

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XV No. 6

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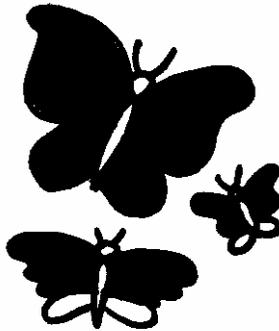
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Protected Area Update

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<http://indiaenvironmentportal.org.in>

EDITORIAL

The day of the dolphin

It can only be considered an extremely positive and welcome step that the Gangetic River Dolphin has now been notified as the National Aquatic Animal. Not only will this help direct much needed attention to an animal whose fate has been seriously neglected, it will also help focus on the importance of the ecosystems that are home to them – our rivers.

It is ironic that a civilisation that is so dependant, indeed nourished by its rivers is so callous to their plight today. There is hardly any river in the country now, whose natural flow has not been altered by dams and barrages or which has not become a carrier of our municipal and industrial waste. The waters that have been the source of life and nourishment for centuries are, now, almost dead themselves. Needless to say, the fate of the dolphins and a multitude of plant and animal life that depends on these systems is fated to meet the same end. That they are not seen often has not helped matters worse. 'Out of sight', in this case, has clearly been a case of 'out of mind'.

Little, for instance, is known of the biology or even the number of the Gangetic dolphins that survive today. The most optimistic estimates put their number at about 2000, spread over rivers in the Gangetic basin and in the Brahmaputra river system.

The new status of the animal will hopefully change the present situation and if some reports in this issue of the *Protected Area Update* are some indication, this is already beginning to happen. The states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have almost immediately expressed their intentions (and in some case also taken steps) for dolphin protection and conservation. A further interest in the dolphin has also been spurred in Assam, where the creature has already been the state aquatic animal for over a year now.

What will be crucial is how the intentions are operationalised on the ground, or for that matter in the water. It needs to be borne in mind that some 'band-aid' kind of

suggestions and solutions (arrest fisherfolk, awareness programs in schools etc) alone will simply not work. The status and fate of our rivers are symptomatic of deep and underlying problems with our development process where damming of rivers, chemicalisation of our agriculture, rapid industrialization and urbanization have been given priority over everything else. More than 168 large dams, for instance, have been planned in the Brahmaputra river basin alone, with little realization that this will change the entire ecological system and adversely impact the dolphin. It is precisely these kinds of developments that are working as a noose around our rivers and the diverse life found in them.

If the dolphin must have it's day, it is this process that needs a fundamental and serious re-engagement and re-structuring; otherwise declarations that accord national status will amount to nothing more than symbolic lip service. And that as well all know, is not going to achieve anything at all.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

ZSI survey in islands of the Rani Jhansi Marine NP

The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) A&N Regional Centre in Port Blair carried out a week long survey of islands in the Ritchie's Archipelago including the Rani Jhansi Marine National Park (RJMNP). The survey in the month of September covered Outram, South Button, Wilson and Nicolson Islands.

As a result of the 70hrs undersea survey conducted in different localities, a total of 109 species of scleractinian corals, 102 species of reef fishes, three species of sponges, 15 species of echinoderms, three species of bivalves, three species of nudibranchs, 10 species of crabs, three species of alcyonacian corals, four species of polychaetes, 33 species of zooplankton and 19 species of phytoplankton were recorded. 20 species of

scleractinian corals identified are new additions to Indian waters. Additionally, live coral coverage in these islands was estimated and found to be 40- 52%. 17 species of fishes and 19 species of corals were registered and added to the National Zoological Database.

The faunal database of the Centre was updated with records of 112 species of sponges, 219 species of soft corals, 333 species of other corals, 425 species of echinoderms, 858 species of crustaceans, 1178 species of molluscs, 257 species of avifauna and 65 species of mammals.

Source: From *ZSI e-NEWS*, Vol 1, No. 9.
September 2009

Contact: **Officer-in-Charge**, ZSI A&N Regional Office, 1, Horticulture Road, Haddo, Port Blair – 744102, A&N Islands. Tel: 03192 – 230115 233148 Fax: 03192 – 230115
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ASSAM

Tourism infrastructure enhanced at Pobitara Wildlife Sanctuary LS

Tourism infrastructure has been enhanced at the Pobitara Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) to cater to the needs of the constantly growing tourist numbers here. Room capacity of the Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC) run lodges has been increased to 14. The jeep safari in the sanctuary too is expanding with the involvement of local unemployed youth who run five Maruti Gypsies for tourists. The forest department (FD) here uses eight elephants for the safari.

The FD earned a revenue of Rs 9.60 lakhs from visitors to Pobitara WLS in 2008-09 – up from Rs 3.50 lakhs in 2006-07, and Rs 6.50 lakh in 2007-08. The number of foreign tourists to Pobitara has also shown a rising trend. There were 145 backpackers last season, while the number in 2007-08 was 45.
(also see *PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 2 & No. 39)

Source: ‘Pobitara opens to tourists’, *The Assam Tribune*, 25/10/09.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Pobitara WLS, Nagaon Wildlife Division, P.O. & Dist. Nagaon – 782001, Assam. Tel: 03672-223104(O), 222310(R)

Spate of wildlife deaths in and around Kaziranga NP



A tiger, a rhino and an elephant were found dead on the same day in September in different parts of the Kaziranga National Park (KNP). A tiger was found dead outside the Kohora range of the park but poaching was ruled out as the cause of the death in this case. It has been suggested that the killing may have been an act of revenge by neighbouring villages after reports of cattle lifting here. Other forest officials said that the tiger may have died after being seriously injured in a fight with a rhino.

A rhino was also killed by poachers on the same day and its body, with the horn chopped off, was found at the Burapahar Forest Range. In another incident the same day, poachers gunned down an elephant and chopped off its tusks and trunk in the Karbi Anglong District in the area that lies between Panbari Reserve Forest and the Dalamara Forest Range. The injury marks showed that a rifle was used to kill the elephant and that the trunk had been cut off using a machete. This is first case of elephant poaching in this area in the last two years.

