

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XV No. 5

October 2009 (No.81)

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Protected Area Update

Vol. XV, No. 5, October 2009 (No. 81)

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Publication of the *PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 5 has been supported by the **Duleep Mathai Nature Conservation Trust**, the **Foundation for Ecological Security**, **Greenpeace India**, the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds** and the **Indian Bird Conservation Network**.

Do we want the Cheetah back?

It is not anymore a question only of academic interest. The ball, in some senses, is already rolling. A meeting was held in Rajasthan in September (see national news) where a host of international and national experts including representatives from state and national governments met to discuss and debate a proposal for the re-introduction of the cheetah to India.

A decision may not be taken for a while as the issues related to availability of habitat and prey, of management and possible conflict with humans are studied, analysed and decided upon. There are many areas where the feasibility of the re-introduction will have to be carefully studied and this is what the meeting has proposed to do.

But the question really is a more fundamental one. Why do we want the cheetah back? There seem to be two different answers to this. One it would seem, and the Minister for Environment and Forests, Mr. Jairam Ramesh too referred to that - is to regain a part of the lost glory and history of this country. The other, as has been pointed by some wildlife experts, is that the cheetah, like the tiger, is the apex species of the grassland habitat and it's presence would, both, indicate and ensure the health of this badly abused ecosystem.

Prima facie the arguments seem valid, but if looked at carefully, both have serious problems. It is certainly important to realize that grassland habitats are extremely productive but undervalued and abused. There is no doubt they should be conserved but introducing the cheetah from Africa hardly seems to be the way to do that. There are far simpler and effective ways to do it if we have the common sense and political will for it.

It is also an extremely unfortunate part of our history that this glorious animal was shot into extinction nearly six decades ago. What is a scarier reality is that many species of plants, birds and animals stand today on the verge of joining the cheetah into that void



called extinction. Flagship programs - Project Tiger and Project Elephant, for instance, face serious challenges and some might even say that they are floundering. How prudent would it then be to get into something new without ensuring the success of what we already have on hand?

Rather than spending huge amounts of time, human resources, energy and money towards an 'esoteric' bringing back of the 'dead' the effort has to be concentrated on preventing it happening again – with other species. That would be a far more worthwhile and valuable endeavour.

We can't undo the extinctions we have caused already. Let the fate of cheetah be a grim pointer to that reality.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ASSAM

Habitat protection vital to save River Dolphin in the Brahmaputra

A study carried out under an IUCN Sir Peter Scott Fund project has expressed the need to protect the habitat of the Ganges River Dolphin to save the species from extinction.

According to the study the total population of the Ganges River Dolphin is around 2,000 and of these between 240 to 300 can be found in the Brahmaputra river system. This study was conducted in the 1,044km stretch of the Brahmaputra River system, primarily in Assam. A similar study carried out in 2005 had estimated the dolphin population to be 250.

Oil India Limited (OIL) has proposed to start prospecting for oil along the bed of the Brahmaputra River using air guns and explosives; hence the need was felt for the study - to get an estimate of the population here.

The research has identified eight river sections as potential protected areas and suggested that community-based dolphin conservation is the best strategy to save the dolphins. The project also carried out 32 awareness campaigns along the Brahmaputra valley, focusing on fishing communities.

Research has also shown that accidental killing through fisheries by-catch, poaching for oil, dam building and the proposed seismic survey in the Brahmaputra River are the major threats to the dolphins. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 1; Vol XIII, No 2; Vol XII, No.3; Vol XI, No 5 and No. 46)

Source: 'Ganges River Dolphin in dire straits'
20/07/09

http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/brahmaputra_river_dolphins_psf_final_report.pdf

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Study on implications of the Forest Rights Act around Nameri NP and Sonai Rupai WLSs

Kalpavriksh recently conducted a short exploratory study on the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 in the areas around Nameri National Park and Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam. The objective was to gauge the status of implementation of the Act, understand people's perceptions and also the possible implications for, both, the biodiversity and forest-dependent communities of the area.

Given the historical context of this area, the findings of the study suggest that some modifications are needed to the Act and certain conservation safeguards should be integrated before the Act is implemented here.

Some of the possible resolution measures suggested for this particular context include the need for:

- (a) an amendment of the cut-off date of the Act from 2005 to 1980
- (b) steps to highlight conservation aspects of the Act, such as community forest rights provisions
- (c) steps to prevent ethnic conflict resulting from varying eligibility of claimants under the Act
- (d) steps to actively involve communities in conservation efforts

- (e) steps to prevent fresh encroachments
- (f) steps to regenerate forest areas on which claims have been rejected
- (g) steps to expeditiously recognize the rights of eligible claimants

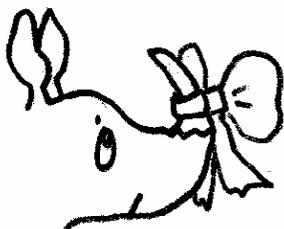
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Opposition to proposal of gifting rhino horns



The Assam State government has proposed to gift rhino horns to visiting dignitaries and museums all over the world in a move to get rid of the large number of horns that are now lying with it. The state government is reported to have also approached the Central government for help as the proposal will need diplomatic communication with various countries. The Forest Department intends to present these horns in order to preserve them, and many forest officials are reported to have welcomed the move.

The Indian Army too is said to have requested the FD to provide them with rhino horns so that these could be displayed in various army museums across the country.

Environmental activists and organisations including Aaranyaak and People for Animals have, however, expressed their opposition to this move. They have warned that such a decision may legitimize poaching to a certain extent and could fan the aphrodisiac myth about the rhino horn.

About 500 rhinos are reported to have died in Assam in the last 30 years and many of these are believed to have been poached (see *PA Updates* Vol XV, Nos. 3, 2, & 1; Vol XIV, No. 2; and Vol XIII, Nos. 6& 5).

A number of rhino horns that were seized from poachers or retrieved from dead rhinos are now decaying due to lack of proper preservation. The largest number of such horns is believed to be in the possession of the Golaghat district treasury, since the Kaziranga National Park is under its jurisdiction. The state government has also constituted a committee headed by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests for the purpose to gather data on the number of horns it has in its treasuries.

Source: Rahul Karmakar, 'Greens see red over Assam rhino horn gift plan', *Hindustan Times*, 08/06/09.

'A home for rhino assets - Assam may send rotting horns to world museums', *The Telegraph*, 04/06/09.

Contact: **Bibhab Talukdar**, Aaranyaak Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati - 781 028, Assam. Email: bibhab1@sancharnet.in

More stringent punishment for poaching in Assam

The Assam State Assembly recently passed the Wildlife (Protection) (Assam Amendment) Bill-2009, incorporating more stringent provisions to check wildlife crimes, including a life term for poaching.

The Bill (now an Act) has made first-time poaching a punishable offence by imprisonment from seven to ten years in place of the earlier provisions of three to seven years. For a second offence, the quantum of punishment will extend from ten years to life imprisonment.

The bill had been drafted after pursuing the matter with the Centre besides having discussions with wildlife experts, NGOs and members of judiciary.

Source: 'Assam makes Wildlife Protection Act more stringent', *The Assam Tribune*, 17/07/09

Opposition to eviction for expansion of the Kaziranga NP

Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK), the student body of the Mising indigenous community has strongly opposed the eviction of their community in the name of the sixth expansion of the Kaziranga National Park. The body has alleged that the State Government was planning to settle the suspected Bangladesh nationals in parts of the national park between Jakhlabandha and Bagori along the national highway and it was to facilitate this settlement that eviction notices had been served on the indigenous people of 18 villages under Bakoridoloni Gaon Panchayat, Bartamuly Gaon Panchayat and Rawnamukh Gaon Panchayat in Sonitpur district.

