

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

The Central Gondwana Gap

Huge deposits of mineral wealth lie below the surface of the land here and above one will find some of the finest forests in the country. These forests are rich in a wide diversity of animal, plant and insect life and also home to traditional adivasi communities who have lived here for millennia. These are communities whose lives, societies and cultures have evolved along with this natural wealth and where survival is inextricably linked to, even dependent on it. These are perhaps the last of the strongholds of a way of life and a way of being that is fast being lost.

And yet, if this, the Central Gondwana region, comprising Chattisgarh and adjoining parts of Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh is in the news, it is generally for the wrong reasons – for being the stronghold of the naxalites, for incessant conflict and for what the Prime Minister of India has called India's 'biggest internal security threat'. There is little else that we ever get to hear from the region and there is almost nothing about the status of wildlife or the challenges of conservation.

Take the specific case of Chattisgarh. The state has 10 wildlife sanctuaries and three national parks and yet, if one was to look at the *Protected Area Update* for the last decade and a half one would find almost nothing from this state. It's almost as if there are no PAs here and no wildlife either. Mainstream media clearly has no connections with large parts of this region and not much is likely to change in the foreseeable future as the *PA Update* is itself based substantially on what the mainstream media reports.

There is a huge and obvious gap that needs to be filled. It is with this in mind that we are launching a new initiative in collaboration with *CGnet Swara*, the path breaking initiative of citizen journalists that report with mobile phones from these forgotten areas. Visit them at www.cgnetswara.org to understand what they do, how they operate and how effective they have indeed been. Starting with this issue (see 'The Central Gondwana Page' pg 21) we'll be tapping

into their existing archive and bring to the readership of this newsletter, short news reports that are related to wildlife and forests.

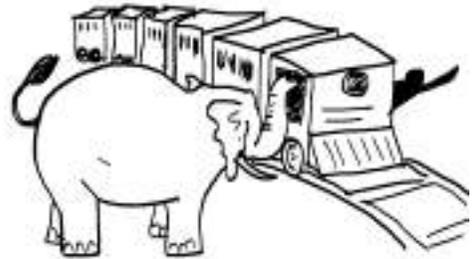
Initially, the reports are likely to be more about forest related issues but over time we hope we'll be able to bring in issues about wildlife and those that are more specific to the protected areas in the region. For this we will also be working to help *CGnet Swara* to extend their existing reporting network and at the same time in building capacity of the existing network to look at wildlife and conservation issues.

It promises to be a hugely exciting possibility and while we may not be able to change the overall picture, we will hopefully at least make a dent as we move ahead.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ASSAM

Elephant-train collisions on decline in Assam; zero mortality in Deepor Beel area in one year period



Recent efforts to reduce collisions between elephants and trains appear to have made gains in Assam. As part of the 'Mitigation of Elephant Mortalities due to Train Hits in Assam,' project of the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), new measures are being studied to fine tune the approach as train traffic swells in the Brahmaputra Valley. Considering the growing threats WTI, supported by the UK based organization, Elephant Family, has been collaborating with Northeast Frontier Railway and some other agencies in joint patrolling in crucial sections, installing

signage, generating awareness and training for train drivers.

Last year, the WTI installed 34 signages so that visibility is high and loco pilots can identify elephant movement in the area from a distance to reduce speed and stay alert. It has also identified spots with low visibility and steep embankments where interventions are needed.

Regular night patrolling along tracks, and timely action taken by the team within a proper information network seems to have helped as at least 84 possible train hits have been averted. Significantly, zero mortality was achieved in the Deepor Beel area for the one year period from June 2011-July 2012.

A total of 71 elephants have been killed in train accidents in different parts of Assam between 1987 and 2012. The deaths usually occur on particular stretches with a total length of 70-80 km. In these areas, elephant movements across rail tracks take place due to seasonal migration, and search for food or shelter. These facts were overlooked when railway tracks were laid close to or through elephant habitats. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol. XVII, No. 3; Vol. XVI, No. 4; Vol. XIV, No. 3 and Vol. XIII, No. 3)

Source: 'Train-elephant collisions on decline', *The Assam Tribune*, 27/11/12.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Assam State Zoo Division, I/c Deepor Beel WLS R.G. Baruah Road, Guwahati - 781 024, Assam0361-261363(O), 263331(R)

JHARKHAND

Funds crunch at Palamau Tiger Reserve

There is serious funds crunch at the Palamau Tiger Reserve. Around Rs 2.50 crore has been earmarked for the reserve this fiscal — Rs 1 crore from the Centre from which salaries for casual staff, tiger protection force, maintenance activities of reserve areas etc. are to be undertaken. The remaining is to be borne by the state and Centre on a 50:50 basis. According to officials, however, none of this money has been received thus far this year.

Till September, the reserve's Betla range alone had procured items like firecrackers and kerosene worth over Rs 60,000 on credit to protect villagers from rampaging elephants. Given the fact

that the reserve covers eight ranges, the debt estimate was to the tune of Rs 5 lakh on this front alone. Petrol bills amounting to over Rs 50,000 were also pending.

The reserve has around 100 staff — including casual workers and half a dozen ex-army men who make up the special tiger protection force. Each casual worker is given Rs 125 per day, while the former army men get Rs 10,000 per month. They too have not been paid for months and there is an urgent need for an amount of Rs. 5-6 lakh is needed to meet this and other related liabilities. This is in addition to funds needed for other activities like grassland development, creation of trenches and road repair and construction.

Local field level staff has also expressed concern regarding resources for fuel for a new fleet of patrolling vehicles received recently by the reserve. A fleet of 20 motorcycles and two SUVs was delivered to the reserve recently as a gift from Mumbai-based NGO Wildlife Conservation Trust. Senior officials have said that these were a welcome addition to the present fleet of six SUVs and three open mini-trucks in their current possession.

The new fleet is expected to increase mobility in the reserve, which in recent times has been in the news for illegal timber smuggling and poaching attempts. Each motorcycle would need at least a litre of petrol daily for patrolling. At Rs 68 per litre, the reserve authorities would need to spend Rs 1,360 per day on the bikes and another Rs 2,000 per day would be needed for the SUVs. In the present situation is not sure where this money will come from.

Joint Secretary in the Forest Department, Ravindra Prasad, when contacted, said that Rs 83 lakh had been recently sanctioned for the tiger reserve and further allotment had to be made by the principal chief conservator of forests.

Source: ASRP Mukesh, 'Wheels for tiger lair, no funds for fuel', *The Telegraph*, 26/11/12.

Contact: **Field Director**, Palamau Tiger Reserve, P.O. Daltonganj, Dist.

Palamau - 822 101, Jharkhand. Tel: 06562-22650(O), 22684(R). Fax: 06562-22427, 22650

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

KARNATAKA

Railway line proposed through the Bandipur Tiger Reserve

There is a proposal for a railway line that would run through the heart of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. The line is to connect Nanjangud in Karnataka with Nilambur in Kerala at a cost of Rs 3384 crores. Nearly 22 km of the line will pass through the tiger reserve.

Further details are presently not available.

Source: Saswati Mukherjee. 'Proposal to discuss new railway line slashing Bandipur Tiger Reserve' *The Times of India*, 02/01/13

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

Suspected outbreak of KFD in Bandipur TR

There is reported to be an outbreak of the Kyasanoor Forest Disease (KFD), commonly known as monkey fever, in the Bandipur Tiger Reserve (TR). The Karnataka Forest Department (FD) has confirmed the death of eight Bonnet Macaques and two Common Langurs in the forests here due to the suspected outbreak. The animals were found dead along National Highway 212 running through the reserve. Symptoms of the disease had also been found in some other animals.