Till recently, elephants used to pass through the Panbari Reserve Forest in Golaghat to Karbi Anglong and Nagaland without any disturbance. But the situation is no more the same. The entire route, which traditionally covered areas like Panjir Pahar, Kakokchang, Deothar, and up to Nambor-Garampani and Lengrapahar, is now marked with encroachments and relentless deforestation. The Panbari Reserve too has seen stone excavation and tree-felling at a hectic pace in recent times.

The FD reported five days later that the poachers, who had allegedly been involved

in poaching the rhino in Burapahar had been arrested in Nagaon district. The trio - two Paites from Manipur and a Guite from Karbi Anglong district's Manja area - were nabbed by foresters from Nagaon district's Salna area while they were looking for an exit route through the hilly Karbi terrain. They were later handed over to the police.

After killing the rhino, the poachers' gang had been ambushed by armed Kaziranga guards twice - once at the hilly Bage Reserve Forest and then at Rhinoland park. Despite a volley of gunfire, the poachers had managed to escape, but had been eventually captured.

The first week of October also witnessed the death of another rhino. While some suggested that it was case of poaching, other forest officials said that the animal had died of old age. The carcass of the female rhino with a missing horn was recovered near the western part of Dimoli Forest Camp under the park's Bagori Range. The carcass of another big cat was also found near the Mikirjam Forest Camp under the Kohora Range. Some reports suggested that it was a leopard and others said that the dead animal was a tiger. Preliminary reports suggested that the death had occurred due to poisoning.

In another incident that occurred a few days later, there was exchange of gunfire between forest officials and armed poachers after a rhino and a female tiger was found dead within the park. The exchange followed the detection by forest officials of the attempt by a gang of 10-12 poachers to enter the park through the northern fringe facing the River Brahmaputra. The exchange of gunfire took place outside Kaziranga at Bhokte Chapori, an island in the Brahmaputra located between Kaziranga and Golaghat Wildlife Division. It lasted for around 20 minutes.

The FD is also reported to have initiated a move to further equip the staff to deal with increasing incidents of poaching. Revolvers are to be provided to the range offices of different national parks in the state and an initial decision of giving 10 revolvers has also been taken.

The FD will, additionally, raise an armed forest battalion of at least 600 personnel. The armed battalion will be trained at Bagmari

near Kaziranga, which will also be the headquarters of the battalion.

12 tigers have died in and around Kaziranga since November 2008 and the rhino death toll for this year has already reached six. (See *PA Updates* Vol XV, Nos. 5, 4, 3, 2, & 1; Vol XIV, No. 2; and Vol XIII, Nos. 6& 5).

Source: Naresh Mitra. 'Tigers found dead outside Kaziranga', *The Times of India*, 19/09/09

'Three rhino poacher held in Assam', *Times News Network*, 25/09/09

'Poachers gun down elephant near Kaziranga', *The Times of India* 19/09/09.

http://www.ptinews.com/news/318731_Poachers-kill-rhino--leopard-in-Kaziranga

Naresh Mitra. 'Gun battle rages in Kaziranga after Rhino, tiger deaths', *Times News Network*.

'Shootout in Kaziranga National Park' http://www.ptinews.com/news/321337_Shootout-in-Kaziranga-National-Park

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

Human-elephant conflict takes heavy toll along Assam - Bhutan border

Human-elephant conflict is reported to have escalated seriously in the Udalgiri district on the Assam - Bhutan border. Six elephants and eight humans have been killed in the past one year with the month of September alone witnessing the death of three elephants. Herds of elephants looking for food are inflicting heavy damage on standing crops and are being killed in retaliation by villagers either by poisoning or by electrocution.

At least two elephants were killed in the last week of September, allegedly, by high voltage power lines laid out by villages to keep the elephants away from their paddy fields. The first death was that of a young tusker in a paddy field at Satghoria village followed a few days later by that of a pregnant female at Number 2 Athgora Village located only about a kilometer away from the earlier site.

Three persons were arrested following the first incident and the FD personnel that

arrived after the 2nd death had to face the wrath of the villagers who complained that the FD was not doing anything to protect the paddy fields from marauding herds of wild elephants. The forest personnel had to take the help of police to reach the site of the incident.

Forest officials said that they could not find the cables that had been laid by the villagers to kill the elephant but that preliminary investigations suggested that the elephant had died due to electrocution. The Bhutan border is about 6km from the site of the elephant deaths.

The root of the problem is said to lie in the growing depletion of elephant habitat and destruction of their migratory corridors. Forests in the area form part of the Ripu-Chirang Elephant Reserve besides constituting a buffer zone of the Manas Tiger Reserve.

Forest department (FD) officials have said that constraints of infrastructure and manpower, coupled with the difficult terrain, have limited their efforts in tackling the problem. Further, the late release of funds have been affecting payment of compensation for elephant-induced death or damage besides hampering routine activities of forest staff.

Another peculiar habit with the elephants which has added to the woes of the forest staff is that the original big herd scatters into a number of smaller groups while descending on cropland. This was not seen in earlier years, and has made monitoring difficult.

The elephants involved in the conflict are said to belong to a herd with a population of 248 as per the latest census.

Source: 'Elephant electrocuted in Udalgiri district, again', *The Telegraph*, 30/09/09
'Man-elephant conflict intensifies along Bhutan border', *The Assam Tribune*, 06/10/09.

Awards given to Assam FD personnel

In a move to motivate and support staff involved in forest and wildlife protection in Assam, the state government recently announced that it would give Rs. Three lakhs to the family of any forest department (FD) employee who dies on duty. The incentive will be in addition to the normal benefits given to government employees. The forest employees

will also be awarded medals for outstanding services henceforth.

Chief minister Tarun Gogoi made the announcements in Guwahati on the occasion of Wildlife Week. He gave awards to 31 personnel, including an Assam Rifles official, for their contribution towards conservation of wildlife in the state last year. While most of the award winners are state FD staff members working in protected areas, two are from the police department and three are members of eco-development committees formed near national parks.

As many as 13 forest guards have died in attacks by wild animals or drowned during floods in the past decade in Kaziranga NP alone. Over 50 forest guards have become physically handicapped.

Source: 'Dispur announces cash reward for diligent forest staff', *The Telegraph*, 07/10/09.