It has also been pointed out that the government was turning a blind eye to the rapid encroachment in the Orang National Park, the Pobitara Wildlife Sanctuary and the Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary. Yet, about 10,000 Mising people who have been living in the areas around Kaziranga for a long time and have been paying land revenue since 1947, have been asked to vacate about 15,000 hectares of land for the expansion of the national park.

According to other reports, hundreds of unidentified people (suspected to be Bangladeshis) have, over the last six months, occupied the *tapus, chars and chaporis* of the Brahmaputra in the southern side of Sootea, Jamugurihat and Tezpur in Sonitpur district.

The places so occupied include Labtapu, Dhakaltapu, Longketapu, Piajtapu, Kalibhomora, and Burhachapari. The new arrivals are reported to have constructed innumerable small huts and even started cultivation on the land by challenging the local people as they are numerically larger than the locals. They have also started occupying and fishing in big beels like Kathdhora, Bowalmari, Chenidhora, Gajalimora, Lathimari, Nangkhawasuti, and Jaranipuri.

It has also been alleged these new settlers lend a helping hand to the poachers in fishing and killing wild and endangered animals of the sixth addition of KNP. The local administration, forest and police departments, it has been pointed out, have also not taken any

action though the situation has been brought to their notice a number of times.

The Mising student's body has said that the focus of the government should be on evicting these encroachers of doubtful origin and also to protect the park's land area from the erosion of the Brahmaputra.

(Also see *PA Update* 41)

Source: 'Encroachers posing threat to Kaziranga, local inhabitants' *The Assam Tribune*, 27/08/09

'Mising body raps Govt over move to evict locals', *The Assam Tribune*, 11/09/09.

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GUJARAT

MoEF rejects proposed port at Poshitara adjoining the Gulf of Kutch Marine NP

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has rejected the proposed port at Poshitara adjoining the Gulf of Kutch Marine NP, and asked the private developer to look for an alternate site. The decision was taken in a recent meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife.

The MoEF rejected the Gujarat government's proposal to conduct an environmental impact study of the project, stating that a national level study to assess the cumulative impact of all the forthcoming port projects on the Indian coastline was already underway and that it would be inappropriate for this particular project to be considered until that report came in.

Wildlife experts who carried out the inspection of the port also said that the proposed site of the port was adjacent to the Gulf of Kutch Marine and would pose serious threat to the marine biodiversity.

Source: 'Environment ministry opposes port at Poshitara', PTI 05/08/09

Contact: **Conservator of Forests**, Gulf of Kutch
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JHARKHAND

Mobile phones and flying squads to tackle man-elephant conflict



The Jharkhand Forest Department (FD) is distributing mobile phones to villagers to keep track of the movements of wild elephants. It has also constituted flying squads to drive away the elephants that enter villages. The FD has listed 600 villages that regularly face problems because of wild elephants and each of these villages is to be given one phone. Over 100 such phones have already been distributed.

The phone which will be given to the Joint Forest and Village Defense Committee member of each village will have contact numbers of all relevant forest officials

Since the formation of state of Jharkhand in the year 2000, 679 people have died and 1,020 have been injured by wild elephants. 90 elephants have, at the same time, been killed in Jharkhand by poaching and electrocution. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 1; Vol. XIV, No. 2; Vol. XI, No. 6 and Nos. 55, 52, 47, & 39)

Source: 'Jharkhand distributes mobile phones to tackle elephant menace' IANS,
<http://www.prokerala.com/news/articles/a72522.html> 17/08/09

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KARNATAKA

NEAA rejects thermal power station close to Anshi-Dandeli TR

The National Environmental Appellate Authority (NEAA) recently issued a stay on the conditional permit issued by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for the Hanakona thermal power station in Karwar.

The conditional permit certificate was issued to the power company in June. The MoEF had suggested that any objections to the permit should be filed within 30 days, following which objections were filed by the North Karnataka District Consumers and Citizens Welfare Association and Hanakona Thermal Power Station Virodhi Horata Samiti.

The objections stated that the site of power station comes within the 25 km. radius of the forests of the Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve and therefore violates the guidelines issued by the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

It was also pointed out that the company had secured the permit directly from the MoEF, instead of securing it from the State Pollution Control Board, Gram Panchayat and other government departments. Forest officials are also reported to have said that the company has submitted false documents to the ministry.

Source: 'Power project stayed' Karwar, *Deccan Herald*, 26/08/09

Contact: **DCF**, Dandeli Wildlife Division,
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230114(R). Fax: 230300.

Night traffic banned through Bandipur NP

The Karnataka High Court has banned vehicular traffic at night inside the Bandipur National Park. A division bench recently passed the order and no vehicles will be allowed now on the stretch of two roads in the Bandipur forests in Chamarajanagar district from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

The Deputy Commissioner of Chamarajanagar had, in June, passed the order restricting night traffic on NH 212 (Gundlupet-

Sulthan Bathery and Gundlupet-Ooty), both passing through the Bandipur forests. This order had evoked significant opposition following which a second order was passed to revoke the ban (see *PA Updates* Vol. XV, No. 4 and Vol. XIV, No. 6)

A public interest litigation (PIL) was filed in the court challenging this move following which the division bench passed an interim injunction, staying the second order.

The Kerala government, meanwhile, has decided to approach the Supreme Court to oppose the ban. Kerala politicians have said that Karnataka should have first tried alternative measures like imposing speed regulations. They also said that an increase in animal populations had aggravated the problem. Traders and vehicle operators have also planned various modes of agitation against traffic regulation.

Source: 'High Court bans night traffic through Bandipur forest', *The Hindu* 28/07/09
'Rejoice over ban on night traffic in Bandipur sanctuary' (IANS)
<http://www.headlinesindia.com/environment-news/forestry/rejoice-over-ban-on-night-traffic-in-bandipur-sanctuary-18353.html>

'Night traffic ban in tiger corridor has Kerala's claws out', *The Indian Express*, 31/08/09

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

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MADHYA PRADESH

Displaced fisherfolk ask for full fishing rights in Tawa reservoir in Satpura TR

The Tawa Displaced Adivasi Fish Production and Distribution Cooperative Society (TDAFPDCS) has demanded that all fishing rights in the Tawa reservoir in the Satpura Tiger Reserve should be restored to those who had been displaced by the Tawa dam. They have

claimed that these displaced people have the first right on the fish in the reservoir and this should not be denied to them.

The appeal was part of a resolution passed on June 30, 2009 during the General Body meeting of the organization that was held in Kesla. It was also suggested that fishing permits should be issued to the co-operative committees rather than to individuals. This, they have argued, will help eliminate middlemen and ensure better management, protection and distribution of the fish.

Concern was also expressed over the Supreme Court order of April 2009 that is related to fishing in Tawa reservoir. It was argued that if the shortcomings in the order were not sorted out it would have negative impacts on livelihoods of the fisherfolk and also on fish conservation.

The SC order allows for fishing in only one part of the reservoir and also allows for only 400 individual fishing permits. This has been termed as both unfair and non-workable because the reservoir cannot be segregated in this manner. They have also pointed out that presently there are 1600 fishers who are part of 38 primary societies. The SC order would therefore be unfair to a majority of the people dependant on the reservoir for their livelihood.

Fear has also been expressed that there will be irregularities and corruption in the process of the distribution of these 400 permits. The Society has suggested that the local organizations should be represented on the committee that will give these permits. The meeting was attended by a number of people from the Kesla and Sohagpur Block.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol, XIII, No. 2; Vol. XII, No. 2; Vol. XI, No. 4; and No. 44)

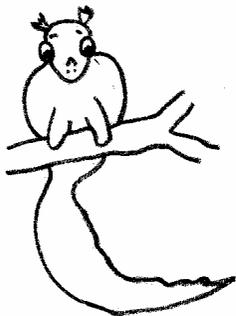
Source: Press releases by the TDAFPDCS dated 01/07/09 & 03/07/09.

