benefits the project will bring for the villages as well as for the tiger reserve.

Kishor Rithe of the Satpuda Foundation communicated to the committee their concerns regarding the impacts the project will have on Pench and the proposed Mansinghdeo Sanctuary. He also pointed out that this will set a wrong precedent and would result in more politicians and villagers demanding the use of the other nallahs and water from the Totladoh (Pench) reservoir for irrigation.

The committee is expected to submit its report to the MoEF, following which the proposal

will be put up to the standing committee of National Board for Wildlife for its permission. The proposal will also need the approval of the Supreme Court.

Source: Kishore Rithe, Press Release, 28/11/05  
Contact: **DCF, Pench National Park**, Near Govt.  
Press, Civil Line, Nagpur - 440001,  
Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-2524727(O),  
2267282(R) Fax 0712-2539226  
**Kishore Rithe**, Satpuda Foundation,  
201, Sapphire, Opp. Jantar-Mantar Flats,  
Bharat Nagar, Amravati Road, Nagpur,  
Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-2557320(O) /  
9422157123. Email:  
[satpuda\\_found@yahoo.com](mailto:satpuda_found@yahoo.com)

## ORISSA

### No kerosene for personnel in Gahirmatha

Forest personnel involved in on shore and off shore patrolling in the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary were left with no kerosene to cook their food in the month of November. Action was taken after VHF messages were received from the patrolling camps saying that they had no kerosene and would be forced to go without food for a day or two.

Senior officials said that adequate quantities of kerosene were being procured from the public distribution system to be sent to the camps. They also pointed out that these teams are stocked with enough quantity of dry food and therefore there was no possibility of their going hungry.

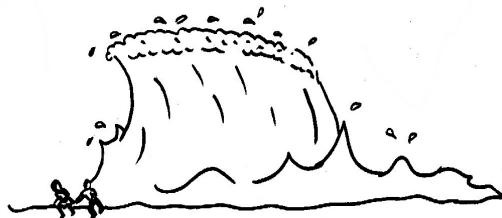
Source: 'Preparations on to provide cooking oil to forest personnel', *The Statesman*, 16/11/05.

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

### Giant waves lash Pentha coast along Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary

Mighty sea waves lashed the 2 km stretch of the Pentha sea coast along the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, causing massive erosion of the turtle-nesting beach on December 24 and 25, 2005. Waves with considerable velocity

brimmed over the beach during the high-tide and took nearly eight hours to recede. The waves caused severe panic among the turtle protection personnel here. They were officially asked to vacate the temporary patrolling camps on the beach. The entire 2 km stretch of sandy beach that extends upto Chinchudi was eroded. It is feared that this stretch will not be used for nesting by the turtles this season.



Source: 'Giant waves lash Pentha coast', *The Statesman*, 27/12/05.

### Patrol vessels attacked along Gahirmatha coast; one intruder killed

Suspected Bangladeshi fishermen in motorised fishing vessels reportedly attacked patrol vessels of the state Forest Department (FD) along the Gahirmatha coast on December 31, 2005. FD officers said that more than a dozen Bengali-speaking fishermen chased the patrolling vessels of the FD in a couple of trawls. The patrolling party was also attacked. The VHF communication network was out of order and as a consequence the patrolling party was not able to seek the help from DRDO.

In response, the FD sounded an alert on the intrusion of motorised fishing vessels from across the border and sought the redeployment of armed police to avert the recurrence of such an attack. A team of police officers accompanied by a section of Armed Police Reserve (APR) was rushed to the Barunei seacoast in Gahirmatha to beef up -shore patrolling. A decision was also been taken to conduct joint patrolling by the forest and police personnel. Each of the forest vessels is to be accompanied by at least one armed policeman.

In an incident a couple of days later, one fisherman, again of suspected Bangladeshi origin, was killed and another sustained critical bullet injuries following the exchange of fire between

the joint forest-police patrol team and the fishermen. 14 others were also arrested.

Officials said that a few deep sea fishing trawlers had trespassed into the waters of the marine sanctuary and were fishing there illegally. One trawler was seized by the joint patrol team while the others managed to escape. The exchange of fire, according to the police, took place about 12 nautical miles off the Gahirmatha coast and lasted for nearly two hours, starting at about 8.30 pm.

The patrolling squads included a magistrate, three senior forest officers and nearly 50 crew. None of these were injured but the two motorised vessels were ridden with bullet shots.

The injured fisherman was rushed to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack and was said to be in critical condition. The fishermen on board the seized trawler were arrested under Sections 147, 148, 332, 333, 307, 467, 379 and 149 of the Indian Penal Code, Section 27 of Arms Act and Section 27-29 of Wildlife Protection Act.

The arrested fishermen have claimed that they were from Kakdwip in West Bengal, but the authorities said they were being interrogated and cross-checked to establish their nationality.