Joint committees to monitor transmission lines for elephant safety

The Assam government has set up joint co-ordination committees in every district for monitoring the maintenance of the transmission lines to prevent electrocution of elephants. The committees set up recently in the wake of a rise in such incidents across the state will ascertain whether the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) have been followed (see *PA Updates* Vol XII, No. 5 & Vol XI, No. 5).

Each committee will comprise the district deputy commissioner, executive engineer of the Assam State Electricity Board, representative of a local NGO and the divisional forest officer either from the wildlife or territorial division.

The CEA has stated in one of its guidelines, for instance, that before designing or construction of any line, a proper survey of the route over which the line is to pass has to be conducted. The line should avoid rough and difficult countryside, forest areas and orchards. Similarly, in forest areas inhabited by animals, the routing of distribution lines should ensure that the number of trees required to be felled is

minimal. The line route should also have the approval from competent authorities including the forest department and finalised after incorporating changes, if any are suggested.

The CEA guidelines also say that there should be a joint inspection of every power distribution line by officials of the electricity department and the forest department twice a year preferably before and after the monsoon. The FD is expected to inform the power supplier concerned should any accident involving animals take place in an around the forest area and the power supplier is then supposed to submit a report

The most recent incident took place on the night of October 10. A male elephant had strayed into a garden in the Saghunbahi tea estate in Nagaon district and was electrocuted after it came in contact with a power line.

Source: 'Joint panel vigil for elephant safety', *The Telegraph*, 19/10/09

Two rhino poachers killed in gun battle in Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) NP

Two alleged rhino poachers were shot dead in a gun battle inside the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park in the month of October. This was after they had killed a female rhino and chopped off the horn – the sixth rhino killed this year in the national park.

The horn was later recovered from a bag found on one of the slain poachers, Harmoj Ali, a dreaded local criminal who is said to have been involved in killing rhinos earlier at Orang and at Kaziranga National Park. The other poacher shot dead was not identified while the third member of the group fled under cover of thick fog and darkness.

The gun battle, one of the fiercest in the park, continued for over half an hour in pitch darkness close to midnight and more than 30 rounds were fired by the guards. Two empty cartridges and a live bullet of a .303 rifle, two bags containing food, a bottle of country liquor and the rhino horn were found at the site of the shootout. A blood-soaked axe, used to chop off the horn, was also seized. The exchange of fire started after a forest patrol heard gunshots around 10.45pm and then took 15 minutes to

zero in on the exact location from where the shots were being fired.

Ali, the slain poacher, had been arrested several times under the Wildlife Protection Act and the Arms Act. On June 28, earlier this year, he was involved in the killing of a female rhino at Orang and was arrested the following day from a Dimapur-bound bus. During a raid on his residence soon after, a US-made pistol, a 12-bore rifle and ammunition were recovered. He had managed, however, to jump bail soon. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XIV, No. 3 & 2; Vol XIII, No. 6, 5 & 1; Vol. XII, No. 3 & 2; and No. 49)

Source: 'Rhino killers shot after Assam hunt', *The Telegraph*, 19/10/09.

Contact: **DFO**, Orang NP, Mangaldoi Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Darrang - 784 125, Tel: 0914-22065(O), 22349(R)
Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam. Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386

BIHAR

Special efforts to prevent dolphin hunting

The Bihar Chief Minister (CM) Mr Nitish Kumar has directed the state authorities to take steps to stop the hunting of dolphins in the River Ganga. The directions were issued a couple of days after the dolphin was declared the national aquatic animal (see National News). The Patna District Magistrate said that the CM's instructions had been passed on to senior officials, including sub-divisional officers, magistrates, police officers and block development officers and a close watch was being kept to protect the animal.

The Gangetic Dolphin is found in the Ganga, Brahmaputra and Meghna river systems and their population is estimated to be less than 2000. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XII, No. 2 and No. 43).

Source: 'Dolphin hunting banned in Bihar', *DNA*, 08/10/09

Contact: **CWLW**, Government of Bihar, Patna, Bihar. Tel: 0621-287507. Fax: 284425

GUJARAT

1550 trees to be cut over seven acres of land adjoining Gir WLS

The Gujarat Government has proposed the cutting of 1550 trees over seven acres of land adjoining the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary. The forested area concerned is revenue land located in the Rupayatan forest area of the Bhavnath taleti in Junagadh district and is said to be the territory of a pride of 6-7 lions.

The trees are being cut to clear land to house a set of 210 families that are being relocated from Reserve forest area around the Bhavnath Taleti temple. The forested revenue land was lying unused for nearly 40 years and was recently acquired by the Rupayatan Trust.

Environmentalists and wildlifers have expressed their opposition to the cutting of the trees and have suggested that another smaller plot be use for the construction.

Source: Jumana Shah. '1,500 trees face the chop in Gir forest', *DNA*, 23/09/09

Jumana Shah. 'Man-animal conflict is a 'sensitive' reality of Gir', *DNA*, 24/09/09

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/630051. Fax: 631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in

Maldharis insist on living in Gir; memorandum given to President

The Maldhari Sewa Samaj recently submitted a memorandum to President Pratibha Patil asking for the recognition of their right to reside in the Gir forests. The memorandum was handed to the president at the Dudhala Nes while she was on a lion safari in Gir.

The memorandum points out that the Maldharis have been living in the Gir forests for several centuries, and the lion was part of their tradition. They have demanded a right to inherit property and to graze their cattle here by the issuing of permanent passes. It states that though recognized as tribals, many Maldharis have not been given necessary certificates despite repeated requests to the Gujarat government.

The families shifted out of Gir too are reported to have been given poor quality land. About 900 families have been shifted out of the Gir forests, while about 500 families are still living within.

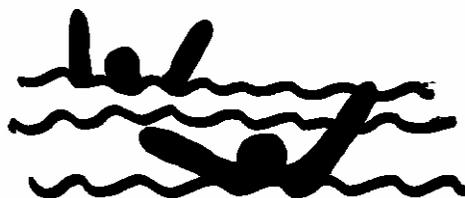
The memorandum also pointed out that as traditional pastoralists, the government should have promoted animal husbandry activities for them, but nothing of that sort had happened. Further, it points out that while Maldharis are not being allowed to live in the forest, commercial interests that are ecologically destructive are being allowed by giving mining leases in areas next to Gir.