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MAHARASHTRA

Rise in Giant squirrel population in Bhimashankar WLS

A census conducted by the Forest Department (FD) in the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary in June has counted 1,297 Giant squirrels (*Ratufa indica elphinstoni*), also known as *Shekaroo*. This is a significant increase from the 1,180 squirrels reported last year.



The FD employed indirect methods of calculating the number that primarily included the counting of nests built by this animal just the setting in of the monsoon. The giant squirrel is known to build six to eight nests around the area it has marked.

The Giant squirrel is also the state animal of Maharashtra.

Source: Umesh Isalkar. 'Giant squirrels at home in Bhimashankar, count up', Times News Network, 18/07/09

Contact: **DCF, Wildlife Pune**, (Bhimashankar WLS). New PMT Building, 3rd Floor, Shankarseth Road, Swargat Pune-411042. Maharashtra. Tel: 020-24471465

Forest Dept employees warn of strike

Class III and IV employees of the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD), threatened in the 2nd week of September, to go on strike in support of their demands of pay parity and absorption in the service after the state's forthcoming assembly elections.

The Maharashtra State Forest Guards and Promoted Foresters Union (MSFGPF) and Maharashtra State Forest Employees and forest Labour Union (MSFELU) said that employees - forest guards, foresters, permanent labour and daily wage labour - would wait for a month after the formation of the new government in the state before resorting to the strike.

The forest guards are demanding pay parity with revenue inspectors, and foresters

with Naib tehsildars of the Revenue Department. The existing pay scales (fifth Pay Commission) are 2750-4400 for forest guards as against 4000-6000 for revenue inspectors, and 4000-6000 for foresters against 5500-9000 for the naib tehsildar.

The Unions pointed out that the demands were being raised since 1993, and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) had recommended as long back as in 2002 that pay parity be granted. The government, however, is still to issue the necessary orders.

Source: 'Maharashtra Forest Dept employees warn of strike'

<http://news.webindia123.com/news/Articles/India/20090910/1338891.html>

Large scale transfers; PAs left unprotected

The Maharashtra Forest Minister, Babanrao Pachpute recently effected large scale changes in the postings of forest officers in the state leading to concern that a number of PAs would now remain unprotected.

Over 350 forest personnel including over 240 range forest officers (RFOs) and the field director (FD) and conservator of forests (CF) of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) have been transferred without replacements. The same situation is seen with more than a dozen other RFOs from other wildlife areas.

It has been pointed out that many of these transfers have been effected regardless of continuity of postings and this has left a number of important posts vacant.

The Tadoba Andhari and Pench Tiger Reserves are believed to be worst affected. The transfer of the Director of TATR, and of RFO Tadoba without replacements has left the tiger reserve headless. Similarly posts of the other RFOs in the reserve - Kolsa, Moharli and the one for Protection will be vacant because of transfers and retirement of officers.

Similarly two RFOs at Pench Tiger Reserve, for East Pench and the other in charge of the anti-poaching squad have been shifted to Paoni and Kuhu respectively, without any replacements. The RFOs post for West Pench too is to fall vacant as the present officer is to

be promoted to the rank of an Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF).

The other PAs that are expected to be affected because of the transfers include the Melghat Tiger Reserve, the Bhamragarh WLS in Gadchiroli, the Chaprala WLS, Yawal WLS, Bhimashankar WLS and the Chandoli NP.

It has also been pointed out that in the eight protected areas in the Nagpur Wildlife Circle, of a total 17 RFOs only three had training in wildlife.

(Also see *PA Update* Vol XV, No. 1 for story on shortage of RFOs in Tadoba Andhari TR)

Source: 'Minister ignores wildlife areas again'
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/NEW-S-City-Nagpur-Pachpute-ignores-wildlife-areas-again/articleshow/4796507.cms>

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

MEGHALAYA

Land adjoining Balpakram NP reclaimed from illegal miners

The Garo Students Union (GSU) and the Chitlang Hills Anti Mining Forum (CHAMF) have recently reclaimed the land that had been illegally denuded of forest for constructing a road to the proposed mining spot in Gongrot Aking bordering the Balpakram National Park (see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 1 and Vol XIV, No. 6). The land that was reclaimed lies in the Halwa Atong Aking in the South Garo Hills District of Meghalaya.

In a symbolic gesture of returning the land to the forest, an 85 strong contingent of GSU members and other NGOs of South Garo Hills planted saplings on the 1.5 Km of road that has been cut through standing forest. Though a commitment has been taken from the headman of Halwa Atong Aking to not permit any further illegal activities on the land of his village, the anti mining coalition had decided to maintain a constant vigil to ensure that no fresh moves to start road construction are made.

The anti mining coalition has also petitioned the Ministry Of Environment and Forest's regional office in Shillong regarding the violation of the Forest Conservation Act. Similarly a complaint has also been filed with the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council for prosecuting the headmen of Gongrot and Halwa Atong Aking for felling of standing forest, that too with malafide intent of illegal mining.

Source: 'Reclaiming Land From Illegal Miners in Halwa Atong Aking, South Garo Hills District, Meghalaya', Press Release by the GSU, 12/08/09

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ORISSA

223 tribal families to be shifted from Simlipal TR



The Orissa Forest Department has said that 223 tribal families residing in six villages in the core area of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve (STR) will soon be shifted out. These villages include Jenabil, Bakua, Kabatghai, Jamuna, and Khadia Settlements (I) and (II) in the Upper-Barha-Kamuda Range of Simlipal.

The decision was taken at the second Rehabilitation and Periphery Development Advisory Committee meeting held under the chairmanship of Revenue Divisional Commissioner, Central Division. The STR and the Forest Department were represented in the meeting by the STR Field Director cum

Conservator of Forests HS Upadhaya, Deputy Director Manoj V Nair and three DFOs from Rairangpur, Karanjia and Baripada.

Meanwhile, an allocation of Rs ten lakh for each displaced family has also been received for their resettlement and rehabilitation and for ensuring all basic amenities at the places of their relocation outside the sanctuary.

The families to be displaced have been assured that they will be relocated to places of their choice as per the guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority. Some of the displaced families have opted for their relocation at Amdiha and Kapand model housing colonies, while others have sought their relocation at Arjunvilla near the Manda forest range. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XIII, No. 3)

Source: '223 tribal families to be shifted from Similipal Tiger Reserve core area', <http://www.odishatoday.com> 13/08/09

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

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

PUNJAB

Ranjit Sagar Dam reservoir to be declared a wildlife sanctuary

The reservoir of the Ranjit Sagar Dam in Gurdaspur district of Punjab is to be soon declared a wildlife sanctuary. A declaration to this effect was made recently by the Punjab Governor, Gen SF Rodrigues (Retd.) after he held a meeting with officials of Forest, Wildlife, Horticulture, Soil Conservation, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Town Planning Departments to discuss the modules of the project in detail.

The dam was constructed over the land belonging to Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir states. Except Punjab, all other states have declared their respective area as a wildlife sanctuary. Though the Punjab government had agreed to notify 30 per cent

area of the dam reservoir as a sanctuary, revenue officials had not provided the necessary land records, thus delaying the implementation for many years.

Source: Chander Parkash. 'Dam reservoir to be made wildlife sanctuary - Govt to issue notification soon', *The Tribune*, 06/09/09

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

RAJASTHAN

Great Indian Bustard sighted in Tal Chappar Wildlife Sanctuary

A pair of Great Indian Bustards (GIB) was sighted at the Tal Chappar Wildlife Sanctuary in Churu district in August. The female bird was spotted on August 1, and the male was seen the next day. This is the first time in 30 years that the GIB has been sighted in this sanctuary.

Forest officials have suggested that the birds may have migrated to the sanctuary from Bikaner and the area where it was spotted was immediately closed to tourists.