In a similar incident a forest guard was killed in an attack by the intruding fishermen in November 2002 as well.

Source: 'Patrol vessels attacked', *The Statesman*, 03/01/06.

'Shootout on sea, one Bangladeshi killed', *The Statesman*, 04/01/06.

### Turtle Witness Camp

As part of a new initiative, Greenpeace India along with the support of local community groups is setting up a *Turtle Witness Camp* at Bandar in the proximity of the Devi River Mouth in Orissa, which is one of three most important mass nesting sites for the Olive Ridley Turtle.

The intention is to provide a base for various activities connected with the issues related to Olive Ridley Turtles. Various sections of interested people including students,

naturalists and researchers, coastal groups and youth particularly from Orissa have been invited to visit and make use of the Turtle Witness Camp.

Contact: **Ashish Fernandes**, Oceans Campaigner, Greenpeace India, 3360, 13<sup>th</sup> B Main, HAL 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage, Indira Nagar, Bangalore – 560 038. Tel: 91- 98190 11429. Email: ashish.fernandes@gmail.com

### Nearly 200 tribals arrested in Simlipal for Akhand Shikar

Over 200 people, mostly tribals, were arrested on charges of poaching in the Simlipal National Park and Tiger Reserve in the month of December. 24 country made guns and over 198 bows and 470 arrows were also recovered from them. The tribals had entered the forests of the park for the annual ritual *akhand shikar* and were reported to have killed two sambar and a barking deer. (Also see *PA Updates* 54, 49, 43, 41, 27, 26 & 17)

Source: 'Over 200 tribals arrested', *The Hindu*, 23/12/05.

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

## A

### SIKKIM

#### Eco-clubs to be set up in schools

The Sikkim State Forest, Environment Wildlife Management Department will soon setting up Eco-clubs across the state. The initiative is part of the National Green Crops Programme of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). The aim is to spread environmental awareness among children, calling for active involvement on their part. Each school will be provided with a financial aid of Rs 2,500



and  
be

per annum. All government and government-recognised schools with students above class VI are eligible for the program.

Source: 'Young environmentalists', *The Statesman*.

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

## TAMIL NADU

### Biosphere Reserve in Agastiyamalai Range

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has decided to notify the Agastiyamalai range in the Western Ghats as a biosphere reserve (BR). This would include the forest ranges of both Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu and Kollam and Trivandrum in Kerala. This will be the third BR in Tamil Nadu after the Nilgiris BR and the Gulf of Mannar BR.

There are a number of wildlife sanctuaries in the region including the Neyyar, Peppara, Chenthuruni Wildlife Sanctuaries and the Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve

The proposal to declare Agastiyamalai a BR was first made in 1992 when researchers found many endemic fauna here that were also very threatened.

Source: 'Environment Ministry to soon declare Agastiyamalai a Biosphere Reserve', *The Hindu*.

## UTTARANCHAL

### Jhilmil Jheel and Asan Barrage declared Conservation Reserves

The Jhilmil Jheel, a saucer shaped wetland situated on the right bank of River Ganges in Chidiyapur forest range, Haridwar district was declared a Swamp Deer Conservation Reserve on August 14 by the President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. The Asan Barrage was also similarly declared a Conservation Reserve (CR) for the protection of birds.

The move to grant protection to Jhilmil Jheel was initiated in February 2005, following the discovery of a new population of about 34 of the endangered Swamp Deer.

The southern side of the waterbody is inhabited by a village of people from Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and the Garhwal region settled here in the 1950s. A few families of Gujjars also live along the forest belt here. During a meeting of the villagers with the State Forest Minister, Mr. Nav Prabhat, they had reportedly expressed a desire to move out of the area and be resettled elsewhere.

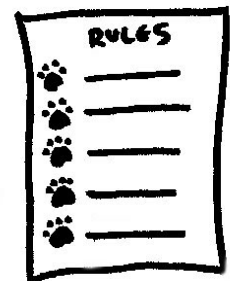
A detailed long-term project proposal has been prepared and sent to Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) for funding.

Source: Dr. SP Sinha. Email dated 28/11/05.

Contact: **Dr SP Sinha**, Wildlife Institute of India, Chandrabani, Dehra Dun -248001, Uttaranchal. Email: [sinhasp@yahoo.com](mailto:sinhasp@yahoo.com)

### Corbett Tiger Viewing Rules

The Corbett National Park authorities have put in place a set of five 'Corbett Tiger Viewing Rules' to improve the quality of tourism as also to ensure the safety of



visitors and tigers. As per the rules the minimum distance to be observed by a visitor while viewing a tiger would have to be 10 metres; not more than two elephants would be allowed to carry tourists into the tiger viewing areas at a time; a person would be able to view a tiger for not more than 10 minutes; vehicles will have to keep a distance of 50m from each other and tourists will not be allowed near a tigress with cubs.