Source: 'Maldharis submit memo to Prez in Gir' *Times News Network* 03/10/09

Contact: **CF, Wildlife**, Junagadh (see above)
CWLW - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar-382010, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-230007. Fax: 221097.

KERALA

38 casualties in boat tragedy in Periyar TR



At least 38 persons drowned when a state-run double-deck boat carrying more than 90 tourists capsized in the waters of the Thekkady Lake in Periyar Tiger Reserve in September. Later reports said that there were in fact 45 casualties. 40 persons were rescued after the recently launched Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) boat – Jalkanyaka, sank after cruising five km from the boarding point in Thekkady. Those who died included 14 women and six children.

According to eyewitnesses, the tragedy occurred when the boat tilted after several tourists moved to one side on sighting elephants on the banks of the lake.

Besides state forces, a team of 40-50 navy divers were rushed to the spot from the Southern Naval Command at Kochi and Naval

helicopters were also pressed into service to help the rescue efforts.

The Jalakanyaka's driver and his assistant were arrested for culpable homicide. It was also found that the two month-old fibre boat had a faulty design, there were not enough staff on the boat, the driver was inexperienced (though the FD has denied this allegation) and there were more passengers on it than permitted capacity – 95 instead of the maximum capacity of 75.

It was also reported that a majority of the boats - including the ill fated Jalakanyaka - plying in the state's rivers and backwaters for long did not have basic safety requirements like fitness certificates, sufficient life jackets, life buoys and requisite number of staff.

The state government immediately issued orders to strictly implement all required safety and security stipulations in tourist boats plying in the state including in the popular backwaters, Kerala's biggest tourist attraction.

It was also revealed that the inland water navigation in the state is not yet governed by any effective legal framework. The Inland Vessels Act of 1917 has not yet been implemented for lack of framing rules even after nine decades! The state cabinet has now decided to frame rules soon.

Orders were also issued that every passenger in all tourist boats - about 2000 of which 235 belong to the state government and rest private - should compulsorily wear life jackets and also tickets be issued to them with each of their names written on it. A life guard per 25 passengers too has been made mandatory in every boat. The Irrigation department has been asked to submit a report regarding the safety precautions in all the tourist boats.

This mishap is one of the major boat tragedies in the state after the capsizing of a boat carrying school children at Thattekkad Bird Sanctuary in Ernakulam district a few years back. That tragedy had claimed 22 lives, most of them primary school students.

Source: '38 died in Thekkady lake', <http://www.kaumudi.com/news/100109/kerala.stm>
MG Radhakrishnan. 'Kerala anxious as tourist season approaches', India Today, 08/10/09.

Contact: **Field Director**, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Aranya Bhavan, Forest Complex, S.H. Mount P.O. Kottayam - 686006. Kerala. Tel: 0481-2562940(O) / 2560297(R). Fax: 2569217 / 2565740

'Orientation Programme on Wildlife Conservation' for Kerala High Court judges



An 'Orientation Programme on Wildlife Conservation' for judges of the Kerala High Court was held at the Kerala Judicial Academy in the first week of October. The programme was conducted by TRAFFIC India and the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature - India in partnership with Kerala Judicial Academy.

The programme was inaugurated by the Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court and the inaugural session was attended by over 60 senior judiciary officers in the state including 30 senior judges of the high court and 14 principal judges of district courts in the state.

Resource people for the program included Mr. SP Yadav, Joint Director — National Tiger Conservation Authority; Mr. Samir Sinha, Head- TRAFFIC India; ADN Rao & Ritwick Dutta, Advocates, Supreme Court of India; and Dr. SP Goyal, Wildlife Institute of India.

Contact: **Khalid Pasha**. Tel: 09810797349 / 011 – 41504786. Email: kpasha@wwfindia.net Web: www.wwfindia.org/traffic

MAHARASHTRA

Opposition to religious gathering within Bhimashankar WLS

Environmental activists have expressed concern and opposition over the permission granted to a religious function held in the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS)

towards the end of October. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests – PCCF (WL) Maharashtra had permitted the Delhi based Nandakishor Charitable Trust to organise a *Ram Katha Pravachan* by Baba Morari Bapu from 23rd Oct to 1st Nov inside the sanctuary. The permission for a gathering of not more than 400 people was given on the terms that there would be no violation of the provisions of Wild Life Protection Act and that the *pravachan* would include information and awareness about the environment and forests. It was further stipulated that during the gathering the work of controlling the crowd, cleaning, & garbage disposal will be done by the organizer's volunteers under inspection of the FD.

The program was held at Bombay Point inside the sanctuary and tents for accommodation were put up close to Mhatarbachi Wadi. Initial estimates suggested that at least 2500 people attended the program which was much less than the expected figure of 10,000 but much higher than the officially permitted number of people. A large portion of the crowd was said to be visitors from places that included Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Mumbai and Delhi.

NGOs that voiced their concern to the *pravachan* included Ekjoot Sanghatana and Kalpavriksh. It was pointed out that the authorities have not been able to deal with the problems of sanitation, drinking water, firewood collection and disturbance to wildlife that is caused every year because of the religious pilgrimages and that permission for this *pravachan* should not have been given. It was also pointed out while the locals have been denied permission for various developmental activities, such as digging for electric poles, repairing village roads and the permission for the function gives the impression that any activity, as long as it is not for the local people, is fine within the protected area.

Source: Swati Shinde, 'Greens object to plans to hold religious function at Bhimashankar', *The Times of India*, 23/10/09.
 'Bhimashankar Sanctuary is doomed', Letter from Ekjoot Sanghatana, 21/10/09.
 Emails from Pradeep Chavan and Dharmaraj Patil.