Five guards in an anti-poaching camp were also said to have been affected and the condition of two of them was stated to be serious. A veterinary surgeon with the FD said that the virus was unlikely to affect human beings in the early stages. However, it could weaken humans and thus they may need hospitalization.

The viral disease was reported for the first time from the forests of Kyasanoor in Shimoga, Karnataka in 1957 and hence the name. High fever, frontal headaches and hemorrhagic symptoms are

the main symptoms of the disease. Morbidity is put at two to ten percent and between 100 and 500 people are said to be getting affected annually. The virus spreads mainly through air or directly through ticks. It is known to have a wide range of natural hosts like monkeys, rats, mice and reptiles. Humans contract monkey fever from bites of infected ticks.

Source: VR Jayaraj, 'Kerala alerted on Bandipur monkey fever scare', *The Pioneer*, 01/12/12.

KERALA

Study of road kills and their ecological impacts in Kerala



A study has been initiated in Kerala to look into the incidents of animals being run over on forest routes and the impacts of these accidents on wildlife in the state. The study will focus on the road

between forest check-posts at Vazhachal and Malakapara as well as the stretch between the check-posts of Chinnar and Meladi.

The study area is part of the Chalakudi-Pollachi road passing the Anaimalai Tiger Reserve (TR). The 50-km-long stretch passes through moist deciduous and evergreen forests, a majority of which fall under the buffer zone of the Parambikulam TR. There is frequent vehicular traffic during day time and night traffic is regulated to some extent.

The road stretch between Chinnar and Meladi, which connects Udumalpet of Tamil Nadu and Munnar of Kerala, is used by a large number of vehicles. The 16-km-long road passes mostly through the dry deciduous patches of Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

The ecological impacts of fragmentation caused by roads, especially avoidance of the habitats by animals in these stretches, would also be looked into. The study will record road kills along the selected

portions of highways and the probable causative factors such as changes in the road side vegetation, population and biology of the species, vehicular traffic and speed, and rainfall. Data will be collected throughout the year, except during the monsoon season.

Dr PS Easa of the Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi, will be co-ordinating the study

Source: K.S. Sudhi, 'Wildlife experts focus on roadkill on forest routes', *The Hindu*, 19/11/12.

16 families to reoccupy land in Wayanad WLS

Sixteen families relocated from the Kottamkara hamlet inside the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary have said that they plan to reoccupy their land in protest against the alleged negligence of the state government in paying them compensation. The families, 11 of them tribal, were protesting under the aegis of the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary Rehabilitation Action Council.

Forty families have been relocated under a voluntary relocation project, but only 24 have received compensation of Rs. 10 lakh each. A survey conducted by the Kerala Forest Research Institute a few years ago had, in fact, identified 96 eligible families in the hamlet but many were excluded in the final list prepared by the Forest Department.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, No. 2 & Vol. XVII, No. 1)

Source: '16 families to reoccupy sanctuary land in Wayanad', *The Hindu*, 04/01/13.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Wayanad Wildlife Division, P.O. Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad-673 592, Kerala. Tel: 0493-2620454

MADHYA PRADESH

Four additional wildlife rescue teams for MP

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has created four new wildlife rescue teams for Indore, Dhar, Jhabua and Alirajpur. Each team is made up of eight to ten forest personnel including the forest ranger and forest guards and will be equipped with basic rescue equipment.

Till now there were eight wildlife rescue teams in entire state. Now there will be a rescue team at every division level, which, it is hoped will reduce the response time significantly. Last year nearly 200 rescue operations were carried out in Indore range alone and the animals rescued included bear, deer, hyena, nilgai, monkeys, black bucks and birds.



Source: Bagish K Jha. 'Madhya Pradesh increases wild life rescue teams to bring down man-animal conflict', *The Times of India*, 04/12/12.

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

MAHARASHTRA

FD opposes buffer zone around the Sanjay Gandhi National Park

Strongly opposing views have emerged between the Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) and the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) in the matter of a buffer zone for the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). While the CEC has recommended the creation of a 500 meter buffer zone around the park, the FD has argued that none be created. In reports sent to senior authorities in Nagpur in August 2012, the range forest officer (Mumbai) and the assistant conservator of forests (Thane) have stated that the eco-sensitive zone should be "0.00 km".

Justifying their stand against a buffer zone around the sanctuary, the forest authorities explained that the area bordering the national park had been developed and that

the residents along the hilly tract around Mumbai and Thane are opposed to any security cover that prevents future development. While one section of the FD is reportedly of the opinion that they have been "practical" in recommending a zero-width buffer zone in the Mumbai-Thane belt around SGNP, another group is opposed to such a blanket clearance for development outside the sanctuary.

Source: Nitin Yeshwantrao. 'Forest department, panel lock horns over eco-zone', *The Times of India*, 21/11/12.

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

Koka sanctuary proposed in Bhandara

The Bhandara Forest Division has prepared a proposal for the creation of a 92 sq km Koka Wildlife Sanctuary, just 20 km from the town of Bhandara. If approved this will be the sixth wildlife sanctuary that has been notified in the region in the last two years (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 4).

The proposed sanctuary includes 28 compartments with an area of 89.84 sq km leased out to the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) and one protected forest compartment of 2.50 sq km of Bhandara forest division making up a total area of 92.35 sq km.

The sanctuary idea was set rolling in August 2012 when Principal Secretary (Forests), Mr Praveen Pardeshi, asked officials to prepare a sanctuary proposal as the area was contiguous to newly declared 151.33 sq km New Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary. The initial suggestion was for a sanctuary of 110 sq km, but as it included three villages - Chandrapur, Sonegaon and Dudhara - it was revised to the current proposal.

The proposed sanctuary is only about 20 km from Nagzira and would help secure wildlife corridors in the region. It is also hoped that the new sanctuary will also help ease the tourism pressure on the other PAs in this region.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Koka sanctuary proposed in Bhandara', *The Times of India*, 22/11/12.

Nearly 30 electrocution cases in and around Nagzira WLS in the last two years



Nearly 30 cases of electrocution of wild animals have been reported in the last two years from forests in and around the Nagzira and New Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuaries. The animals killed include sloth bear, nilgai, chital, sambar, wild boar, bison, leopard and also tigers.

The maximum number of cases have been reported from the Gondia and Tiroda ranges in areas that include Khursipar, Nimgaon, Indora, Ramatola, Kodelohara, Umarzari, Sarra, Maregaon, Ekodi, Mangezari, Navatola. It has been alleged that no action is being taken even though information about the offenders is available.

While the POR (primary offence report) was filed in all the cases, only 50% of the cases went to court. Court cases are reportedly pending since 2001 but are not being pursued. In several cases, charge sheets have also not been filed either. Six cases of sloth bear electrocution since 2006 too have remained unsolved.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Poachers thrive as forest officials neglect prosecution', *Economic Times*, 05/12/12.

Contact: **DCF, Wildlife**, Nagzira WLS, ITI Road, Fulchur, Gondia 441601, Maharashtra. Tel: 07184-226399(O), 226564(R)

Casinos, discotheques planned in Matheran



The Maharashtra government is making grand plans to re-position Matheran as an entertainment-cum-leisure hub. This includes proposals for creating casinos, discotheques, music halls and swanky parking arenas. The decision to repackage the

hill station was taken in November 2012 during a meeting with the State Chief Secretary, JK Banthia.

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) was asked to prepare a detailed project plan on the lines discussed. This would include the creation of adequate infrastructure to ensure year-long access as also ensuring 24x7 water supply by tapping alternative means.