Anyone found violating any of these rules would have to pay a fine of Rs. 5000.

Source: Jaskiran Chopra. 'Stay away from the big cats', *The Times of India*, 17/11/05.

Contact: **Field Director**, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar -244715, Nainital, Uttaranchal.

Tel: 05947 – 285489. Fax: 251376  
**CWLW**, Uttaranchal, 85, Rajpur Road,  
Dehradun, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-  
744225 / 679817. Fax: 675138/747669

## UTTAR PRADESH

### State proposes new elephant reserve

Uttar Pradesh Wildlife authorities have proposed the creation of an elephant reserve comprising of areas around Bijnore and Saharanpur in the western part of the state. The move was prompted by the discovery during the latest census operations that this area had at least 110 elephants.

A proposal seeking financial aid of Rs. 40 million has been forwarded to the Central Government. The money is to be used for habitat improvement including developing of water bodies and making more fodder available for the pachyderms.

Source: 'UP to carve out new elephant sanctuary', *The Pioneer*, 16/09/05.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow – 226001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-206584(O), 2237715 & 2223015(R). Fax 0522-222061/ 206188

## WEST BENGAL

### Proposal for Wildlife Crime Cell

The West Bengal State Government is reported to be mulling over the logistics of setting up a wildlife crime cell following a proposal from the Centre which wants such cells in each state.

The cell, a multi-departmental body, will be formed to tackle wildlife crimes through enhanced coordination among concerned authorities in the state. Officials from the State Forest Department, Intelligence, Police, Detective Agencies from the State and Centre and even Revenue Intelligence will collaborate to ensure proper functioning of this body.

Other law enforcing branches like Customs and the Border Security Force will also be roped in. This umbrella-organisation will render assistance to the implementing and

regulating bodies in different portions of the state to combat wildlife crimes by offering the required infrastructure and expertise.

The proposal for this cell was initially placed by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife in June 2005. It was finally discussed in the State Board for Wildlife meeting on December 29, 2005.

Source: 'Cell to check wildlife crime', *The Statesman*, 05/01/06.

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

### Two injured in firing in Mahananda WLS

Two women were seriously injured when a forest patrolling party fired at them in the Koklong forest under the Sukna Forest Range of the Mahananda WLS. The two injured were admitted to a private nursing home in Siliguri. Peeved at the incident, a group of agitated locals ransacked the Sukna Range Office, causing heavy damage to its property.

A rapid action team of the Sukna Range had noticed a group of villagers including women engaged in cutting trees. When they were challenged, the group tried to flee, following which the patrol party fired, injuring the two women.

Wildlife officials said that the two women injured were confirmed timber thieves. An FIR was also lodged with the Sukna Police Outpost in the matter of the ransacking of the forest office. The FD was also investigating the circumstances under which the rapid action team resorted to the firing.

Source: 'Two injured in forest firing', *The Statesman*, 19/11/05.

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

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### **The Sanctuary – ABN Amro Wildlife Awards**

The Sanctuary – ABN Amro Wildlife Awards were given in Mumbai in the first of December. The Lifetime Service Award was given to Dr. AJT Johnsingh of the Wildlife Institute of India. Wildlife Service Awards were given to Chander Singh Negi of the Uttaranchal Forest Department; the Gir Rescue Team that works in the Gir East, Gir West and Sasan Wildlife Divisions of the Gujarat FD; and K Manu of the Mysore Amateur Naturalists for bird conservation work in Kokkare Bellur, Karnataka.

The Green Teacher Award was given to Madhu Bhatnagar of the Sri Ram School, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi. The Young Naturalists Awards were given to Vishal Bansod who works with the Nature Conservation Society, Amravati and Bharat Vaghabhi Kamaliya for his work in the Una Taluka, Junagadh District, Gujarat.

Special Tiger Awards were given to Belinda Wright of the Wildlife Protection Society of India; Mr. BK Sharma, DIG in the Central Bureau of Investigation for his efforts to fight wildlife crime and to Kirat Singh of New Delhi who was considered too young to qualify even for the Young Naturalists' Award.

The newly constituted Wind Under the Wings Award was given to *The Indian Express*, for its support to journalist Jay Mazoomdar to investigate and report on the situation in many of the country's protected areas including the Sariska, Ranthambhor, Panna, Indravati and Corbett Tiger Reserves

Contact: **Bittu Sahgal**, Sanctuary Asia, 145/146, Pragati Inds. Estate, NM Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai – 400011, Maharashtra. Tel: 022 – 23016848/49. Email: [bittu@sanctuaryasia.com](mailto:bittu@sanctuaryasia.com)

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 is being amended to provide for constituting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), responsible for implementation of Project Tiger. The NTCA would be set up under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Environment & Forests and will have eight experts or professionals having qualifications and experience in wildlife conservation and welfare of people, including tribals. There will also be three Members of Parliament, two of whom will be elected by the House of the People and one by the Council of States. The Inspector General of Forests, in-charge of Project Tiger, will be ex-officio Member Secretary.