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

Kusum Karnik. Ekjoot Sanghatana, Opp. Thorat Bldg, Behind Market Yard, Manchar, Dist. Pune-410 503. Tel: 02133 -223608/ 224107. Email:

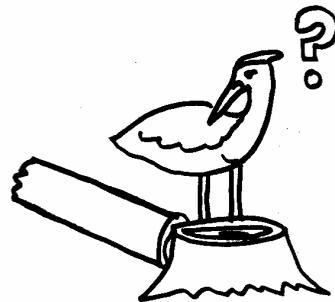
shashwatm@vsnl.net

Pradeep Chavan. C/o Kalpavriksh
 Email: prdpn@gmail.com

Dharmaraj Patil. Email:

dharmarajraptor@gmail.com

Trees over 50 hectares to be cut in the Great Indian Bustard WLS



Trees over an area of 50 hectares are to be cut down in the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) Sanctuary keeping in mind the needs of the endangered bird. The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD), which has actively supported afforestation since 1975, has decided to clear the area and allow for the development of grasslands, the natural habitat of the GIB.

Special permission for the same was taken from the Supreme Court in January 2008. Conservation organizations like the Bombay Natural History Society have welcomed this step by the FD.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol XIV, No. 4; Vol XII, No. 31; Vol. XI, No. 5 and No. 29)

Source: Chandran Iyer, 'Trees will be cut to save bustards', *Mid Day*, 02/10/09.

Contact: **DCF, Wildlife Pune**, see above

Conservation Reserve status proposed for Mahendri Reserve Forest

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) is considering a 'conservation reserve' status for

the Mahendri Reserve Forest in the Warud tehsil of Amravati district. The forest links the Melghat and Pench Tiger Reserves and is particularly known for the large number and species of spiders found here.

The matter gained importance recently when around 40 researchers from across the country gathered at the Mahatma Phule Arts, Commerce & Sitaramaji Choudhari Science Mahavidyalaya, Warud, to discuss the spider-richness of the area. It was an initiative of Amravati territorial circle of the FD and the Nature Conservation Society (NCS), Amravati.

An existing proposal for declaring the forest a wildlife sanctuary has been reportedly opposed by locals and this is the reason why the conservation reserve idea has been mooted now. The deputy conservator of forests has been asked to submit a report that will include information about Mahendri's role as a corridor connecting Pench and Melghat and the density of the forests here.

Mahendri Reserve Forest is spread over an area of about 70 sq km and is rich in flora and fauna. Wildlife reported from the forests includes the tiger, leopard, *cheetal*, *sambar*, bluebull, barking deer and many bird species. It was a shooting block in the past and is mainly made up of 'A' class forests. The forest beats here include Shekdari, Wai, Linga, Pimpalgarh and Mahendri.

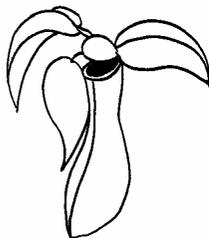
Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Mahendri spiders may help tigers, humans', The Times of India, 12/10/09.

Contact: **Kishore Rithe**, NCSA, Pratishta, Bharat Nagar, Akoli Road, Near Sai Nagar, Amravati, Maharashtra. Tel: 0721-672359. Fax: 670308. Email: ncsa@bom3.vsnl.net.in

MEGHALAYA

Community reserve set up for pitcher plant conservation in South Garo Hills

Residents of the Baghmara Aking in the South Garo District of Meghalaya have recently set up a community reserve for the conservation



of the pitcher plant *Nepenthes khasiana*. The Matcha Nokpante Community Conserved Pitcher Plant Reserve (MNCCPPR) has been established in an area called Matcha Nokpante, which in Garo translates to 'Bachelor Hut of Tigers'. The area has traditionally been rich in wildlife and tigers have also been seen here.

The reserve is spread over an area of 1.5 sq. kms where the pitcher plant is found in abundance. It was set up after several meetings and discussions by hamlets located in the vicinity of the area.

The Samrakshan Trust that works in the region helped the communities in creating the reserve, setting up an institutional mechanism and in formulation of the rules for its management. Samrakshan's team had surveyed and mapped the area and has now initiated a biodiversity survey of the reserve.

Source: 'About Matcha Nokpante Community Conserve Pitcher Plant Reserve (MNCCPPR)', *Green Footprint*, Newsletter of the Samrakshan Trust Meghalaya Office, September 2009.

Contact: **Basabjit Chakraborty**, Samrakshan. Email: basab.samrakshan@gmail.com

NAGALAND

Singphan RF declared as Singphan WLS

The Singphan Reserve Forest in Nagaland's Mon District has been declared as the Singphan Wildlife Sanctuary. The deputy commissioner (DC) of Mon District recently issued a notification under Section 26A of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 creating the sanctuary over an area of 2,357 hectares.

The boundary description of the sanctuary is as follows: 'South – Shenmen Nallah and Upper Tiru village, North – PWD Border Road Assam, East – Sufrai/Tiru River up to the junction and West – Churaideo Tea estate on the Assam side'.

Source: 'Mon DC declares Reserved Forest as Wildlife Sanctuary', *The Morung Express*, 08/10/09.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Government of Nagaland, Dimapur – 797112. Tel: 03862-22095. Fax: 03862-21472

ORISSA

Oil spill concerns for Gahirmatha

Paradip port authorities have lodged a police complaint against three foreign companies including Singapore-based Black Rose Maritime Ltd. and Pacmar Shipping Private Ltd, Hong Kong's Devi Trading Co Ltd. and local agent Seatranf Marine Ltd. associated with the Mongolian ship Black Rose, which sank in September. The complaint was filed as the insurance papers and other documents submitted by the agencies were found to be fake. 26 crew members who were rescued have not been permitted to leave the country.

The vessel ran aground on September 9 in the harbour area off the port in Jagatsinghpur district, with 924 tonnes of furnace oil and about 25,000 tonnes of iron ore fines. Twenty-seven crew members were on board. All but a Ukrainian engineer, whose body was found 10 days later, were rescued.

Fears have been expressed that the oil leak and iron ore fines could be washed away by currents north to Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary as the site where the vessel capsized is very close to the sanctuary. There is concern of the impact this might have on Olive ridley turtles and other marine species found here.