A decision has also been taken to get an NOC from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests as Matheran is an eco-sensitive zone, restricting development and the movement of vehicles within the region.

Source: Sharad Vyas. 'Maharashtra tourism plans casinos, discotheques in Matheran', *The Times of India*, 29/11/12.

Contact: **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 -

ODISHA

Over 700 wild animal deaths in three years



250 elephants and 504 other wild animals have died in Odisha since 2009. The information was provided in the state assembly recently by the State Forest and Environment Minister, Mr

Bijayshree Routray.

Of the 250 elephants, 20 were poached, 16 died of poisoning and 28 were deliberately electrocuted. 24 of them died of accidental electrocution while 11 died in accidents. Seven died in train accidents while the reasons behind the death of 51 jumbos are not known. 41 had natural deaths while 54 succumbed to different diseases.

The state government has filed 476 cases against 524 persons for deaths of the elephants and other wild animals. Seven of these cases have been handed over to Crime Branch for inquiry. The 504 other wild animals that died in these three years include 132 spotted deer, 89 barking deer, 26 black buck, seven mouse deer, 58 wild boar and three

tigers. Of these 31 barking deer and 24 spotted deer were killed by poachers.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 4, 2 & 1; Vol. XVI, Nos. 5 & 3; Vol. XIV, No. 3; and Vol. XII, Nos. 6 & 1.)

Source: 'Jumbo deaths on the rise in Odisha', *The New Indian Express*, 28/11/12.

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

RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan plans to save sloth bears

As a part of the National Action Plan for Conservation of Bears, Rajasthan has proposed habitat management, protection, controlling human-bear conflict and spreading awareness for protecting the sloth bear.

During a recent survey conducted by the Wildlife Trust of India, the sloth bear population was found to be distributed in 14 districts of the state - Chittorgarh, Kota, Bundi, Baran, Bhilwara, Sawai Madhopur, Sirohi, Jalore, Karauli, Dholpur, Pali, Ajmer, Rajsamand and Udaipur. The highest presence of bears was reported from Udaipur, Mount Abu and Sawai Madhopur.

The study also noted that though the bear population in the state does not face any threats of poaching or live trade of cubs, human-bear conflict was on the rise, especially in Mount Abu and Jaswantpura. Most conflicts occurred in Mount Abu, Jaswantpura in Sirohi and Sunda Mata in Jalore. Other places that reported conflict incidents include Tonk, Kota, Baran, Pratapgarh and Dholpur.

Source: Anindo Dey, 'Rajasthan decides to grin and sloth bear it', *The Times of India*, 28/11/12.

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

TAMIL NADU

Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust to continue functioning

The Tamil Nadu government has decided to continue funding the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust (GOMBRT) even after the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) funding comes to an end in December 2012.

GOMBRT is a UNDP project that was initiated in the year 2000 for the conservation and sustainable use of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve's coastal biodiversity. The project was initially planned for seven years and was later extended by three more years up to December 31, 2012. The Director of GOMBRT had requested the state government for continuance of the trust in its present form, structure and autonomy because of its various achievements during the project period of 10 years. He had also furnished a plan for the period 2013-14 to 2017-18 and sought an allocation of Rs. 10 crore towards the activities of the trust.

Source: 'TN government to take over GOMBRT', *The New Indian Express*, 27/11/12.

Contact: **Director GOMBRT**, Virudhunagar Circle, Collectorate Campus Virudhunagar 626 002 Tamil Nadu, India Tel: 04562-252158. Email: shekhar.niraj@gmail.com

Scheme to provide compensation for cattle killed by tigers in Sathyamangalam forests



15 farmers from three forest ranges in the Sathyamangalam area were recently given a total Rs. 50,000 as compensation for cattle killed by tigers. The compensation was paid as part of an initiative by 'Coimbatore ACME Round Table 133'.

Farmers from Hassanur, Thengumarahada, and Sathyamangalam stand to benefit from the initiative. Thus far, the organisation had given around Rs.1.75 lakh in compensation, the quantum of which was close to the market price of the animal lost. The actual value varied between Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 4,000.

Source: 'Saving tigers through a novel initiative', *The Hindu*, 22/11/12.

WEST BENGAL

Bear habitat in West Bengal shrinking rapidly: study

The National Bear Action Plan, released by the Centre has sounded an alarm on shrinking bear habitat in Bengal. While over 280 hectares of bear habitat in North Bengal is under human encroachment, more than 5000 hectares of habitat in South Bengal has been encroached upon.

According to the report, the protected area network in the state is more or less secure, but the areas outside are under constant threat of degradation and shrinkage, and most of the bear population in South Bengal is outside protected areas.

The report states that

- According to over 50% of the foresters, sloth bear population is declining in all bear occupied forest divisions, except Purulia.
- The two species* of bears found in the state are being killed for illegal bear trade, and tribals also kill them during their annual hunting festival in Purulia and Jhargram.
- The habitat of the Asiatic Black Bear, found in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, is under severe anthropogenic pressure. Human populations in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri has increased by 14% in the last one decade, with 42% of the forest divisions reporting human-bear conflict.
- Lack of information is another major hurdle for bear conservation. Officials in 71% forest divisions have reported no research work in their areas.
- Between 2002-03 and 2009-10, five seizures of Himalayan Black Bear/Sloth Bear and one case of bear parts were reported from the state.
- Though Black Bears are mostly poached for their gall bladder and skin, local communities indicated that hair (62%), nails (31%) and teeth (7%) are also used for medicines.

- According to about 40% of divisional forest officers, there is possible trade of bears and bear parts to neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh with Siliguri and Sikkim as the main trade centres.
- Though the state is making efforts to tackle human-bear conflicts in certain areas, this is being hindered due to insufficient and well-trained staff.

Bear Habitat Encroached

Forest Division	Area (in hectares)
North Bengal	
Darjeeling	41.44
Wildlife II	34.90
Jalpaiguri	103.40
Buxa East	98.50
South Bengal	
Bankura South	2300.40
Midnapore	582.00
Jhargram	1577.75
Purulia	519.30
Kangsabati North	525.00

* While the Sloth bear is found in North and South Bengal, the Asiatic Black Bear is found only in the hills of the northern part of Bengal.

Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee, 'Habitat loss threatens Bengal bears', *The Times of India*, 30/11/12.

Survey reveals good croc populations in the Sunderbans



The recently held, 1st ever estuarine crocodile survey in the Sunderbans has reported a good population of the animal in these mangrove forests. The national park east and west ranges in the tiger reserve area and the Raidighi range in the South 24-Parganas forest division, were reported to have the best numbers.

The national park east range with 40 direct and 51 indirect sightings had the best

population, followed by Sajnekhali range with 30 direct and 14 indirect sightings, the national park west range with 28 direct and 15 indirect evidences and the Ramganga range with 15 direct and 3 indirect sightings.

Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee. 'Crocodiles score in diverse Sunderbans delta', *The Times of India*, 30/11/12.

Contact: **Director**, Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve, Bikash Bhavan, 3rd Floor, North Block, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3211750. Fax: 3211529.
Joydip & Suchandra Kundu, 7A Principal Khudiram Bose Road Kolkata 700006, West Bengal. Tel: 09830092059. Email: wildwatchers@gmail.com

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

National Bear Conservation Action Plan

The Union Minister of Environment and Forests Ms. Jayanthi Natarajan released the National Bear Conservation and Welfare Action Plan for India at the 21st International Conference on Bear Research and Management that was held in Delhi in November, 2012. The national plan and the individual state action plans have been prepared by the Wildlife Trust of India, World Society for the Protection of Animals and the International Fund for Animal Welfare. The MoEF would provide necessary guidance and support to the states to implement these plans.