The Authority, would lay down normative standards and guidelines for tiger conservation in the tiger reserves, apart from national parks and sanctuaries. It would provide information on protection measures including future conservation plans, tiger estimation, disease surveillance, mortality survey, patrolling, and also report on untoward happenings. The Authority would also facilitate and support tiger reserve management in the states through eco-development and people's participation as per approved management plans and support similar initiatives in adjoining areas in a manner that is consistent with existing laws.

The Authority would be required to prepare an annual report, which would be presented in the Parliament along with the Audit Report.

State level Steering Committees will be set up in the Tiger States under the Chairmanship of the respective Chief Ministers. A provision has been made for the State Governments to prepare a Tiger Conservation Plan, which would include staff development, their deployment to ensure protection of tiger reserves and its development, while ensuring compatible forestry operations in adjoining areas. Further, safeguards have been provided for ensuring the agricultural, livelihood, developmental and other interests of the people living inside a forest or in and around a tiger reserve.

Source. Press Release issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, 19/12/05.



## Vatavaran film festival awards

Vatavaran – 2005, the Environment and Wildlife Film Festival was held in New Delhi in the month of November. The films that won the awards are as follows:

Best of Vatavaran 2005: ‘Indian Leopards - The Killing Fields’ by Praveen Singh.

The Delhi Chief Ministers Award for the Best Documentary: ‘A Second Hand Life’ by Nutan Manmohan.

Environment Category: ‘River Taming Mantras’ by Sanjay Barnela and Vasant Saberwal.

Best Wildlife Documentary: ‘The Last Flight’ by Nutan Manmohan and ‘The Policing Langur’ by Ajay & Vijay Bedi produced for Public Service Broadcasting Trust.

The Forest for Life Award: ‘Invocations to the Mountain Goddess’ by Christopher Rego.

The Star Award: ‘Vikas Bandook Ki Naal Se’ by Biju Toppo and Meghnath.

Best Animation Film: ‘Irony’ by R Sathya Narayanan for the Ramanujam Foundation.

Best Public Service Message: ‘Do Your Bit’ by Anand Thakur and produced by Ogilvy and Mather Advertising Limited for Eco-India.

Student Category: ‘Fistful of Steel’ by Leena Rani Narzary, Nidhi Bal Singh and Sabir Haque for A J Kidwai Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC), Jamia Millia Islamia.

Contact: **Alka Tomar**, Deputy Director – Environment, Centre for Media Studies, Research House, Saket Community Centre, New Delhi 110017. Tel: 011-24992597/ 26522244 / 26864020. Fax: 26968282.  
Email:vatavaran@cmsindia.org  
Website: www.cmsvatavaran.org

## 11 more biosphere reserves to be set up

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is in the process of adding 11 more biosphere reserves to the existing 14 all over the country. This was announced by Mr Suresh Chandra, Special Secretary to the MOEF at a recent meeting held in Gangtok to

review biosphere reserves in the North-East region.

These 11 reserves are to be declared in each of the bio-geographic zones in the country as demarcated by the Wildlife Institute of India.

Further details are, however, not known.

Source: ‘11 more biosphere reserves to be set up’, *The Financial Express*, 20/11/05.

## SOUTH ASIA

### BANGLADESH

#### Tree fellers turn protectors in Lawachara National Park

A 20 member community patrol team composed of those formerly involved in illegal felling from the Lawachara National Park (LNP) is reported to have drastically brought down tree felling in the forests here. The team was formed as part of a new initiative, the Nishorgo Support Project (NSP), of the Bangladesh Ministry of Environment and Forests with financial support from USAID.

The LNP is located about 160-kilometres northeast of the capital city of Dhaka and covers an area of about 15 sq. kms of the Kamalganj and Srimangol Upazilas in Moulvibazar district.

Inadequate manpower, lack of logistical support and sometimes unscrupulous dealings were said to be the main reasons why the Forest Department was unable to prevent the cutting of the forests here. At least five organised gangs were engaged in tree felling every day. As many as 250 people from the adjacent villages used to enter the forest to collect fuel wood, each gathering around 25 kilograms. Another 25 people took away bamboo from the forest each day, according to a survey conducted during May-July, 2004.

As part of the project, villagers surrounding the park were motivated to participate in forest patrolling. In return, project officials promised to help withdraw cases lodged by the Forest Department against the fellers and extend support to other actions to improve local

people's livelihoods. Each member of the patrolling team now receives Tk 50 per day from the NSP. This is to be raised to Tk 75 shortly. The cash payments are to be eventually replaced by other livelihood improvement opportunities.