A team of scientists from Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) made an assessment of a ten-km-stretch beach off Paradip coast. They are reported to have said that there is a dire need of containing the oil spill, as they had found dead aquatic animals were found scattered across the beaches due to toxic effect on them. This team too expressed its concerns of the adverse impact that the spill could have on the turtles as they congregate here in large numbers prior to their mass nesting on the beaches

The deputy inspector general of forests (wildlife) wrote to the state forest secretary to constitute a "crisis group" to monitor oil removal operation. The group was expected to be headed by the chief wildlife warden (CWLW), with members taken from state pollution control board, Coast Guard, Paradip port, Wildlife Institute of India, forest department, local civil administration and other specialists and NGOs working in the field.

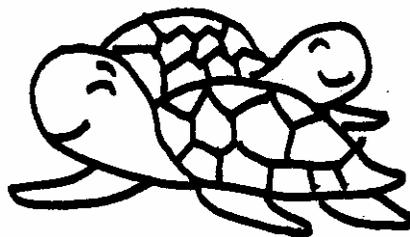
A member of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) said that the government has directed the state to ensure that the pollution does not pose danger to the Olive Ridley turtles.

The port authorities were reported to be examining several tenders in order to appoint an agency to pump out the remaining 950 tons of furnace oil and diesel from the ship. The port had earlier engaged an agency to plug the oil leakage following a directive from the Union shipping ministry, but later it was decided that the oil would be pumped out from the vessel.

Source: 'Paradip port lodges complaint against sunk-vessel' *Times News Network* 07/10/09,
'Orissa directed to monitor oil spill off Paradip port' *Times News Network, India Abroad News Service* 07/10/09, Manoj Kar. 'Olive Ridelies exposed to oil spill off Odisha coast' www.kalingatimes.com

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

SC notice against Dhamra port



The Supreme Court has issued a notice to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and the Orissa government to halt work on the Dhamra port that is located near the Bhitarkanika National Park and the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary. The port is promoted by Tata Steel and Larson & Toubro.

The notice of the SC was issued in response to a plea filed by environmentalists seeking a halt to the port construction, citing threat to the endangered Olive Ridley turtles. Conservationists and wildlife experts have alleged that the state government had allowed the Dhamra Port project to start work on forest

land without prior approval from the Central government. However, a company representative is reported to have said that the company had all the necessary permissions. (See *PA Updates* Vol. XV, No. 4 and No. 4).

Source: 'SC notice to environ ministry, Orissa on Tata-L&T port project', *Press Trust of India; Times News Network* 11/10/09

Contact: **DFO Bhitarkanika**, see above

Orissa to constitute State Wetland Management Authority; Integrated Management Plan for Chilika Lake

The Orissa government will constitute a State Wetland Management Authority in addition to a national institute on management of wetlands and coastal eco-system to ensure proper management of wetlands in the state. Chief Minister Mr Naveen Patnaik made the announcement at a workshop on Integrated Management Planning for Chilika Lake held in Bhubaneswar recently.

Wetland International South Asia (WISA) has also prepared an integrated management plan for Chilika Lake in Orissa. The plan offers to showcase the brackish water lake, promote measures to correct changes in ecological character and improve socio-economic status of the population living in and around it.

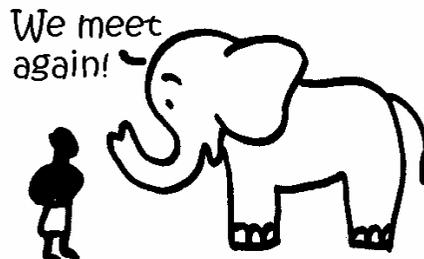
After it was successfully taken out of Montreux list, the Ramsar Advisory Mission had observed that the Convention should consider using it as a case study of Ramsar guideline applications, tools and approaches addressing the complex wetland and catchment management issues.

Source: 'Orissa to form Wetland Management Authority'
<http://www.wildlifewatch.in/news/india/2129.html> 25/10/09

'Management plan for Chilika lagoon ready' *The New Indian Express*, 20/10/09

Contact: **DFO (WL)**, Chilika Wildlife Division, At/PO Balugaon, Dist. Khordha – 752030, Orissa. Tel: 06756 – 211012 / 9437109889

Orissa may take the help of traditional elephant catchers from Assam to mitigate man-elephant conflict



Wildlife experts have suggested to the Orissa Forest Department (FD), which is presently preparing an 'Elephant Management Plan', to use the traditional elephant catchers from Assam, to help deal with the escalating elephant-human conflict in the state. Known as *Phandis*, these elephant catchers were rendered jobless after trapping of wild elephants was banned in Assam in 1980s and have since been doing odd jobs and working as labour.

The suggestion is to now use their expertise in elephant driving exercises and to create a pool of elephant managers among Orissa's Vana Suraksha Samitis (VSS).

Large scale mining, canal construction and related deforestation across elephant habitat in Orissa has disrupted migratory corridors and resulted in significant rise in conflicts in the state (*PA Updates* Vol. XV, 4; XIII, Nos. 6, 3 & 1; Vol. XI, No. 4; and Nos. 49, 46, 41, 39, 34, 32, & 29).

Source: Naresh Mitra. 'Orissa, Assam look at a jumbo deal', *Times News Network*, 02/10/09

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

RAJASTHAN

Rs 104 crores for relocation of villages from Ranthambhore TR

The Rajasthan Forest Department (FD) has recently received a grant of Rs. 104 crore from the central government for relocation of villages presently inside the Ranthambhore

Tiger Reserve. This is believed to be the largest such amount received by any tiger reserve for relocation of villagers and is an outcome of the recently signed tripartite agreement between the park management, the state government and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) (see *PA Update* Vol. XIV, No. 4).

Villages from 60 sq km. of the core area were re-located last year and most were re-settled to places within Sawai Madhopur. The present grant is to be used to move the villages of Moredungri, Bhir and Khatuli. While Moredungri is on the periphery of the park, the others lie along the Kailadevi corridor.

Source: 'Rs 104 crore grant for Ranthambhore'
Times News Network 02/10/09.