The national plan focuses on ensuring stable status for all bear species and minimising bear-human conflicts through conservation efforts. It aims at building a 'green lawyer network' and to ban bear hunting in the northeastern states with the help and involvement of local communities.

The plan also aims to create rapid action and rescue teams at the district level between 2013 and 2016. A 'non-lapsable

corpus fund' to meet plastic surgery costs for victims of bear attacks will also be created.

Source: Kim Arora, 'Action plan aims to minimise bear-human conflicts', *The Times of India*, 30/11/12.
'Scheme to conserve bears', *The Telegraph*, 27/11/12.

UIDs for tigers



The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has proposed to assign a unique identification (UID) number to each tiger captured through camera traps. The NTCA wants to create a national repository of camera-trap photographs of tigers and the UIDs will help cut out duplication and also help in getting an exact headcount.

Tigers in the Sunderbans, for instance, will have the prefix 'Su' before a number while those in the Northeast will have the prefix 'NE'. The Ranthambore tigers are likely to be the first to get these UIDs.

Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee, 'Now, even tigers to be assigned UIDs', *The Times of India*, 04/12/12.

The Wildlife Awards Season

The TOFT Wildlife Tourism Awards 2012

Best International Tour operator for Wildlife – Winner: Cox and Kings, United Kingdom; Runner up: Sawadee, Netherlands.

Best Lodge Naturalist – Winner: Rajesh Bhatt - Jim's Jungle Lodge, Corbett; Runner up: Shukra Kumal - Ken River Lodge, Pench.

Best Tourist Related Community Initiative – Winner: Prakratik Society, Ranthambhore; Runner up: Shakti Himalayas (Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Ladakh).

Best Wildlife Promotion Company – Winner: AndBeyond India; Runner up: Royal Expeditions.

Best Wildlife/Tourism Initiative – Winner: Wilderdest, Goa; Runner up - Pugdunde Safari & Ken River Lodge, Madhya Pradesh.

The Billy Arjan Singh Memorial Award for Best Wildlife Guide – Joint Winners: Yadendra Singh Rajawat, Ranthambhore & Vipul Jain, Ranthambhore; Joint Runners up: Guru Prasad Yadav, Kanha & Ajay Marskole, Pench.

The John Wakefield Memorial Award for most Inspirational Eco Lodge – Joint Winners: Mahua Kothi, Bandhavgarh & Tiger Trails Jungle Lodge, Tadoba; Runner Up: Singinawa Jungle Lodge, Kanha.

Visitor Friendly Wildlife Destination – Winner: Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan; Runner up: Pench Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh.

Source: 'Winners of the 2012 TOFT Wildlife Tourism Awards', www.toftigers.org

RBS Earth Heroes' Awards 2012

The RBS Earth Heroes' Awards 2012 were awarded in Hyderabad on October 14, 2012.

The winners are as follows:

RBS 'Earth Hero' Award: Dr MK Ranjitsinh
RBS 'Earth Guardian Award: The Wildlife Trust of India, New Delhi & Mangalajodi Ecotourism Trust, Chilka, Orissa

RBS 'Protect the Tiger' Award: Ranglal Chaudhary and Dinesh Kumar Gupta, both employees of the Rajasthan Forest Department in the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve

RBS 'Inspire' Award: Dr Rajaram Tripathi, Central Herbal Agro Marketing Federation of India

RBS 'Green Warrior' Awards: Nimesh Ved, for environment education work in the Garo Hills, Meghalaya and in Mizoram; Nandini Velho for her work in conservation at multiple levels including the community, state government and the national government; and Lalli Agariya for livelihood

and awareness work adjoining the Bandavgarh Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh.

The following awards were also given on the occasion in collaboration with the BNHS:

Salim Ali International Award for Nature Conservation: Pavan Sukhdev for the pioneering the concept of 'The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity' (TEEB)

BNHS Salim Ali National Conservation Award: Dr Ravi Sankaran (posthumously) for his wide ranging contribution to Indian ornithology and

BNHS Salim Ali Community Conservation Award: The Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary, Nagaland.

The Sanctuary Wildlife Awards 2012

Lifetime Service Award: Belinda Wright, Founder of the Wildlife Protection Society of India

Wildlife Service Awards: Richard D'souza, Additional PCCF, Goa; N. Badusha, Wynad Prakruthi Samrakshana Samithi, Kerala; Jadav Payeng, Forest Man of Assam; Srinivasa Reddy, Field Director of Maharashtra's Pench Tiger Reserve; and P. Dhanesh Kumar, Divisional Forest Officer, South Wynad Forest Division

Young Naturalist's Awards: Cara Tejpal, Writer, Animal Rights Activist; Roheet Karoo, Tiger Protector & Wilderness Crusader; and Rohan Chakravarty, Cartoonist and Illustrator

Wind Under the Wings Awards: Arti Kulkarni, Deputy Feature Editor, IBN Lokmat and Deepak Atal, Managing Director, Amalgamated Plantations Private Ltd.

Green Teacher Award: Chandrakant Wakankar, Professor from Pune.

Source: www.sanctuaryasia.com



MEGHALAYA

The 3rd Garo Hills Conservation Award

The Garo Hills Conservation Award – 2012 were awarded in the month of August 2012 at a function held in Baghmara, South Garo Hills. The awards that were instituted in the year 2010 by the Samrakshan Trust were given away by the Deputy Commissioner of the South Garo Hills, DD Sangma.

The awardees for 2012 awards were the following:

- Panda Forest Task Force: The task force comprises of seven individuals who collectively apprehended illegal Bangladeshi nationality loggers from inside the Baghmara Reserve Forest while felling trees.
- Nengsra CCR Management Committee: Nengsra *Aking* established a Community Conservation Reserve (CCR) on 22nd June 2010 in order to protect and manage their remaining forest areas. The villagers of Nengsra, supervised by their CCR management committee, planted over 1500 native saplings in 2012 in degraded areas of their CCR and are planning similar activities in the following years.
- Lakhira Sangma: Lakhira is from Baghmara and she rescued an Indian Leaf Turtle from Baghmara in 2011.
- Nobin Sangma: Nobin resides in Baghmara. She and her family rescued a Barking Deer (Indian Muntjac) and handed over the same for release in the wild to the Forest Department, Balpakhran National Park Division in 2012.

Source: 'Garo Hills Conservation Award 2012', *Green Footprint Newsletter*, October 2012

Contact: **Samrakshan Trust**, Bolsalgre, Baghmara, South Garo Hills District, Meghalaya – 794102 Tel: 03639-234187 Visit: www.samrakshan.org, Email: balpakram@gmail.com

Important Bird Areas Update



NATIONAL NEWS

Vulture numbers stabilizing in India and Nepal



According to a new research paper published in the science journal - PLoS ONE – recent surveys show that vulture numbers have stabilized across India and Nepal. The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), the UK-based Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Central and State Governments in India and several other organizations under the consortium Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) have been working for years to conserve the three critically endangered vulture species.

The latest surveys show that in India and Nepal the numbers of the three critically endangered vulture species have remained stable in the last couple of years. Prior to the ban on veterinary diclofenac the vulture population was decreasing at a rate of up to 40% a year.

Source: 'Vulture numbers in India are stable', *The Times of India*, 17/11/12.

ANDHRA PRADESH

GoM to study Kolleru lake issues; MP assaults forest officer

The Andhra Pradesh State Government has constituted a Group of Ministers (GoM) to examine the issues related to the Kolleru lake and the long-pending demand of displaced farmers and fisherfolk seeking compensation for loss of livelihood after the Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary was extended from the +3 contour level to the +5 contour level.