Alternative income-generating activities being considered include cow rearing, fish culture, home gardening and imparting of other skills to reduce dependence on the forest. 18 villagers have already been trained for cow rearing. A member of the patrol team, has also been trained to perform in *Gano Natoks*, (people's dramas), to create awareness about the need for the conservation of forests. The project has also helped form a *samity* (association) where the members deposit Tk 10 every day. An account in the name of the *samity* has also been opened in a local bank and the total amount deposited till now is Tk 4,500. The patrolling team has been given a mobile phone, a torch light and a whistle to help in the patrolling that is done in shifts round the clock. NSP uniforms are also to be provided to the team members.

The patrols have drastically reduced tree felling. According to the Lawachara Beat Office, Srimangol, the instances of tree felling have fallen from 322 earlier to 107 since the inception of the project. At least 13 offenders have also been caught and handed over to the FD.

NSP has also formed a 50-member Co-Management Council to protect and regenerate Lawachara. The Council consists of 12 representatives from local government institutions, nine representatives from the user groups, seven from the local elite, five from the resource owning group, three from the ethnic communities, two from the law enforcement authorities, two from the Forest Department, five from the non-governmental organisations (NGOs/CBOs) and five representatives from other government departments.

Source: Zam Khairuzzaman. 'Tree fellers turn forest protectors',  
<http://www.thedailystar.net/2005/11/29/d511291504112.htm>

Contact: **Mehrin Ahmed Mahbub**, NSP, IRG/  
USAID, House 68, Road 1, Block I,

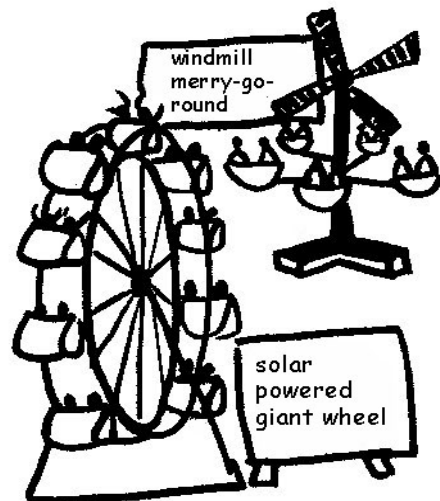
Banani, Dhaka 1213, Bangladesh. Tel:  
9873229 / 9871553. E-mail:  
mehrin@irgbd.com  
Website: [www.nishorgo.org](http://www.nishorgo.org)

### Alternative energy fair to protect forests of Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary

A three-day alternative energy fair aimed at reducing dependence on fuel wood from the forests of the Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary (CWS) was recently organized at Banshkhali in Chittagong. The sanctuary is spread over 8000 acres of grassland and forests and wild elephants have also been reported from here.

People from surrounding villages are dependant on the forests here for their fuelwood needs and this in turn is said to be adversely affecting the sanctuary. The fair was organized by the Nishorgo Support Project (NSP) that is being funded by USAID.

The fair was inaugurated by State Minister of Environment and Forests, Alhaj Jafrul Islam Chowdhury. Banshkhali Union Nirbahi Officer Nur Mohammad Majumdar and Nishorgo Project's Chief of Party, Philip J De Cosse also addressed the gathering on the occasion.



Source: 'Move to create awareness for protecting trees',  
<http://www.thedailystar.net/2005/12/17/d51217070773.htm>

Contact: **Mehrin Ahmed Mahbub**, NSP.

## BHUTAN

### **Black necked cranes arrive in Bomdeling**

The first of the Black Necked Cranes were reported to have arrived at their winter roosting grounds in Bhutan's Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary from Tibet in the first week of November. Over the last few years the number of cranes roosting in the Bomdeling Valley has remained stable at 148-150 birds.

This year the sanctuary officials faced a bigger challenge than in the past, in rehabilitating the roosting areas that had been badly damaged by monsoon flooding of the Kholongchu. Sanctuary officials engaged about 100 nature club students from Bomdeling Higher Secondary School, Trashigang Lower Secondary School and Bomdeling community Primary School to clear up the roosting area for the arriving cranes.

According to the sanctuary officials, the yearly flash floods and the burgeoning population in the town of Trashiyangtse were the main reasons responsible for significantly shrinking the roosting areas. The town area in particular is an important feeding ground of the birds.

The bird is known to breed in Northern Tibet in the summer and make the journey to Bhutan and Arunchal Pradesh and Ladakh in India between October to January. They start leaving for their breeding grounds again by March. The Phobjikha valley in Wangduephodrang is another roosting area for the cranes in Bhutan.

Source: 'Cranes arrive in Bomdeling', <http://www.kuenselonline.com/article.php?sid=6253>, 18/11/05.