Source: Anindo Dey, 'Rare bustard sighted at Churu sanctuary', Times News Network. 09/08/09

Contact: **I/c Tal Chappar WLS**. Dist. Churu, Rajasthan. Tel 0291-2544371 / 2433656. Fax: 0291-2629038

TAMIL NADU

Animal census in Point Calimere WLS

The Forest Department (FD) conducted a one-day wildlife census in August at Point Calimere Wild Life Sanctuary. The animal census is held in the dry season of April, but because of the water logging due to heavy cyclonic rain in April it was postponed to August.

The count was conducted with the help of 165 people, including 130 students from seven colleges. The census covered

roughly a quarter of the 1,650 hectares sanctuary and was based on King's technique of 'direct-transect count'. The count was conducted with the help of 25 transects with each team of five to six members being led by a FD official.

A similar census for birds will be held in the first week of January.

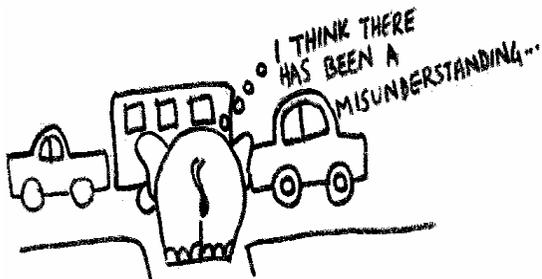
Source: PV Srividya 'Wildlife census taken', 03/08/09

<http://www.cmsindia.org/cmsenviscentre/newsletter/enews/NewsDetails.asp?id=27022>

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Point Calimere WLS, 110, Public Office Road, Nagapattinam – 611001. Tamil Nadu. Tel: 04365-22349

UTTARAKHAND

SC abandons elevated corridor for elephants in Rajaji NP



The Supreme Court (SC) has abandoned the proposal of building two elevated corridors for elephants to cross over the highways and railway line passing through the Rajaji National Park. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has instead, been given permissions for the construction of three flyovers for vehicles here (*PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 3, Vol XIV, Nos. 5 & 3; Vol XIII, No. 5, Vol XII, No. 2).

The NHAI had proposed a flyover either for the elephants or the vehicles, and had been pleading for a speedy solution as lakhs of pilgrims would be coming to Haridwar next year for the *Ardh Kumbh*.

The NHAI and the Railway ministry both were agreed on the proposal of the flyover for elephants and the apex court's Central Empowered Committee (CEC) too had cleared it by a majority of 3:2.

The Amicus Curiae Mr. Harish Salve has, however, been opposed to the elevated corridors for the elephants and pointed that the animals could face problems in climbing the flyover and that such a solution had not been tried anywhere else in the country. The proposal was subsequently dropped.

It has however been pointed out that the present arrangement still does not solve the problem of the elephants needing to cross the railway track, something that has caused many deaths in the past (see *PA Updates* Vol XIV, No. 4 and Nos. 40, 36, 34 & 32).

Source: Dhananjay Mahapatra. 'SC shoots down flyover corridor for elephants' Times News Network. 25/07/09

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

CWLW, 5, Chandrabani, Mohobewala, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0135-2644691

UTTAR PRADESH

'Steering committee' for tiger conservation

Three years after the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had made the proposal, the Uttar Pradesh government has set up its State Steering Committee to supervise tiger conservation in the state.

The committee will be headed by Chief Minister Ms Mayawati, while the State Forest Minister will be the vice-chairperson. The Principal Secretaries of the Forest, Tribal Welfare and Social Welfare Departments will be members of the committee

Five other states – Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh have already set up these steering committees.

Source: UP sets up steering committee to oversee tiger conservation, *The Times of India*, 22/07/09.

Contact: **CWLW** Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow – 226001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-206584(O), 237715 & 223015(R). Fax 0522-222061/ 206188

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Proposal to re-introduce the cheetah to India

International and national wildlife specialists met recently in Gajner, Rajasthan to discuss a Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) proposal for the re-introduction of the cheetah which went extinct in the wild in India about six decades ago. The proposal is to bring in cheetahs from countries such as Tanzania, Botswana and Kenya in Africa, and keep them in captivity in semi-wild enclosures until they get acclimatized to local conditions.

The meeting was attended by officials of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF); the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA); Chief Wildlife Wardens of four states - Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh - that hold potential sites for cheetah reintroduction; representatives from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII); IUCN; international cheetah experts, and members of Indian and International NGOs.

The meeting debated several issues pertaining to cheetah reintroduction including habitat and prey availability, man-animal conflict, professional project management and source of the reintroduction stock..

The WII presented a comparative study of the potential cheetah reintroduction sites in India and it was suggested that in terms of habitat suitability, density of human settlements, and other considerations, cheetah reintroduction was possible in certain sites. It was also pointed out, however, that site-specific management would be necessary and these sites should be studied in greater detail before a final selection can be recommended. Some of the sites considered include the Tal Chappar Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan, Velavadar WLS in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat and the Banni grasslands in Kutch, also in Gujarat.

The Chief Wildlife Wardens (CWLW) of the four states pointed out that several issues such as habitat, prey availability and conflict with humans will have to be examined in greater detail.

The WTI and WII will develop a detailed blueprint of the project, to be presented to the authorities for their consideration.

Source: 'Top international and national wildlife specialists meet to discuss cheetah reintroduction into the wild in India,' http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/current-news/090909_experts_discuss_cheetah_reintroduction_in_India.html

Report on Ecologically Sensitive Areas in India

A report titled 'India's Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs): The Story so Far', a study on the history and current status ESAs in India was published recently by Kalpavriksh.

The study traces the chronology of the notifications declaring ESAs and also reflects on the various mechanisms through which each of these ESAs came to be declared, rejected or remain pending with the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). The detailed account of each of the ESAs, a comparison of the provisions, and understanding the range of actors involved, throw critical light on the trajectories each of the ESAs have followed in their declaration and implementation.

Based on indepth interviews, review of a range of documents from government records and also those shared by activists/NGOs, the report arrives at some conclusions. These are both at the level of understanding the advantages that ESAs offer as a landscape-level planning tool for the conservation of multiple-use areas. At the same time the report also raises some critical concerns on how ESAs have come to be declared as well as implemented.

The report has been authored by Meenakshi Kapoor, Kanchi Kohli and Manju Menon of Kalpavriksh. The work on the report was supported by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-India's Civil Society Collaboration for Environment Governance Initiative.

Contact: **Meenakshi Kapoor**, Kalpavriksh
Email: meenakshi.em@gmail.com
Rahul Priyadarshi.
Email: rahul_priyadarshi@rediffmail.com

Four PAs proposed for inclusion on UNESCO heritage list

Four protected areas from different parts of the country have been placed on the Tentative List of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. These are the Desert National Park in Rajasthan, the Great Himalayan National Park in Himachal Pradesh, the Bhitarkanika Conservation Area in Orissa and the Neora Valley National Park in West Bengal.

UNESCO keeps these sites on the tentative list for a year before the full nomination based on rigorous and competitive processes is granted.

Source: 'Desert National Park in UNESCO heritage list', *The Hindu* 12/07/09

SCB'S Distinguished Service Award to Dr Kamal Bawa

The Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) recently awarded Dr. Kamal Bawa with its Distinguished Service award for 2009.

The award was given in recognition of his important contributions to conservation in India through the establishment of the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) and its activities, and was presented in SCB's annual meeting held in Beijing, China in July earlier this year.

SCB (<http://www.conbio.org>) is an international professional organization dedicated to promoting the scientific study of the phenomena that affect the maintenance, loss, and restoration of biological diversity. The Society's membership comprises a wide range of people interested in the conservation and study of biological diversity: resource managers, educators, government and private conservation workers, and students make up the more than 10,000 members world-wide.

National Green Tribunal approved

The Union Cabinet has cleared the proposal for the setting up of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) along with benches in different regions (see *PA Update* Vol XV, No. 4).