A recent government order (GO) stated that the GoM would comprise Forest Minister, Shatrucharla Vijayaraja Raju; Revenue Minister, N Raghuvendra Reddy; Agriculture Minister, Kanna Lakshminarayana; Secondary Education Minister, K Parthasarathi and the Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Minister, P Vishwarup. The Special Chief Secretary, Forests and Environment, would be the convenor.

The decision on the GoM came close on the heels of the ultimatum given by the Eluru Member of Parliament (MP), Kavuri Sambasiva Rao, who has extended support to the agitating farmers and fisherfolk and demanded that the notification be reduced to the +3 contour. An estimated 14000 acres of private land is claimed to lie between the +3 and +5 contours. The ruling Congress party has also demanded the restriction of the notification to the +3 contour or to extend a compensation package to those affected.

Earlier, the expert committee headed by Dr PA Azeez of the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Nature (SACON) had recommended that the reduction of the area of

the lake to the +3 contour was not viable on environmental grounds.

In another incident in the first week of January, the MP Mr Rao reportedly assaulted a forest range officer when the officer tried to prevent him and his followers from laying a road in the sanctuary. The forest department (FD) officials have filed a complaint at the Kaikalaru police station and registered two cases under the Wildlife Protection Act. According to the complaint, the MP along with his followers, many of whom were allegedly inebriated, came in tractors to strengthen the footpath from Atapaka to Komatilanka village. According to FD records there is no road linking these two villages.

A bund had been built by the wildlife division to impound water in order to create favourable conditions for pelicans, and this bund was being used by villagers for walking as also for plying two wheelers. The bund had been damaged by the use of two-wheelers and the MP and his followers were trying to dump mud in an effort to repair it.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, No. 6).

Source: 'GoM constituted to study Kolleru lake issues', *The Hindu*, 13/12/12.
'Kavuri 'assaults' forest range officer', 07/01/13.

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

GUJARAT

NBWL objects to road through Kutch desert sanctuary

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has objected strongly to the July 2009 proposal of the Gujarat Forest Department to divert nearly 80 hectares of forest land from the Kutch desert sanctuary for laying a road (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 3)

While the official reason for the road is to make movement of the Border Security Force (BSF) easier in the region that falls on Indo-Pakistan border, some have pointed out that it is an attempt to develop tourism in the

area. The site inspection committee, appointed by the NBWL, has noted that already exists a route that the BSF can use, and this new road is therefore not needed. Serious concerns have been expressed about the ecological impacts of this road as it will run through the only breeding ground of Lesser and Greater flamingos in the Indian subcontinent, the reason why the sanctuary was created in the first place.

There also exists a patch of an unique mangrove forest at Shravan Kavadia, believed to be the only mangrove site that is away and cut off from the sea. The *Avicinnia* mangroves stand high in a cluster, resembling banyan trees in height, and are dependent on underground supply of saline water, which in turn is dependent on the annual influx from the sea. This too will be negatively impacted if the road is allowed to be built.

Source: Darshan Desai, 'Road across sanctuary will mean dead-end for flamingos', *The Hindu*, 13/11/12.

Contact: **DCF**, Kutch Desert Sanctuary, Kutch (East) Division, Old Remand Home, Building No.39/1, Bhuj - 370 001, Gujarat. Tel: 02832-250227; Fax: 02832-250236

PUNJAB

Tourism promotion plans in Harike Bird Sanctuary

The Punjab Forest Department has confirmed that it has sent a multi-crore proposal to the Tourism Department to initiate and promote tourism in the Harike Bird Sanctuary. As an initial step the authorities have allowed trips by school students to the sanctuary. Boating which is presently prohibited might also be allowed in a restricted manner by the end of the year.

Full details of the proposal are not available. Forest officials have said that only about 10% of the 86 sq km sanctuary will be opened for tourism and care will be taken to minimize negative impacts.

Source: Raakhi Jagga. 'Harike Pattan Bird Sanctuary opens door to public', *The Indian Express*, 04/01/13.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Harike Lake WLS, Near Police Station, Harike, Dist. Firozpur, Punjab. Tel: 0181 - 248409

RAJASTHAN

Conservation action plan for GIB



The Rajasthan Forest Department (FD) has prepared an action plan to revive the population of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) in the state. Rs. 60 crore are to be spent over a span of ten years as part of this plan, with the primary focus being on the Desert National Park in Jaisalmer. While the

project will be largely funded by Government of India, Rs Three crore would be contributed by Japan International Cooperation Agency.

A special effort will also be made to go beyond the protected areas for management interventions and to involve all the relevant stake holders. The plan supports ecotourism to ensure sustainable conservation of the biodiversity. The eco-development committee (EDC) members and self-help groups (SHGs) will be trained to manage the ecotourism sites. A sum of Rs. one crore has been kept aside for this activity.

(Also see *PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 1)

Source: 'Rajasthan prepares Rs. 60 cr action plan for GIB conservation', *The Times of India*, 03/12/12.

GIB shot dead in the Desert National Park

A Great Indian Bustard (GIB) was allegedly shot dead by some hunters travelling in two vehicles in the Sudasari area of the Desert National Park in the month of December. The

dead bird was reportedly taken away by the hunters as well.

The incident was reported to the forest authorities by a shepherd who happened to see the shooting incident taking place. The eyewitness reported that one of the poachers had made phone calls twice, once before and once again after opening fire on the bird. Officials are sorting out mobile phone data made from the region on December 20, the day of the incident. A feather recovered from a jeep impounded on the Khudi-Jaisalmer road has also been sent for DNA test. A demand has also been made that Khudi-based tourism operators be screened to unearth their possible links with the main culprits.

A first information report (FIR) was filed in the Khudi police station

Source: 'Poaching of Great Indian Bustard shocks environmentalists', *The Hindu*, 27/12/12.

Anindo Dey. 'Great Indian Bustard killed in Jaisalmer, forest dept files FIR', *The Times of India*, 24/12/12.

Contact: **DCF**, Desert National Park, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. Tel: 02992-252489 (O), 252490(R). Fax: 02992-252201/252063



The Important Bird Areas Update is a new section that is being brought out in collaboration with and support from the *Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)*, the *Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN)* and the *Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)*, UK

The Forest Rights Act, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Demand for public consultation, implementation of FRA in the Great Himalayan National Park



The Banjar, Kullu based Himalaya Niti Abhiyan (HNA) has expressed concerns over the proposal and process regarding the declaration of the Great Himalayan National Park as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS). The concerns were highlighted in a recent letter by the HNA to the Director of IUCN's World Heritage Program. The letter has demanded that:

- 1) There should be a public consultation and public hearing before any process is initiated for the declaration of the park as a WHS;
- 2) The Forest Rights Act (FRA) should be implemented first and all forest and Nistar Rights of the local people be duly recognised.
- 3) The socio-cultural rights and access that people have to sites inside the national park should be recognised.
- 4) The park should be a 'people managed national park' and the power to manage, develop, and regulate should lie with the locals under the provisions of the FRA.

Source: Guman Singh. Letter to The Director, World Heritage Program, IUCN, 30/11/12.

Contact: **Guman Singh**, Coordinator – Himalaya Niti Abhiyan, Village Khundan, PO Banjar, District Kullu, HP. India. 175123
[Email:gumanhna@gmail.com](mailto:gumanhna@gmail.com), Tel: 09418277220.
Director, GHNP, Shamshi, Dist Kullu
175 126 Himachal Pradesh. Email: dirghnp@vsnl.com

MAHARASHTRA

An update on the implementation of the FRA in the Tadoba Andhari TR

A buffer area comprising of 1101.99 sq km was notified for the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in August 2012. Earlier, in May 2010, 625.82 sq km TATR was declared as 'Critical Tiger habitat, raising the need for an additional buffer.