## PAKISTAN

### **Four Markhor hunting permits issued at US\$ 52,000 each**

The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) Wildlife Department has auctioned four permits for hunting markhor at \$52,500 per animal under its Trophy Hunting Programme (THP).

All the four permits were bought by foreign hunters who will start hunting in March 2006. Last year the permits had been sold at US\$ 33,000 each.

The THP here has been launched with the permission of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES). As part of the program, communities are involved in the conservation of wildlife and the revenue generated from the sale of the hunting permits are mostly spent on development of the respective communities. The involvement of the communities in the trophy hunting has been increasing and this is reported to have had a very positive impact on the lives of people here.

In addition to the markhor, permits are also issued for hunting ibex. The Wildlife Department is considering a reduction in the price for ibex hunting permits to attract hunters. More people are said to be interested in hunting Markhor in the NWFP. Trophy hunting is permitted only in the community game reserves in Chitral and Kohistan districts. The authorities have cautioned that hunting of Markhor and ibex is an extremely challenging sport, which required fitness and patience and the hunters should be prepared for rugged and difficult slopes, extremely cold weather and irregular flights to Chitral

Source: Ghafar Ali. 'One markhor is worth US\$ 52,000, *Daily Times*, 17/11/05.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## BURMA

### **Dolphin survey in proposed protected area on River Irrawady**

A two week survey of the Irrawady Dolphins was conducted in the upper reaches of the Irrawady River between Mandalay and Singu in the month of November. This stretch of about 70 kms is a proposed protected area. The survey was conducted by a ten member team comprising specialists from the Burmese Fisheries Department and scientists of the Wildlife

Conservation Society, USA.

This was the fourth consecutive yearly survey and aimed to confirm the dolphin population in the proposed protected area as also to educate local people about its importance and need for conservation. The team also had the task of finalizing the demarcation of the protected area.

Source: Ba Saing. 'Survey of Ayeyarwaddy dolphins under way', *Myanmar Times*, 21/11/05.

### **UN-sponsored report urges stronger protection for endangered sea mammals**

A United Nations-sponsored report has urged for extra protection for the world's small cetaceans – dolphins, porpoises and related species – more than two-thirds of which are at risk from entanglement in fishing nets and are also vulnerable to pollution, habitat degradation and military sonar.

The report, produced by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), was launched at the eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention that was held in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2005.

The report has argued that eight small cetacean species, including the Ganges River Dolphin, the Atlantic Spotted Dolphin and Northern Right Whale Dolphin should be given new protection under the CMS agreement, and that conservation of seven other species, including the White-Beaked Dolphin of North American waters, should also be strengthened.

Source: UN-sponsored report urges stronger protection for endangered sea mammals, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=16660&Cr=UNEP&Cr1,> 23/11/05.

### **Mountain Invasions Research Network**

The Mountain Invasions Research Network (MIREN) was founded recently at a workshop held in Austria in July 2005. The network would contribute to the implementation of the Gochamore Research Strategy in Mountain Biospheres and other protected areas.

It will address the problem of plant invasions in mountain regions using mountains as model study systems for research into the mechanisms of plant invasions, particularly under the conditions of global climate change.

Presently MIREN is hosted by the Institute of Geobotany at the ETH Zurich and includes members from six different mountain regions – Australia, Chile, Canary Islands (Spain), Hawaii (USA), the Pacific Northwest of the USA and Switzerland.

Contact: Christoph Kuffer. Email: [miren@env.ethz.ch](mailto:miren@env.ethz.ch)  
Web: [www.miren.ethz.ch](http://www.miren.ethz.ch)

## **UPCOMING**

### **International workshop for conservation of snow leopard**

An international workshop to work out strategies for the conservation of the Snow leopard is being organized in February 2006 in Jammu. It will be organized jointly by the Jammu and Kashmir Government, the WildLife Institute of India, the National Conservation Foundation and International Snow Leopard Trust..

Source: 'International Workshop for conservation of snow leopard to be held in Jammu, [http://webjk.nic.in/newsline/news\\_item.asp?NewsID=12620](http://webjk.nic.in/newsline/news_item.asp?NewsID=12620)

### **3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas will be held in Rapperswil, Switzerland in September 2006. Details can be downloaded from the following address: <http://www.wsl.ch/mmv-3/>

Contact: **Yves Hausser**, Lecturer, University of Applied Science of Western Switzerland, Dpt. of Nature Management, CH - 1254 Jussy – Geneva, Switzerland.

Email: [yves.hausser@etat.ge.ch](mailto:yves.hausser@etat.ge.ch)

## WHAT' AVAILABLE

- **Ladhar, SS (2005).** *Ropar Wetland*, Punjab State Council for Science and Technology, Chandigarh

This is a comprehensive document about the Ropar Wetland, a Ramsar site located in the Ropar district of Punjab.