Once established, the NGT will become the only forum where civil cases pertaining to

the entire set of environment related laws, including public interest litigation, would be entertained. It will also address all substantial questions relating to environment.

According to the proposal, the tribunal will not be bound to follow the procedure laid down in the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 or by the rules of evidence contained in the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, but will be guided by the principles of natural justice. It will have the regular powers that other judicial institutions carry. The appeals against this tribunal would go to the Supreme Court.

The NGT will have a full-time judicial member as its chairperson, and, three fulltime technical members — one an expert in physical, life sciences or engineering; one an expert in law and another with administrative experience in environmental policy.

The Law Commission, had in its 186th report in 2003, recommended the setting up of green benches. This is 2nd attempt since then on part of the government to set up an exclusive green bench like this one.

Source: Mahendra Kumar Singh & Nitin Sethi, 'Green tribunal gets Cabinet go-ahead', Times News Network 25/07/09.

CEE plans Hoolock gibbon conservation programme in NE

The Centre for Environment Education (CEE), North East is planning a 'Site Specific Conservation Education Programme (SSCEP)' in selected hoolock gibbon sanctuaries of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura. The program will be executed by forming clusters, each of which will involve 20-25 schools and a local NGO partner.

The programme will involve development of gibbon educational packages in the context of the North-east to support classroom teaching-learning; orientation workshop series for NGOs and teachers, year-long school cluster activities, evaluation information and attitudinal changes brought about by the project; thorough pre- and post-project Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) surveys.

Great Ape Campaigns will be organized at select places with support from

the local Forest Department. Campaigns will also emphasize on community participation and local protected area management.

Inputs and partnerships will be sought from a number of organizations that include the Primate Research Centre; the Gibbon Conservation Centre; Wildlife Areas Development Trust, Assam; Wildlife Trust of India; Zoo Outreach Organization; local NGOs, institutions and allied departments.

Source: 'Hoolock gibbon conservation programme' *The Assam Tribune*, 03/08/09

Contact: **Simanta Kalita**, CEE North East.
Email: simanta.kalita@ceeindia.org

1st installment of CAMPA money for eight states; dissatisfaction with amount of money being released

According to information from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), the 1st installment of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) money was to be released to eight states in the month of August. The eight states were Uttarakhand, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Sikkim, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Assam; all of whom have opened their State CAMPA account according to approved guidelines.

These guidelines envisage a three-tier system — a state-level CAMPA governing body under the chairmanship of the chief minister, a state-level CAMPA steering committee under the chairmanship of the chief secretary and a state-level CAMPA executive committee under the chairmanship of the principal chief conservator of forests. There will also be a national CAMPA Advisory Council headed by the Union Minister of Environment and Forests for monitoring, technical assistance and evaluation. States are expected to utilize these funds for enhancement of forest cover in six million hectares of degraded forest land all over the country, through a scheme under Annual Plan of Operation (APO). Union Minister, Mr. Jairam Ramesh also announced that the operational details would be left to the states, and the centre would only plan and monitor the utilization of the funds.

A number of states, have however, expressed their dissatisfaction that only 10% of the total amount would be released to states on a pro rata basis every year, for the next five years. The dissatisfied states include Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra who have together contributed 55% of the Rs 9,900 crore principal of CAMPA funds. Orissa which is the highest contributor with Rs 1,311 crore, will receive Rs 130 crore, while Chhattisgarh with a contribution of Rs 1,230 crore will get only Rs 123 crore this year. The other three big contributors—Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra — will get Rs 95 crore, 90 crore, and 90 crore, respectively.

The states have argued that the funds would not be sufficient for any meaningful project. They have also demanded more flexibility in planning, saying that the three-tier system suggested undermines the country's federal structure.

The apex court has asked the CEC to file status report on the issue after six months. (Also see (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 4 and Vol XIV, Nos. 6 & 2).

Source: 'Provide Rs 1K cr to states for forests: SC to Campa' *Financial Express*, 11/07/09

Urmi A Goswami, 'States unhappy with 10% release of afforestation funds', 17/07/09,

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/4787301.cms?flstry=1>

'First installment of CAMPA to be released to 8 States tomorrow', MoEF Press Release,

<http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=51913>, 17/08/09

Centre sends teams to assess situation in eight tiger reserves

In an attempt to avoid a repeat of the Panna and Sariska-like situations where tigers were wiped out, the Centre recently decided to send three teams to assess the scenario in eight "critical" tiger reserves and take adequate steps to save the big cats.

The move comes after it was felt that tigers in Dampa (Mizoram), Buxa (West

Bengal), Namdapha (Arunachal Pradesh), Valmiki (Bihar), Palamau (Jharkhand) and Manas in Assam would become extinct if adequate and timely interventions were not initiated to save the last species. The Indravati TR in Chattisgarh and Nagarjunasagar Srisailem in Andhra Pradesh have also been identified for the study by the teams comprising experts from NGOs.

A senior official from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) said that these teams will re-evaluate the existing strategies and explore alternative conservation measures. The team members will also identify administrative or ecological problems besides managerial problems in the identified areas and will submit reports within two months on the basis of which further corrective measures would be taken.

Source: 'Centre sends teams to assess situation in 8 tiger reserves', *The Hindu*, 13/08/09

Contact: **Dr. Rajesh Gopal** NTCA, Annexe No. 5, Bikaner House, Shahjahan Road, New Delhi-110011. Telefax: 2338 4428. E-mail: dirpt-r@nic.in

SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH

US, Germany pledge US \$19 million for reforestation of Chunati WLS

The United States of America and Germany have agreed to donate US \$19 million for the reforestation of the Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary in Bangladesh under a global climate change mitigation project. The sanctuary lies about 350 km (219 miles) southeast of Dhaka and is also a major corridor for the movement of Asian elephants between Myanmar and Bangladesh and home to an important timber species under threat.

Under the project, to be implemented over the next four years, trees will be planted to help restore 2,000 hectares of forest land and to decrease carbon emissions in the region. The project will help restore the severely degraded

sanctuary, raise awareness through public education, and create alternative income opportunities for over 125,000 people who live in communities in and around the sanctuary. (also see *PA Update* XII, No. 1)

Source: 'Bangladesh to get \$19 mln for reforestation project', <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSDHA532275>

NEPAL

121 breeding tigers counted in PAs in Nepal

A nine-month research conducted to study tiger population in all the protected areas (PA) in Nepal has revealed the presence of 121 breeding tigers in the country.

The study was carried out jointly by the Government of Nepal, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the National Trust for Nature Conservation with support from Save the Tiger Fund and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Chitwan National Park (NP) reported a population of 91, and is relatively healthy in comparison to the data from three other PAs which suggested declining numbers; Parsa Wildlife Reserve (WR) has an estimated four tigers, Shuklaphanta WR, eight tigers and Bardia NP has 18.

The report has suggested that these numbers are not strong enough to withstand an ever increasing demand for tiger parts and derivatives and that concerted conservation efforts were required as the remaining population was vulnerable to poaching, habitat loss and encroachment.

WWF has also committed to support the government of Nepal's Tiger Conservation Action Plan 2008-2012, which plans to increase the population of tigers by 10 per cent within the first 5-year period.

Source: 'Nepal's Tiger Numbers Remain Constant despite Political upheaval And Poaching, Census Reveals' WWF Press Release, <http://www.worldwildlife.org/who/media/press/2009/WWFPresitem13170.html>

Contact: **Lee Poston**, WWF.

Email: lee.poston@wwfus.org

UPCOMING

Great Himalayan Bird Count, Winter – 2009



The Great Himalayan Bird Count, Winter – 2009 has been tentatively planned for November 7-10, 2009. The count will be conducted over 36 popular trekking trails situated in the river-valleys of Tons; Yamuna; Bhagirathi; Bhilangna; Ganga; Mandakini and Alaknanda in Garhwal Himalayas and will also include the Asan & Jhilmil Jheel Conservation Reserves in Dehradun & Haridwar districts respectively.