A recent visit to some of the villages that fall in the buffer zone brought out some interesting facts. Firstly, most of the 89 villages that fall within the newly formed buffer, did not know of the notification. While villages like Mamla, Vaygaon, Nimbada Chak and Walni were emphatic about their unwillingness to be included in the buffer area (the unwillingness was endorsed by the gram sabha), in other villages like Mohadi, Jamsala, Wasera, Singadzari they were not even aware of the mandatory consultations that the forest department is supposed to organize.

In response to information sought under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, the TATR field office has provided resolutions of 12 gram panchayats, all of which indicate their unwillingness to be included in the buffer area in 2008. Yet, the buffer area was notified in 2012. It was also found out that in 2008 the range forest officer (RFO) in Chichpalli had held consultations with villages like Pahami, Zari and Peth to find out if the villagers were willing for relocations after the area was declared as buffer. The villagers had rejected the proposition.

There is also considerable confusion about the applicability of the FRA in the reserve as well as in the buffer area. The project office of tribal development department, which is mainly responsible for disseminating information regarding individual and community rights under FRA, reportedly, conducted only a few workshops in the region. This has resulted in filing of only a small number of individual

claims and even fewer community claims by the villages in the buffer area. Most of these claims too have not yet been accepted.

Officials of the TATR have also mentioned that all the claims of the five villages located inside the reserve were settled, and FRA is not applicable for these villages as the area has already been declared as 'inviolable'. Due to this misinformation, individual as well as community claims are almost absent from the villages like Palasgaon and Kolsa. Two villages, Navegaon and Jamni, are ready to be moved out, and hence they have not shown much interest in registering their claims under FRA. Only Rantalodhi village has gone ahead and used the provisions to put in their claims, though there is no progress in the long process of acceptance of these claims.

Source: Note from Rucha Ghate.

Contact: **Rucha Ghate**.

Email: ruchaghate@gmail.com

TAMIL NADU

Survey reveals good tiger, wildlife population in Sathyamangalam forests; forest dwellers term the Wayanad and Sathyamangalam TR illegal

Recent surveys conducted by the Wildlife Trust of India and World Wide Fund for Nature in consultation with the forest department (FD) have confirmed that the tiger population in the Sathyamangalam forests is between 18 and 25. The survey was conducted using modern techniques including DNA analysis and camera trapping. Other methods such as the line-transect direct count, carnivore sign survey, dung count and waterhole count systems were also used.

The presence of tigers was confirmed in many areas. In Thengumarahada, Kettuvadi and Bijilatti, for instances bodies of deer killed by tigers were found. Marks left by tigers on some trees were also documented. The survey additionally estimated a population of 800 elephants in the region. The FD has noted that

protection and wild populations will improve once the area is declared a tiger reserve.

Over 19 organisations representing traditional forest dwellers and other tribal communities living within the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve (NBR) have, however, again stated that the proposed Wayanad and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserves are illegal as they were in violation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) – 2006.

A declaration to this effect was adopted in Gudalur in the first week of January, 2013. The declaration also demanded immediate reversal of the tiger reserve status granted to Mudumalai National Park last year saying it has caused massive displacement and denial of livelihood. It has also termed pathetic the condition of the tribal people and other forest dwellers living on the fringes of Nagarhole and Bandipur Tiger Reserves as the forest department was denying them constitutionally granted rights.

Forest rights committees from the tribal villages of Kerehaadi, Maladahaadi, Nagarholehaadi, Bommadu, Avregunda, Basavanahalli, Muguvinahalli haadi, Muguvinahalli, Ananjigundi, Guddekeri, Hadinakanive, Haggadahalla, Kaniyanapura Colony and BalleBudakatta Krishikara Sangha took part in the deliberations. The meeting was held with the support of National Adivasi Alliance, National Adivasi Andolan, All India Forum of Forest Movements and the Campaign for Survival and Dignity.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 5, 4, 3, 2 & 1 and Vol. XVII, No. 6);

Source: 'Recent survey says tiger count has gone up to 25 in Sathyamangalam forests', *The Times of India*, 25/12/12.

KA Shaji. 'Forest dwellers term proposed tiger reserve as illegal', *The Times of India*, 05/01/13.

Contact: **CR Bijoy**, Coimbatore Human Rights Forum. Email: cr.bijoy@gmail.com

Reports on the state level status of the implementation of the FRA in protected areas

The table is based on state level action plans presented by state level FRA nodal agencies during a national level meeting on the Forest Rights Act held in New Delhi on December 3, 2012

State	As reported in the State-level Action Plan
Andhra Pradesh	Operational guidelines have been issued that rights of eligible beneficiaries should be recorded first without any exception or compromise and resettled. Forest Rights in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries have to be recognized as per the Act and their relocation, if required will be decided later in critical wildlife habitats.
Assam	No process initiated for recognition of rights in protected areas. The schedules and plans for this area 'shall be finalised after discussion in SLMC meeting shortly'.
Bihar	Rights are recognized in Valmiki Tiger Project (National Park) in West Champaran district and in Bhimbandh Sanctuary in Munger district. <i>(Comment: whether this is about rights recognized under FRA is in question because no titles have been issued in the state)</i>
Goa	Process of recognition of rights begun in the Mahavir, Cotigao, Madei, Bondla, Netravali and Dr Salim Ali (Chorao) Wild Life Sanctuaries
Gujarat	The process of recognition of rights has begun in protected areas (4 national parks and 23 wildlife sanctuaries in the state. Baseline survey of the families living in the PAs would be carried out and accordingly the claims will be invited and process of recognition will be done in consultation with the Forest Department.
Himachal Pradesh	The process has already begun in the protected areas. This includes among others the Tundah Kugti, Rakchham Chitkul, Lippa Asrang, and Rupi Bhabha Wildlife Sanctuaries and the Pin Valley National Park. A special campaign is being launched for publicity and trainings to speed up the process.
Jharkhand	The state is currently developing synergies between the rights regime and the conservation regime by exploring practical linkages of existing participatory approaches or community based approaches and the FRA opportunities through duties and forest protection committees particularly in the Betla National Park & Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary
Kerala	The process of recognition of rights not started in protected areas. Claims from five national parks & 16 wildlife sanctuaries are to be considered. The Forest Department has requested for some clarifications from the Government of India
Madhya Pradesh	The process for the recognition of rights has begun in the following: Tiger Reserves - Kanha and Panna Wildlife Sanctuaries:- Bagdara, Bori, Sanjay (Dubri), Gandhi Sagar, Gangau, Ghatigaon, Karera, Kuno Palpur, Noradehi, Panpatha, Pench (Mowgli), Phen, Ratapani, and Sardarpur
Maharashtra	The process of recognition of rights in protected areas has begun and details have been sought from the concerned district collectors. In response to a request for a clarification it was explained that Sub Divisional Level Committee & District Level Committee cannot be formed within the limits of a municipal corporation. As a consequence villages in the Sanjay Gandhi NP, Mumbai will be deprived of benefits under the FRA.
Odisha	The process of assessing and recognising rights is going on in all PAs except the Bhitarkanika, Chilika and Nandankanan Wildlife Sanctuaries. An effort is being made to set up a co-ordination committee between the wildlife authorities, ST and SC Development Dept., Panchayati Raj, Revenue Dept. to expedite the process.