The report is well illustrated with maps and photographs, has useful statistics and information about the importance of the wetland, the threats faced and the conservation initiatives that are being taken.

Contact: **Dr. Satnam Singh Ladhar**, Principal Scientific Officer, PSCST, Sacred Heart School, Sector 26, Chandigarh – 160019. Tel: 0172 – 2792325 / 5001

- **Braich, OS & Ladhar SS (2005).** *Fish Biodiversity in Wetlands of Punjab – A Field Guide*, Punjab State Council for Science and Technology, Chandigarh

This documents lists the 90 fish species found in the three Ramsar sites in Punjab – Harike, Ropar and Kanjli.

The guide includes illustrations of the fishes and their popular names along with a detailed description and information about habitat, habits and distribution in the state.

Contact: **Dr. Satnam Singh Ladhar**, Principal Scientific Officer, PSCST, see above

- **Field Guide on Indian Dragonflies**

A field guide on Indian Dragonflies with coloured photographs and a simple key is now available on the web in a PDF format. It has been authored by Dr. KA Subramanian and can be accessed at

[http://www.ias.ac.in/initiat/sci\\_ed/lifescape/odonates.html](http://www.ias.ac.in/initiat/sci_ed/lifescape/odonates.html)

Contact: **Dr. KA Subramanian.**

Email: [subbu@ces.iisc.ernet.in](mailto:subbu@ces.iisc.ernet.in)

## OPPURTUNITIES

### Volunteers needed for wildlife work in Maharashtra

The Kaati trust that is working on wildlife issues in the Mumbai-Pune-Nashik region of Maharashtra is looking for students who are interested in volunteering for field based work.

Students with a Masters Degree, or even those undergoing graduate level studies can apply. An interest in wildlife biology and / or wildlife medicine is essential.

Contact: **Vidya Athreya / Dr. Anirudh Belsare**, Kaati Trust, NCRA, Pune University Campus, Ganeshkhind. Pune - 411007, Maharashtra. Tel: 9890441190 / 02132-245770. Email: [phatrosie@vsnl.net](mailto:phatrosie@vsnl.net); [phatrosie@gmail.com](mailto:phatrosie@gmail.com)

### The Friends of the Doon Society seeks a Wildlife & Conservation Officer

The Friends of the Doon Society, a Dehradun based environmental NGO is looking for a Wildlife & Environmental Conservation Officer.

The person should be in his/her thirties and preferably a qualified biologist. The job will involve extensive fieldwork, including dealing with the local population, and the relevant authorities and agencies in resolving wildlife - human conflicts.

The person should be thoroughly familiar in application of IT in Project & Office Management, and Financial control. Fluency in speaking & writing in Hindi and an excellent command over English is essential.

Contact: **The Secretary**, The Friends of the Doon Society, C/o EBD Business Centre, 49, Rajpur road, Dehra Dun, 248 001. Uttaranchal. Email: [samghosh10@rediffmail.com](mailto:samghosh10@rediffmail.com)

## IN THE SUPREME COURT

### **I.A. NO.1220 (interim report of CEC in I.A. NO. 548) and I.A. NO. 994** **(Regarding Clarification of 14.2.2000 order of the Supreme Court)**

The matter is in relation to a Supreme Court order dated 14.2.2000 that is as follows:

*'Issue notice to all the respondents. In the meantime, we restrain respondent No. 2 to 32 from ordering the removal of dead, diseased, dying or wind fallen trees, drift wood and grasses, etc from any National Park or Game Sanctuary or forest.'*

On 28.2.2000 the Supreme Court passed another order clarifying further on the 14.2.2000 order which said

*'In the order dated 14.02.2000 the word for forest in the 2<sup>nd</sup> line from bottom at page 4, are ordered to be deleted. The sentence would read thus as: '...In the meantime, we restrain respondent No. 2 to 32 from ordering the removal of dead, diseased, dying or wind fallen trees, drift wood and grasses, etc from any National Park or Game Sanctuary....'*

There were subsequent orders by the court and the Central Empowered Committee, which were towards restriction of rights of forest dependant communities.

Following is the SC order in the matter dated November 25, 2005:

"None of the States has filed any objection to the recommendations of the CEC made in the

Paras 14 and 15 in relation to clarification about allowing conservation and protection related activities for better management of the protected areas. The recommendations therein are, accordingly, accepted and the order dated 14<sup>th</sup> February 2000 is clarified accordingly. Accepting the said recommendations, we direct as under:

(A) Various activities such as removal of weeds, clearing and burning of vegetation for fire lines, maintenance of fair weather roads, habitat improvement, digging, temporary

water holes, construction of anti-poaching camps, chowkies, check posts, entry barriers, water towers, small civil works, research and monitoring activities, etc. are undertaken for protection and conservation of the protected areas and therefore permissible under the provisions of Section 29 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. These activities are necessary for day-to-day management of the protected areas besides it does not involve any type of commercial exploitation.