16 Groups will be undertaking the 36 different treks of about 10 kms each. Each Group size will be a maximum of five birders plus 2-3 urban school students and will include local village youth, forest staff and govt. school students from nearby villages.

Contact: **Prateek Panwar**, Action & Research for Conservation in Himalayas, MDDA Duplex Villa No. 3, Sahastradhara Road, Opp. Petrol Pump, Dehradun- 248001, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0 9412054216/ 0135-2114649.
Email: arch.himalayas@yahoo.co.in;
arch.birdcount@yahoo.in

International Conference on Wildlife & Biodiversity Conservation *Vis-à-vis* Climate Change Management

The Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology of Kashmir (SKUAST-K) in collaboration with the Association of Indian Zoo & Wildlife Veterinarians (AIZWV) is Organizing an “International Conference on Wildlife & Biodiversity Conservation *Vis-à-vis* Climate Change” from 27-29 April 2010, at Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention

Complex (SKICC), near Dal Lake in Srinagar, J&K.

The conference will deal with a number of topics that will include among others

- Importance of mountain wildlife biodiversity conservation.
- Natural ecosystems, biodiversity conservation and nature- based solutions to increasing resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change.
- Status & distribution of endangered temperate wild herbivores
- Climate change and wetlands
- Aquatic wildlife conservation
- Displacement of wildlife & integrated approaches in their rescue, health care and rehabilitation/relocation for management and conservation biology.
- Sustainable resource Utilization and Biodiversity Conservation.
- Future developmental priorities & biodiversity Conservation.

Contact: **Dr. Khursheed Ahmad**, (SKUAST-K).
Tel: 0194 2262312 / 9419543879.
Email: Khursheed47@gmail.com
hangulconference@skuastkashmir.ac.in;

World Tiger Summit in Ranthambore TR in 2010

The Ranthambore Tiger Reserve will be the venue for the World Tiger Summit to be held in 2010 (either October or November). 200 experts from all over the world are expected to be present at the summit that is being held in India for the first time. Ranthambore which is home to 44 tigers will be showcased as a role model to the delegates.

The summit will also seek to strengthen and expand a system of tiger reserves across 13 countries, including India, Indonesia, Thailand, China and Russia.

The recent tiger census in India which is based on a new methodology, would also be released during the summit.

Source: ‘World Tiger Summit in Ranthambore next year’, *The Hindu*, 10/08/09

Global Tiger Workshop in Kathmandu



The Government of Nepal in association with the World Bank and other Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) participants will host the Global Tiger Workshop in Kathmandu from October 27 to 30, 2009.

The aim of the workshop is to frame innovative on-ground strategies for tiger conservation based on best practices identified during the last few decades as well as extensive consultations with governments, NGOs, conservation experts and practitioners. This milestone meeting will also serve the purpose of implementing Decision 14.70, adopted at the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES, and further consolidating and promoting action-oriented solutions towards the fulfillment of the GTI objectives. The Workshop will build on suggestions from international experts, existing national Tiger Action Plans and recent research to articulate:

- (1) targets, objectives and activities for the long-term conservation of tigers;
- (2) policies and practical measures for the integration of tiger conservation into national development objectives;
- (3) principles of international co-operation and harmonization of national, regional and trans-boundary management and, ultimately,
- (4) a set of urgent actions to stop the further decline of wild tiger populations.

The output of the Workshop will be a Global Strategy for Tiger Conservation, and will be reported to COP15. This Strategy will also form the basis of the Global Tiger Summit and the Asia Ministerial Conference on Wildlife Enforcement and Tiger Conservation, to be held in 2010 (see story above), that would endorse, at highest political levels, ambitious targets and specific commitments for tiger conservation in each of the tiger-range countries. This Workshop will be attended by senior officials

and conservation practitioners both from tiger-range and other countries.

Source: <http://www.globaltigerinitiative.org/global-tiger-workshop-kathmandu.Html>

Call for Papers: People and Protected Areas - India case studies

Case studies from India on the subject 'People and Protected Areas' have been invited for the Annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG), to be held in Washington DC, from April 14-18, 2010

The paper session seeks to engage scholars conducting research about or in Indian protected area and reserve communities. Topics are open but papers examining policy initiatives, community-based conservation, JFM, community reserves, conflict with wildlife, interactions with the Forest Department, or methodologies for fieldwork are of special interest.

The organizer and session chair is Monica Ogra, of the Department of Environmental Studies and Globalization Studies Program, Gettysburg College.

Contact: **Monica Ogra.**

Email: mogra@gettysburg.edu

OPPORTUNITIES

Research position for project on Snow leopard phylogeography and conservation

For work on the enigmatic snow leopard and use of genetic data to try and understand population structure, a one year position is available in collaboration with the Nature Conservation Foundation and the International Snow Leopard Trust.

Contact: **Uma Ramakrishnan.**

Email: uramakri@ncbs.res.in

Research position for Population genetics of a montane bird in the Western Ghats

Work involves use of micro-satellites to help understand the colonization history and

connectedness between habitat patches inhabited by the White-bellied Shortwing in the Western Ghats. Read more about the project at www.tinyurl.com/robinv.

Contact: **Uma Ramakrishnan.**

Email: uramakri@ncbs.res.in

Research positions on bio-resource ecology and climate change in the Sikkim Himalayas

Several long-term research positions are available as part of a Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, funded project on Technological Innovations and Ecological Research for the Sustainable Use of Bioresources in Sikkim. The project is jointly implemented by the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) (Tata Institute for Fundamental Research, <http://www.ncbs.res.in>, Bangalore, and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) (<http://www.atree.org>), Bangalore.

Applications have been sought from qualified, highly motivated candidates for various research and technical positions at the Junior Research Fellow (JRF), Senior Research Fellow (SRF), Post-Doctoral Fellow levels, and in GIS/Remote Sensing. The research positions can potentially lead to a PhD based at the two institutions. All salaries will be in accordance with DBT specified norms.

The areas of research encompass both basic and applied ecology and include the mapping and monitoring of faunal and floral biodiversity, field and laboratory measurements of biodiversity and ecosystem services (carbon, hydrology, pollination, bio-resources) and their response to climate change, and work on sustainable use of bio-resources by local communities.

Candidates with backgrounds in life sciences, botany, zoology, geo-sciences, ecology, environmental science, social sciences and remote sensing/GIS and with demonstrated field experience and interest in working in Sikkim and the Northeastern India will be considered. Depending on the position, laboratory work in Bangalore will be combined with field measurements and observations in Sikkim. The GIS/RS position will be based in Bangalore. Short-listed candidates will be

interviewed by project Scientists in Bangalore or Sikkim.

Interested candidates should send their CV and statement of interest by email to: sikkimdbt@ncbs.res.in. Applications will be reviewed until suitable candidates are found.

Diploma in International Wildlife Conservation Practice

Applications have been invited for the WildCRU's 2010 Postgraduate Diploma in International Wildlife Conservation Practice. This newly established eight month full-time course is designed to enhance the skills of conservation practitioners teaching the field, analytical, planning and reporting techniques necessary for effective conservation research and action. The course will focus on survey and analysis methods commonly used in the study of felids and other mammals in the developing world.

Students will take modules on wildlife ecology and behaviour; monitoring skills including camera-trapping, radio-tracking and line transect surveys; GIS analysis, and population management. The course will run from February to September 2010. Students will take a one month online preparatory course from their home countries, followed by seven months of residential training at the WildCRU's Recanati-Kaplan Centre in Tubney in the UK.