Tripura	Area recommended as Critical Wildlife Habitat (in Sq. km): 395.80 Percentage of CWH area of the total of protected area: 66% Total families likely to be affected: 2055 Meetings of the SLC have been held and the members of SLC visited the protected areas and interacted with the villagers and PRIs bodies. The recommendations of the SLC have been placed before the Govt. for consideration but Government has desired to re-examine the proposal.
Uttar Pradesh	Two ST villages (Surma and Golbojhi) in the Dudhwa National Park are under the process of conversion in to revenue village.
Tamil Nadu	Special orientation of field staff of protected areas is being conducted to help in the facilitating of the implementation of the Act.

For more information and full details of the action plans and presentations, contact Shiba Desor,
Email: desor.shiba@gmail.com

‘The Forest Rights Act, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation’ special section is being revived with support from Action Aid India. We invite readers to send us news and information about developments that link the FRA and various aspects of wildlife conservation in general and the protected area network in particular.

Recommendations of the CEC on buffer zones for protected areas

The Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee recently filed its recommendations in the matter of buffer zones of protected areas. The CEC has classified the 102 National Parks and 515 Wildlife Sanctuaries in the country, on the basis of area, in six categories, which are as under:

Category	Area in Sq. Km	No.	Total Area of National Parks/Wildlife Sanctuaries (in sq.km)	% Area of National Parks/Wildlife Sanctuaries
I	Upto 10	195	523.07	0.33
II	10 to 50	94	2746.04	1.72
III	50 to 100	55	4152.46	2.60
IV	100 to 200	85	12065.83	7.55
V	200-500	115	38941.83	24.37
VI	Above 500	73	101389.39	63.44

Total area: 159818.62

On the basis of the above categorization, the recommendations made by the CEC include the following:

- The Safety Zone, in respect of protected areas falling in Category-A and Category-B, may comprise of all the areas including non- forest areas falling within a distance of two kilometers and one kilometer respectively from the boundaries of the protected area. Such distances, in respect of protected areas falling within Category-C and Category-D, may be kept at 500 meter and 100 meter respectively.
- The grant/renewal of mining leases (excluding for collection of boulders, gravel and sand from river beds), setting up of hazardous industries, brick kilns, wood based industries (except MDF/Particle Boards Plants) will be treated as prohibited activities within the Safety Zone (eco-sensitive zones). The activities such as setting up of industries (other than those included in the list of prohibited

activities), hotels and restaurants including resorts, commercial helicopter services, hydel projects, irrigation projects, canals, laying of transmission lines and distribution lines above 33 KV, roads of more than five meter width and collection of boulders, gravel and sand from the river beds will be treated as regulated activities and which will be permissible only after obtaining environment clearance and clearance of the Standing Committee, National Board for Wildlife. All other activities which are not prescribed as prohibited activities or regulated activities will be treated as permissible activities."

Mr. Harish Salve, the amicus in the matter, suggested some modifications in these recommendations made by the CEC. According to his suggestion, the safety zone around both Category-V and Category-VI National Parks/Wildlife Sanctuaries should not be less than two kilometers; for Category-IV, the distance should be 500 meters and for the rest, i.e. Categories I to III, the distance may be 100 meters

A final decision in the matter is pending.

Source: Forest Case Update, Issue 75, September and October, 2012

Contact: Email: forestcase@yahoo.com Web: www.forestcaseindia.org

Readers Respond

Many congratulations on a glorious century! The *Protected Area Update* is a unique blend of social media, news reporting and has constantly kept up with the changing times (and technologies) in the past two decades. I wish you all the very best for future.

- **Joseph Satish**
Knowledge in Civil Society

Congratulations to the whole team. A great effort indeed. It's always a pleasure going through the material.

- **Anirudh Chaoji**
www.ecologics.in

Hearty congratulations on the century *Protected Area Update* has scored under your careful and painstaking watch over the last eighteen years! This is a milestone to be savoured and cherished!

- **Venkat Ramanujam**,
PhD Candidate, ATREE

Congratulations on the 100th issue. Wish you and *Protected Area Update* team all success.

- **Gowri Mallapur**,
Madras Crocodile Bank Trust

Congratulations to everyone involved in this splendid effort to conserve our PAs

- **KB Singh**, on email

Congratulations on the 100th issue of *Protected Area Update*. Sincerely appreciate your commitment to conservation. We think co-publishing the PA Update on the net via the India Biodiversity Portal will be valuable. We should explore how we can go about this. We would be very keen to do this, but would need to look for resources, a good design and partnership. Thanks and regards on the 100th issue.

R Prabhakar, India Biodiversity Portal
www.indiabiodiversity.org

The PA Update is now on facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/protectedareaupdate/>

THE CENTRAL GONDWANA PAGE
in collaboration with www.CGnetswara.org

Kanha authorities flouting rehabilitation laws to evict villagers, alleges leader...

Jan 16, 2013. Darbu Singh Uike, former MLA from Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh, is alleging that Kanha National Park authorities are flouting rehabilitation laws to evict villagers from 18 villages. The villagers are offered Rs 1.5 lakhs if they leave their houses first as a prize money. He says some have not got the compensation as well and the authorities are forcing them to leave their houses in the middle of winter, which is cruel. For more Darbu Singh Uike can be reached at 07354737515. Hear his report at <http://www.cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=16350>

Live report from meeting of Jairam Ramesh with adivasis of Niyamgiri hills

Jan 13, 2013. Giridhari Patra from Niyamgiri Suraksha Samiti in Kalahandi in Odisha is talking live from the meeting of Central Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh. He tells us that more than 10,000 adivasis have come down from Niyamgiri hills to meet the minister. They are very happy because they think that the minister has come to understand their point and will save the hills. They are also saying that the movement to save the hills will continue. For more, Giridhari Patra can be reached at 09583022500. Hear his report at <http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=16289>

Tiger died in accident but officials put a case on villagers for murder of animal

Jan 13, 2013. My name is Nasri Bai. I am calling from Pati block of Badwani district in Madhya Pradesh. I work with the Jagrut Adivasi Dalit Sangathan. A tiger died in village Mandwari in our area when he fell in the well but the officials have made a case of killing the tiger on villagers. We protest it. We have also applied for NREGA work from 2 months but we have neither got work nor compensation. We will start our agitation against it soon. For more Nasri Bai can be reached at 07354421581.

To listen to her report visit <http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=16255>

March to save river Damodar in Jharkhand, Bihar and Bengal

Jan 10, 2013. Naim Ejaz in Dhanbad is talking to environmentalist Ramchandra Nawani who is telling him about a yatra they are starting along the bank of Damodar river in Jharkhand, Bihar and Bengal. They will arrange seminars with people to tell them how the dam and coal mining has destroyed the river and have affected people dependent on it. He says that the situation can still be improved and people should support their movement. For more Naim Ejaz can be reached at 09939181231. Hear the interview at <http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=16133>

Baiga adivasis getting harassed to get approved FRA land deeds from 9 months

Jan 9, 2012. Naresh Bunkar from the Adivasi Jan Van Adhikar Manch in Kawardha district in Chhattisgarh is telling us that in Kandawani village in Polmi block near Pandaria many Baiga adivasi families are running from pillar to post to get their approved land deeds under Forest Rights Act. The people who got their deeds had to give Rs 100 as a bribe to get them. For more Naresh Bunkar can be reached at 08720822286. Hear his report at <http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=16050>

Copper mines in Balaghat releasing acidic water, destroying crops, say locals

Darbu Singh Uike from Gondwana Mukti Sena in Balaghat in Madhya Pradesh is telling us that Copper mines in Malajkhand took land from 134 villages but no local have got jobs and they do not get any facility rather the mines people are releasing acidic water which is destroying their crop. All the villagers have now go together and will do a dharna on 8th November. They are demanding jobs to locals and compensation for destroyed crop. For more Darbu Ji can be reached at 07354737515

<http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=14784>

(Eds note: Malajkhand is about 20 km from the Kanha TR and the river from here flows into the reserve)

Quick NEWS

http://www.asiannature.org/sites/default/files/Sathyamangalam_fire_report_2012_5.pdf
Spatial patten of forest characteristics and fire susceptibility in the SATHYAMANGALAM landscape – A report

Guidance document for taking up **non-forestry** activities in **wildlife habitats**
<http://moef.nic.in/assets/wl-191212.pdf>

Corbett Foundation's report - **The Last Call to Save the Indian Bustard** in Kutch, Gujarat
corbettfoundation.org/GIB_report_FINAL_Oct2012.pdf

This database <http://www.gharial-info.com/> is at attempt at collating available literature on the **gharial** (*Gavialis gangeticus*), and making it readily accessible.