Contact: **Director**, Ranthambore TR,
Sawai Madhopur – 322001, Rajasthan.
Tel: 07462-220223 / 222004 / 221139 /
221142

Great Indian Bustard sighted in Barmer part of Desert NP after 25 years

Four Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) were recently sighted in the Girab and Kuvadiya village of the Shiv block in the Barmer part of the Desert National Park (DNP). The sightings were first made by the locals and then confirmed by the forest department (FD) and independent experts. These are significant sightings as they are said to be the first of this endangered bird in the Barmer part of the DNP in nearly 25 years

Source: Sumit Dookia. Email dated 25/10/09.
Contact: **Sumit Dookia**, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Tel: 09461191165. Email: tharjodhpur@rediffmail.com
DCF, Desert National Park, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. Tel: 02992-252489 (O), 252490(R). Fax: 02992-252201/252063

TAMIL NADU

MoEF says no to neutrino project proposed in Nilgiri BR

The Union Minister of Environment and Forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh is reported to have decided against locating the Neutrino

Observatory (INO), an underground experimental physics project, at Singara in the Nilgiris district. Instead, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has suggested that the project be moved to a site near the Suruliyar falls in Theni district of Tamil Nadu. Suruliyar was one of the several sites considered by the scientists, but rejected as being inferior, compared to Singara.

The decision follows an earlier move by the Ministry to ask the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to assess the ecological impact of Indian Neutrino Observatory (INO). The visit by the NTCA Secretary took place on October 31. It was followed by a meeting with the scientists at the PCCF's office in Chennai on November 3. The Minister, Mr Jairam Ramesh too was supposed to visit the site to ascertain the issues for himself, but that visit did not happen.

In a recent letter to Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) Anil Kakodkar on Friday, Mr Ramesh said that based on the report of Secretary NTCA, the Ministry cannot give a go-ahead to Singara.

The proposed project cost was estimated at Rs. 900 crore and was to be set up at Singara close to the border of the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (TR) inside the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The Tamilnadu State Forest Department too was reported to have raised objections over its location as it is a prime wildlife habitat. The INO, planned to be built a kilometre under the surface of the earth, is to be funded by the Department of Atomic Energy, the Department of Science and Technology and the University Grants Commission. Essential geographical requirements to set up a neutrino observatory are among others a 360 degree curve, rock—mass for at least a km, mountain feature which is at least one kilometer tall, and little or no gorge area.

Though scientists, institutes and universities from India and from all over the world have supported the INO, wildlife experts and environmentalists have expressed opposition. The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve Alliance (NBRA), a collection of organizations opposing the project has pointed out that the project involves tunneling that will lead to excavation of 630,000 tonnes of debris and it's

disposal. This, along with the 147,000 tonnes of construction materials that will have to be brought in will need 156,000 truck trips and cause about 500,000 hours of disturbance to the wildlife here. Concerns have also been raised about the quality of the Environment Impact Assessment that has been done for the project. A memorandum signed by over 20 individuals and organizations from around the world opposing the project was released in September.

While the new site at Suruliyar too has a hydroelectric project and also has Charnockite formation, a preliminary investigation report by the Geological Survey of India points to the existence of a shear zone at the site where the tunnel for the experiment could be dug. According to the scientists, a detailed survey by the GSI would take 4-5 months after which an Environment Impact Assessment will have to be undertaken.

Scientists supporting the project have pointed out that Suruliyar too is in a reserved forest area that is dense and would require cutting down of trees, something that was not required at Singara. They have asked for the government for an assurance that forest clearance for this site will be given.

Source: 'Ramesh seeks ecological impact report on mega science project' *The Hindu* 04/10/09

Killugudi Jayaraman. 'The elephant and the neutrino', *Nature News*, 22/09/09
<http://www.nature.com/news/2009/090922/full/461459a.html>

R. Ramachandran. 'Ministry's 'no' to Neutrino Observatory project in Nilgiris', *The Hindu*, 21/11/09

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Mudumalai WLS, Mt. Stewart Hill, Udthagamandalam - 643001 Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0423-244098
Dr. Rajesh Gopal NTCA, Annexe No. 5, Bikaner House, Shahjahan Road, New Delhi-110011. Telefax: 2338 4428. E-mail: dirpt-r@nic.in

UTTAR PRADESH

UP plans to protect Gangetic Dolphin

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department (FD) is set to prepare a plan for the protection and

conservation of the Gangetic Dolphin that is found in different rivers in the state. The move follows the recent decision to declare the dolphin as the national aquatic animal. The dolphin is found in the River Ganga in the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Meerut, in the River Chambal in the National Chambal WLS that borders Etawah and Agra districts, and in River Gerua in Bahraich district's Katarniaghat WLS.

Initial activities planned include the conduct of a census to get an estimate of the total number of dolphins in the state. In the Bulandshahr District a joint project that is being carried out with the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature for the conservation of migratory birds will also take steps for dolphin protection. (Also See *PA Updates* Vol. XV, No. 1 and No. 46)

Source: 'No plans till date for dolphins, state finally gears up to protect national aquatic animal' www.expressindia.com

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, National Chambal WLS, National Chambal Wildlife Division, Mau Van Block, Agra, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0562-2320091

2nd phase of rhino introduction planned in Dudhwa TR.

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department has agreed to the 2nd phase of the rhino re-introduction plan in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and the project is expected to start soon. A final blueprint of the project will be prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), and the programme will be funded by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). The project aims to add to the gene-pool of the rhino in Dudhwa in order to make it a heterogeneous population and avoid in-breeding and associated risks.

In the first phase of the program, five rhinos from Assam were brought to Dudhwa in 1984. Of these only three (a female and two male) survived following which four more were brought here in 1985. The population has since grown to a total of 29 that includes seven males, 15 females and seven young.

An earlier effort to expand the rhino re-introduction plan in Dudhwa had been made

in 2004. The plan envisaged expanding the area for rhinos by 10-15 sq km and to bring in new animals from outside. The plan was, however, never implemented and the grant given by an international conservation organisation was withdrawn.