The 2010 course will accept up to 10 students and applications from developing countries have been particularly invited. The final application deadline is 20th November 2009. For full details check www.wildcru.org/diploma

Contact: **Dr Lucy Tallents**, Zoology Dept, University of Oxford, Recanati-Kaplan Centre, Tubney House, Abingdon Road, Tubney, Abingdon OX13 5QL, UK, Tel: +44 (0) 1865 393125, Fax +44 (0) 1865 393101. Email: wildcru.diploma@zoo.ox.ac.uk

Part time environment education work in Mumbai

The Energy Research Institute (TERI) Mumbai office has initiated a project to promote activity based environment education. The candidate should be someone with a research background as well as skilled in field work. The job includes visiting schools, municipal authorities, and NGOs in Thane, Navi Mumbai and Mumbai, conduct Internet search and reviews on different topics/themes that will be assigned. Knowledge of Marathi will be an added advantage.

Contact: **Saltanat Kazi**, Associate Fellow, TERI, 318 Raheja Arcade, Sector 11, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai. Website: www.terin.org Tel: 022-27580021/9326112410. Email: saltanat.kazi@gmail.com

IN THE SUPREME COURT

PA related matters before the Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee in July and August 2009

- Application to save wildlife in the Narmada valley
- Matter related to the construction of roads in the forest areas of Kodagu including **Brahmagiri, Pushpagiri and Talakaveri WLSs** and Kadamakal and Pattighat Reserve Forests.
- Application seeking stopping of all construction activities and for removal of all structures in and around the parks in sectors 14A, 15A and 16A of Noida in Uttar Pradesh and in and around an area within 10 kms of the **Okhla Bird Sanctuary**
- Application seeking use of 2.96 hectares of land in the **Kashi Wildlife Division, Ramnagar, Varanasi**, Uttar Pradesh for non forestry purpose
- Seeking permission for laying of a water pipeline over 0.170 hectares of land in the **Majathal WLS**, Himachal Pradesh

- Application seeking permission to divert certain lands from the **Majathal WLS**, Himachal Pradesh for submergence by Kol Dam Hydro Project

'**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 of India.

Contact: **Ritwick Dutta & Kanchi Kohli**. Forest Case Update Editors, E-180, Greater Kailash 2, New Delhi-110048. Email: forestcase@yahoo.com Web: www.forestcaseindia.org
Member Secretary, Central Empowered Committee, Room No. 106, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110003. Tel: 011- 4361297

PRESS RELEASES

National Conference of Minister of Environment & Forests emphasize on sustainable environmental management and to increase green cover

The one-day National Conference of Ministers of Environment and Forests emphasized that sustainable environmental management was a shared responsibility involving all levels of government supported by the public at large, civil society groups, private sector, the scientific community and other stakeholders such as traditional forest dwellers. The conference which was organised today was preceded by a preparatory meeting yesterday, i.e. on 17th August with senior officers dealing with environment and forests from the Centre and States. This two-day meet succeeded to enhance the cooperative effort and identify concrete actions in priority areas for protection of the environment and forests.

The Conference recognized the growing pressures on the ecosystems and the weaknesses in the existing mechanisms, in which context the need was underlined for urgent institutional reforms commensurate with the goals of the Environment Protection Act 1986, the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, the

Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 and other relevant laws. It also welcomed some of the recent initiatives taken by the Union Ministry of Environment & Forests, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Operationalization of the State-level CAMPAs and disbursement of funds for restoration and regeneration of natural forests;
- Additional central assistance of Rs 500 crore provided in the 2009-10 Budget for restoration and regeneration of forest cover;
- Provision of Rs 600 crore for the Intensification of Forest Management Scheme and Rs 365 crore for Capacity Building in the Forestry Sector Scheme during the XIth Plan;
- Provision of Rs 250 crore in the 2009-10 Budget for the National Ganga River Basin Authority and the steps taken to ensure speedy operationalization;
- Steps taken to eliminate bottlenecks or impediments, as exemplified by recent measures to enhance the transparency of the environmental appraisal process and addressing conflict of interest issues, synergizing the forest conservation and forest rights legislations, and issuing guidelines for enhancing convergence between the NREGA and afforestation programmes in coordination with the Ministry of Rural Development;
- Dropping the Integrated CMZ notification of 2008 and allowing it to lapse, and in its stead, taking steps to effect the required adjustments in the earlier CRZ regime; and
- The introduction of the National Green Tribunal Bill, 2009 in the Lok Sabha.

The Conference underscored the need to promote green initiatives, local innovativeness and cost-effective solutions taking into account the need to address non-uniform environmental performance in the country. The discussions brought out the need for approaches in the direction of 'green federalism'. One solution discussed was that states could be offered incentives for retaining high forest cover. Another aspect was the need for comprehensive

measures integrating the safety, health and environmental dimensions. It was also recognised that ecological security was a cornerstone for all-inclusive growth. Thus, when assessing the environmental objectives against developmental concerns, it was recognised that there would be trade-offs and difficult choices may need to be made, sacrificing the immediate benefit for long term environmental security.

In light of the above, the Conference agreed upon the need to:

- Establish an empowered Environmental Protection Authority, within a year, under the Environment Protection Act, which would be an autonomous, professional and science-based body, fully authorized to undertake effective implementation of the legislation and rules therein, as well as monitoring compliance with safeguards stipulated as part of environmental clearances;
- Initiate a time bound programme for preparation of State-level Action Plans on Climate Change consistent with the National Action Plan on Climate Change with a view to enable communities and ecosystems to adapt to climate change effectively;
- Coordinate effectively the working of the Centre, States and Urban Local Bodies for river and lake cleaning programmes; to significantly enhance the resources allocated for these programmes; and seek bilateral/multilateral assistance for the effort and put in place new implementation mechanisms, e.g., special purpose vehicles, drawing upon the experience gained over the past two decades;
- Set up empowered structures in the States, headed by the respective Chief Ministers; complemented by tripartite Memorandums of Agreement (MoAs) between the MoEF, the State Governments, and the Urban Local Bodies concerned to effectively plan, coordinate and implement river conservation activities in an integrated manner. States will allocate dedicated funds for meeting Operation and Maintenance (O&M) expenses and consider measures for mobilization of

resources for this purpose by levy of user charges, cess, etc.;

- Conduct an immediate survey of the 17 categories of highly polluting industries in the current year at the State level to ensure compliance of relevant standards;
- Work out a time-bound action programme for handling the industrial clusters having serious environmental pollution levels, to be implemented jointly by the Central and State Pollution Control Boards. For this, the Central Government will draft guidelines for identification of critically polluted areas and the monitoring protocol to be enforced. High level monitoring at the State Level of these areas will be undertaken to ensure timely intervention;
- Expedite sanctions under the Water Cess Act due by the Central Government to the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs), with action to be taken according to a system to be devised to enable disbursements to the SPCBs without delay;
- Strengthen the SPCBs by allocating greater budgetary resources and sanctioning additional posts wherever needed in terms of technical manpower and infrastructure, as a primary responsibility of the State Government. The Central Government will provide assistance to the Central and State PCBs for this endeavour;
- Set up and strengthen, in view of the decentralized appraisal procedures, State-level Environmental Impact Assessment Authorities and Coastal Zone Management Authorities, with professional and technical expertise in the environment and forest related fields, supported by technology-enabled monitoring mechanisms for enhancing environmental compliance;
- Put in place innovative funding mechanisms, public-private partnerships and special purpose vehicles for setting up common facilities, such as common effluent treatment plants (CETPs), treatment, storage and disposal facilities (TSDFs) for hazardous wastes, and devices for treating bio-medical facilities, keeping in view the need to substantially enhance the assistance by the Central Government;
- Operationalize the crisis management systems to handle chemical accidents and related information using the web-based Chemical Accident Information and Reporting System. Preparation of emergency plans for the Maximum Hazard (MAH) units will be expedited;
- Modernize and revitalize forest administration at various levels, particularly at the cutting-edge level of forest guards and rangers, including with regard to new recruitment, improvement of working conditions and better incentives for field-level staff. States will endeavour to bring the Forestry personnel on par with the Police Force in terms of remuneration and service conditions;
- Speed up action under the CAMPA guidelines, using the Compensatory Afforestation Fund, for regenerating forests and increasing forest and tree cover;
- Mobilize local community participation as the primary instrument for protecting wildlife and for promoting conservation and sustainable management of forests;
- Recognize the imperative of linking forest development with sustainable livelihoods of the dependent communities. Fresh impetus to be provided to community participation with a focus on scientific management of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) and forest plantations;
- Act effectively against poachers and, simultaneously, amend the Wildlife Protection Act, as necessary, to enhance its effectiveness for protecting the reserves;
- Expedite tripartite MoUs for availing central assistance under Project Tiger along with effecting the requirements of buffer-zoning and the stepping up of intelligence networks;
- Take concrete steps, with the Centre and States working together, for addressing the special needs of communities living in and around the wildlife habitats, supported by management plans for the protected areas, which recognize the local communities as stakeholders;
- Expedite notification of critical wildlife habitats to facilitate implementation of the

Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 taking into account cases where the statutory settlement of rights may be required before diverting forest land under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980; and

- Ensure apportionment, by the State Governments, of Central Assistance for implementation of Divisional Plans for Strengthening of Forestry Administration in Naxal Affected Districts, for improving the field situation in areas affected by left wing extremism.

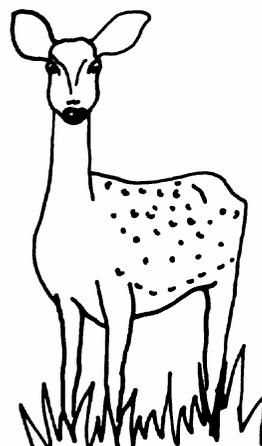
In reply to several questions, Shri Jairam Ramesh, Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests (I/C) said the Ministry will call a special meeting for Elephant Project with states having elephant population and problems. He also reminded that the Ministry has projects for 'vulture' besides tiger. He informed that the ministry will look into the problem of the *neelgai* soon. The minister also informed to make a proposal to institute medals for meritorious service of forest staff working in the field. Ministry will institute special fund for forestry staff welfare fund to support the families of ground staff in case of injury or death, he added.

The Conference was inaugurated by the Prime Minister. The Conference thanked the Prime Minister for his thought-provoking address, which set out a national agenda for the conservation of natural resources, modernization of forest and wildlife management, sound environmental planning and sustainable development.

Source:

<http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=51960>,

18/08/09



Future of Conservation Network Press Release 19/08/09

Implement Critical Wildlife Habitats and Community Forest Rights for Better Conservation!

Conservationists, social activists, and government officers from across the country today commended the Ministry of Environment and Forests for its recent circular requiring state governments to comply with provisions of the Forest Rights Act, when applying for diversion of forest lands for any non-forest use. This was cited as an example of how the Forest Rights Act 2006, could be a major tool for conservation, by participants at the 2nd National Workshop on Critical Wildlife Habitats and Community Forest Rights, held in Delhi on 17-19th August 2009. The Workshop was organized by the Future of Conservation Network, a coalition of conservation and social action groups.

The Workshop discussed the provisions of the Forest Rights Act 2006, and of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act 2006, which enabled the declaration of Critical Wildlife Habitats, Critical Tiger Habitats, and Community Forests. These were highlighted as important new tools for safeguarding India's forests and wildlife, as also water sources. Additionally they are crucial for securing livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people. These points have been reinforced by the Prime Minister at the State Environment Minister's Conference in New Delhi where he

stated that “*Tribal Rights Act is an opportunity to guarantee the legitimate rights of forest dwellers and to bring them in the frontline of the environment movement for regeneration*”

Initial implementation of these provisions has shown their potential. For instance, two communities in Maharashtra have just this week secured legal protection for their community conserved forests.

Participants however expressed concern regarding the following:

1. There are significant delays in most states, regarding the implementation of these provisions;
2. Community Forest Rights (*vis-à-vis* individual rights) have not been encouraged in many states.
3. Due democratic and knowledge-based processes (as required by both the Acts) are not being followed in many cases, for instance in many protected areas (national parks, sanctuaries, tiger reserves) where local communities are to be consulted.
4. In some areas, such as tiger reserves, communities are being told they cannot claim rights, though the Acts provide for it.
5. State governments are facing serious capacity constraints in implementing the Act, and at the Centre, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has hardly any staff to handle an Act affecting millions of people.
6. Vested interests are attempting to misuse provisions of the Act in many places, to enlarge areas under encroachment, without adequate checks by the government.

Many of these issues emerge from a lack of understanding and misinterpretation of the Act and its rules.

The Workshop participants stressed the need to:

- Intensify processes of identifying Critical Wildlife Habitats through democratic means and using best available knowledge (modern and traditional).
- Ensure that threatened species are fully protected within the process and implementation of the Act.
- Encourage and facilitate Community Forest Right claims, especially to protect community conserved forest areas.

- Ensure full establishment of rights within protected areas including Tiger Reserves, and initiate a dialogue which would help secure such areas for conservation with the help of local communities.
- Use all available funds, including those under CAMPA, to facilitate community based forest conservation.
- Initiate a dialogue on the collaborative arrangements between communities and the Forest Department, in community forest areas and protected areas.

Participants also expressed the hope that states and the centre would strictly implement the new MoEF circular mentioned above, for this would be a strong tool to check the deforestation caused by mining, industries, expressways, and other such projects.

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READERS WRITE

Regarding illegal mining in Nagarhole NP...

In pursuance of the report ‘Illegal sand mining in Nagarhole NP’ (*PA Update* Vol XV, No. 3), I would like to state that the Veeranahosahally Wildlife Range is one among the seven ranges under the Nagarhole National Park. It is the northern most part, which is abetting Sollepura S.F. on Northern & Eastern side. The Sollepura S.F. is not included in the National Park notification No. AHEF 91 FWL 87 Bangalore Dt: 08/11/1988.

During the rehabilitation programme for the Tibetans, a portion of Sollepura S.F. was denotified and distributed on lease and during the consolidation of the national park boundary by digging Elephant Proof Trench (E.P.T.), a portion of the left out Sollepura R.F. which was under the jurisdiction of Hunsur Territorial Division was annexed to National Park to avoid encroachment between 1993-94.

As the Tibetan rehabilitated area is next to the E.P.T., the agriculture land allotted to them remained fallow for years due to severe crop depredation by wild animals like elephants, and wild boar.

As is known Elephant Proof Trenches are not a full proof solution and the Tibetan Society therefore, started construction of lining the outside peripheries of the EPT Wall at their expense. Lining work was done for about 5 Kms in that particular stretch. Surprisingly wherever the lining work was completed the man-animal conflict was seen to have drastically reduced.

The Tibetan Society people were in practice of collecting sand from outside the E.P.T. in streams touching the E.P.T. for these lining works. On that particular day i.e. 11/03/2009 the Tibetan Society workers crossed over the E.P.T. to collect the sand from the annexed extra area which is not the part of the National Park.

Office of Working Plans Mysore Division, have surveyed the National Park boundary during 2008-09 and fixed the R.F.

Stones pertains to Veeranahosahally S.F. On inspection and verification of the boundary it was noticed that the particular spot from where the sand was transported is located 1 Km away from the park boundary. The GPS reading of the spot from the where the sand was collected has been reported to higher authorities as below N 12° 12' 131" E 76° 15' 250"

A case (FOC 12/2009-10 on 11/03/2009) was registered for having collected the sand by tractors even outside the Jurisdiction of National Park by the Veeranahosahally Range Forest Officer. The matter has also been reported to the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Territorial Division, Hunsur and higher authorities.

I would therefore like to point out that no mining works were done in the Nagarhole National Park as it was reported in the June 2009 issue of the PA Update

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For Private Circulation / Printed Matter

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