The activities above-mentioned are permissible under the various provisions of other environmental laws as well.

(B) The order dated 14<sup>th</sup> February 2000 will not be applicable to the following activities provided that:

- i) are undertaken as per the Management Plan approved by the competent authority
- ii) are consistent with the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- iii) are undertaken consistent with the National Wildlife Action Plan
- iv) are in conformity with the guidelines issued for the management of the protected areas from time to time
- v) the construction and related activities are designed to merge with the natural surroundings and as far as possible use forest friendly material.

#### **a) Habitat improvement activities:**

Weed eradication, maintenance and development of meadows/grassland required for wild herbivores which are prey base for the carnivores, digging and maintenance of small water holes and small anicuts, earthen tanks, impoundment of rain water, relocation of villages outside the protected areas and habitat improvement of areas so vacated.

#### **b) Fire protection measures**

Clearance and maintenance of fire lines as prescribed in the Management Plan by undertaking controlled cool or early burning and construction of watch towers.

**c) Management of wet grassland habitats**

Early or cool controlled winter burning of grasslands habitats such as in Kaziranga and Manas National Park in Assam, to facilitate growth of fresh grass.

**d) Communication and protection measures**

Construction of wireless towers, improvement and maintenance of fair weather non-tarred forest roads not exceeding three meters in width, small bridges, culverts, fences etc.

**e) Anti poaching initiatives**

Construction, maintenance and improvement of small anti-poaching camps/chowkies, patrolling camps, check posts, barriers, boundary walls, constructions of small staff quarters for the front line staff, etc.

'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](mailto:forestcase@yahoo.com) All issues of the Forest Case Update are uploaded on <http://www.geocities.com/forestcase/forestcaseupdate.html>

## READERS WRITE

### Helping Butterfly's network...

Thanks for including information about butterfly migration in the recent *PA Update* ('Butterfly migration in South India' and 'Newsletter on Butterflies', *PA Update*, Vol XI, No. 6, Dec. 2005). Since the *PA Update* reaches a wide audience, many people get back to me

The *PA Update* has been very helpful, especially for my studies on migration. Now many people contact me during migration and this information can be used in predicting the tentative migratory path, as I myself cannot be at all the places during this migration.

Also there were a few people who came for the Butterfly Meet held at Aralam. They learnt of the meet through the *PA Update* (*PA Update*, Vol XI, No. 4, Aug. 2005).

Dr. Sanjeeva Raj from Chennai contacted me when he learnt of my work on butterflies through the *Update*. This resulted in me giving talks at the Madras Christian College and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Chennai.

Thanks for all your support and for bringing out these *PA Updates*.

Contact: **Kishen Das**. #951, 6th cross, I Main, Srirampura II stage, Mysore-570023 Karnataka. Tel: 09880275941. Email: [kishen.das@gxs.com](mailto:kishen.das@gxs.com)

### Great Indian Bustard under threat in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra

The Maharashtra FD organized a Great Indian Bustard census on July 17, 2005. During the census 6 GIBs were seen in the vicinity of the Village Marda-Vanoja within the Warora Forest Range in Chandrapur District. We then went back to the area in the first week of November and found that it is an ideal habitat for the GIB. We also spoke to the villagers of Marda who know the bird as 'Hoom'.

According to the villagers, open cast mining is being done in the area by Western Coalfields Limited (WCL). Nine villages - Marda, Ekona, Vanoja, Charur, Nagara, Naidev, Khanji, Mohabada and Varora are being affected by this. The entire area is also good GIB habitat. We also saw a letter related to land acquisition from the WCL to a villager from Marda. A public hearing under this process was also held here on October 27.

The mining here will seriously disturb the entire GIB habitat. We think that the mining activity here should be stopped and a process be

initiated for the declaration of this area as a Community Reserve under the Wildlife Protection Act – 2000.

Contact: **Dilip Virkhade**, Secretary, Vidarbha  
*Paryatan Va Paryavaran Vikas Sanstha*,  
Hariram Nagar, Ward 14, Pulgaon,  
Wardha - 442302 Maharashtra. Tel:  
07158 – 283587. Fax: 282600. Email:  
[dnvirkhade\\_wda@sancharnet.in](mailto:dnvirkhade_wda@sancharnet.in)

The Punjab State Council for Science & Technology (PSCST) is in receipt of the October, 2005 issue of the Protected Area Update which also covers the Shramdan activity at Kanjli Wetland. The information included regarding avian influenza in this issue was also very useful

Contact: **Dr. Satnam Singh Ladhar**, Principal  
Scientific Officer, PSCST, see above

### **Useful information on avian influenza...**

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From  
**Kalpavriksh**  
Apt. 5, Sri Dutta Krupa  
908 Deccan Gymkhana  
Pune 411004