This database <http://www.chambal-info.com/> is an attempt at collating available literature on the **Chambal River**, and making it readily accessible.

An Identification booklet for the **Tigers** of **Bandhavgarh**
<http://thelastwilderness.org/foundation/projects/>

<http://www.facebook.com/events/481715675200657/?ref=3>
1st CHERRAPUNJI BIODIVERSITY EXPEDITION 2013

National Symposium on the **Newer Approaches in Welfare and Health Management of Captive and Free Ranging Wild Animals** - April 19-20, 2013 - Bhubaneshwar, Odisha
Contact:
aizwv2013@gmail.com

The new issue of **Agasthya**, ATREE - highlights natural history, research and issues concerning biodiversity conservation of **Agasthyamalai landscape**
<http://atree.org/newsletters/agasthya/Agasthya-vol6-issue3.pdf>

The December 2012 issue of **frog leg**, the Newsletter of the Amphibian Network of South Asia (ANSA) and the Amphibian Specialist Group - South Asia (ASG-SA) regional network is now available at
<<http://www.zoosprint.org/newsletters/frogleg.htm>>

2013 International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB) takes place 21-25 July 2013 in Baltimore, Maryland, USA www.conbio.org/2013
DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACTS: 20TH JANUARY

‘The World Parrot Count 2013’ This count is the 3rd edition. For details visit:
<http://cityparrots.org/world-parrot-count/> or email parrotcount@cityparrots.org

From Pobitora to Manas – A WWF Film on Rhino Translocations in Assam
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyhPMJ0w77w>

GTD. WWF – India’s Green Tribunal Digest that make’s available summaries of cases settled in the National Green Tribunal. Contact Moulika Arabhi: marabhi@wwfindia.net

Carnivores outside parks
www.carnivore.in



A citizen science and collaborative project and that documents carnivores outside our protected area network

A Decade Ago
Protected Area Update February – April 2003

Nal Sarovar dries up during migratory season

Scanty rains earlier in the season resulted in the Nal Sarovar drying up completely in the middle of the migratory season in December itself. The water level in the lake during a normal monsoon year is about six feet and the lake has water till the end of March.

Post monsoon, last year the water level was only between 1.5 to 2 feet, and phenomenon of the early drying up was seen after nearly a decade and a half. The Nal Sarovar receives water from the catchment areas in Ahmedabad and Surendranagar districts, but this time these were mostly dry.

This situation has forced the Forest Department (FD) to consider using the water from the Narmada to fill up the lake. The FD has discussed the plan with the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam, which has reportedly agreed in principle. The channel is however 20 kms short of the Nal Sarovar

Ornithologists have also stressed on the need to develop satellite water bodies, and to preserve other water bodies near the Nal Sarovar. The example sighted is that of Bhaskarpura, some kms from the Nal, which has now become a haven for the birds.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'Nal Sarovar dries up during migratory season.' *The Times of India*, 31/12/02.

Water scarcity affects birds in Nal Sarovar, Little Rann of Kutch

Scanty rains earlier this year led to the early drying up (see above) of the traditional wintering ground of migratory waterfowl at Nal Sarovar.

Nava Talao in the Little Rann of Kutch emerged as an alternative site for the birds, but

was being rapidly emptied by the locals for irrigating fields in the vicinity. The water from the lake was being used to grow water intensive crops like cotton and *jeera* and some of the water pipelines were as much as two kms long.

There is, in fact a High Court order restricting the lifting of water from such water bodies, and the Surendranagar District Collector had even issued circulars to all village panchayats informing them of the same. The farmers however point out that they have no option in light of the fact that water is scarce now and that their fields will dry up in the absence of any irrigation. They also pointed out that they have paid Rs. 200 to Rs. 250 per bigha for lifting the water. It is however not clear who gave them the permission in the first place.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'No respite for migratory birds as Nava Talao dries up as well', *The Times of India*, 05/01/03.

Nal Sarovar, Little Rann of Kutch to be declared Ramsar sites

The Government of India has recommended to the Ramsar Bureau to include the Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary and the Wild Ass Sanctuary in the Little Rann of Kutch in the Ramsar list of wetlands of international importance.

This was announced by a official from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) at a workshop on wetlands held recently in Gandhinagar by the Gujarat Ecological Education and Research Foundation (GEER).

There are other suggestions for the declaration as a Ramsar site some areas of the Great Rann of Kutch as well.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'Nal, Little Rann to enter world list', *The Times of India*, 14/02/03.

PERSPECTIVE

The Sori Muthu Iyyanar temple in KMTR: Reconciling ‘us’ and ‘them’

When I heard about the annual festival in the Sori Muthu Iyyanar temple situated inside Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR), I was aghast to learn that within a span of 3-4 days, lakhs of people were let inside the tiger reserve. The scenes of a train of vehicles inside the forest, thousands of pitched tents, piles of garbage and polythene instead of leaf litter on the floor of the dry evergreen forests of Mundanthurai range shocked me and I wondered if I could do something constructive to negate the obvious adverse impacts on the forest ecosystem. Thus began my association with the campaign of the KMTR team of the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE) for a more biodiversity friendly festival.

The campaign seeks informed solutions through detailed understanding of the festival and I was entrusted with conducting socio-economic surveys of the pilgrims. The ensuing three years of fieldwork unraveled hitherto unknown characteristics of the festival and dismissed some general assumptions that we had made up in our minds. Although popular for its Hindu deities, I found, for instance, that the festival had a pan-religious appeal with many non-Hindus joining in the celebrations. Among many Hindu visitors too, the ‘darshan’ of the main deity wasn’t paramount. Access into the ‘Tiger Reserve’ to respect religious sentiments became an opportunity for a particular mid-aged woman I interviewed, to break free of her monotonous routine of “sitting the whole year in front of the TV and rolling *beedis*”. For her this

was quality time spent in the pristine environment of the forests, which she said “is the only time of the year that I am relaxed and not worry about anything.”

For many low income families of the hot dry-land villages bordering KMTR, a visit to the festival is a cheap and viable alternative to popular but expensive Ooty or Kodaikanal. For others witnessing the high-voltage cultural activities of the mock durbar of the ceremonial king is the prime motivation to visit the temple. The Kanis who are settled close to the temple were ambiguous about their stand. For some the festival only represented garbage, health problems, noise and pollution while for a few other Kanis who could set up temporary small shops and provided other services to the visitors, the festival was a welcome event.

What surprised me the most, however, was the fact that most pilgrims were concerned about the adverse environmental impact of the festival even though they were unclear and even felt helpless about how the environmental issues could be tackled. The future challenge of our team lies in delineating a path which would reconcile the goals and aspiration of both conservationists (us) as well the various visitors of the temple (them).

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