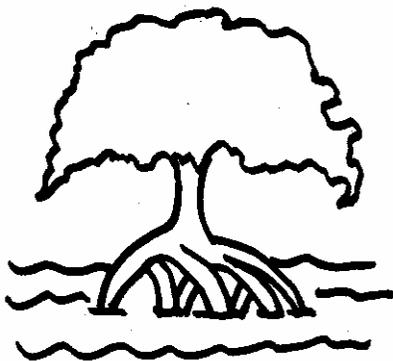
It has now been realized that the 25 sq. kms enclosure is not enough for the 29 rhinos here and plans are also being made to shift some of the animals to the Bilrayen range of the reserve (Also see *PA Update* 41).

Source: 'Better fate awaits Dudhwa rhinos' *Times News Network* 07/10/09

Contact: **Director**, Dudhwa National Park, Dist. Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 05872-252106. Fax: 05872-252106
CWLW Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow – 226001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-206584(O), 237715 & 223015(R). Fax 0522-222061/ 206188

WEST BENGAL

Concrete embankments proposed to protect Sunderbans



The West Bengal Government has proposed the creation of nearly 400 kms of concrete embankments in the Sunderbans to protect it from storms like the recent Aila. The state government had sought the Centre's assistance after the recent storm that devastated the Sunderbans and the Centre has principally agreed to fund the Rs 1,000-crore concrete embankment project to protect the region.

The plan has however been criticized by experts on grounds that the embankments will cause an ecological imbalance. Concern has been expressed that the overlying load on loose sediment layers may cause the river banks to

collapse and that the deep foundations along the embankments would impair the dynamic relations between the groundwater table and the river as seepage would be retarded.

It has been suggested that the best protection measure would be the construction of the mud-and-bamboo embankments at a distance of 500 m from the older ones, followed by a mangrove plantation program in the intermediate 500 meter stretch.

Source: 'Experts' thumbs down to dykes – Say concrete embankments in Sunderbans will do more harm than good', *Times News Network*, 27/10/09

Contact: **Field Director**, Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, PO Canning, Dist. South 24 Parganas 743329, West Bengal

Two rhinos deaths in Jaldapara WLS; elephant safari stopped

Two rhino deaths were reported in the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary in the early part of October. One male rhino carcass was found in the Torsha river, while the other – that of a female – was found deep in the forests of the Kunjabari beat west range a few hours later.

Forest officials initially believed that the deaths had been caused due to a mating fight. A post-mortem on the male rhino, however, found a bullet lodged between the ear and the jaw. A post-mortem report of the female was awaited, but the animal had a deep wound on the leg. Some forest officials have said that they suspected poachers from Assam were responsible.

There was also some controversy over the sequence of events that led to the death of the male rhino. The injured male rhino had, strayed from the forest and hid in a bush on the edge of the Torsha river. Forest officials had engaged three trained elephants to escort the rhino back to the forests. But, villagers and some forest staff are reported to have pelted stones at the animal, and as it came out forest officials fired a tranquilizer at it. The animal tried to get up but lost its balance and fell into the river. Forest officials however, denied that they were responsible for the death of the rhino and that they had done their best to treat and save the animal.

A day after the incident the Government Employees Federation demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into the incident. The federation, with a large number of forest officials, also demanded the resignation of the state forest minister and principal chief conservator of forest.

In a related development the forest department (FD) subsequently decided to stop the elephant safari in the sanctuary. Officials have claimed that this would deny poachers access to the core area of the sanctuary as they were certain that the poachers often took the safari in the guise of tourists to locate the rhino habitation and the tracks followed by them.

The elephant safari was a big attraction in Jaldapara and this move of the FD is expected to hit tour operators the most. The one-hour safari that was charged at Rs. 150 took visitors to areas where rhinos were found in good numbers. Six *kunkis* were used for the three shift-safari.

Source: Pinak Priya Bhattacharya, 'Shot by poachers, rhino drowns', *Times News Network*, 11/10/09.

Now, govt employees demand CBI inquiry into rhino death, *The Indian Express*, 12/10/09

Pinak Priya Bhattacharya. 'Elephant safari stopped in Jaldapara', *Times News Network*, 25/10/09.

Contact: **DFO**, Jaldapara WLS, Cooch Behar Division, P.O. & Dist. Cooch Behar, West Bengal. Tel: 03582-227185. Fax: 227185

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Gangetic Dolphin is National Aquatic Animal

The Gangetic Dolphin has been declared India's national aquatic animal. The decision was taken during the first meeting of the National River Ganga Basin Authority (NRGBA) that was held recently. The NRGBA was constituted in February, earlier this year and is chaired by the Prime Minister.

It is estimated that they are only about 2000 dolphins now left and a majority are found in the Ganga and Brahmaputra river systems.

A survey conducted by Environmental Biology Laboratory of Patna University during 2000-2001 showed less than 500 dolphins in the Ganga in Bihar, about 400 in the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh, and, about 400 in the Brahmaputra. The animals decline has mainly been attributed to rising river water pollution, poaching and loss of habitat.

Source: 'Dolphin becomes India's national aquatic animal', *Hindustan Times*, 07/10/09

Centre approves cheetah reintroduction roadmap preparation



The Central Government has given a go-ahead to draft a comprehensive plan for the Cheetah Reintroduction Project. The Union Minister for Environment and

Forests Mr Jairam Ramesh recently conveyed the decision to the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) which has proposed the project (see *PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 5)

Potential reintroduction sites in four states had been short-listed in the consultative meeting held in September in Rajasthan. The recommendation for a detailed survey of these sites has been approved and will be carried out by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, in collaboration with the WTI, the Bombay Natural History Society and the respective state governments. Seven of the most promising sites in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are in consideration as the site for the relocation.

Source: Source: Centre approves cheetah reintroduction roadmap preparation <http://www.wildlifewatch.in/news/india/1885.html> 07/10/09.

Ecotone – New newsletter on wildlife and conservation in North East India

Guwahati based Environ and Imphal based North East Centre for Environmental Education and Research (NECEER) have jointly launched a new newsletter on wildlife and conservation in North East India. Titled *Ecotone* the newsletter will be published every two months.

The newsletter is edited by Kripaljyoti Mazumdar, while the Managing Editor is Khuraijam Jibankumar Singh

Contact: **Kripaljyoti Mazumdar**, Ecotone.

Email: ecotone.editor@gmail.com

Endangered species list under the Biological Diversity Act

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) recently issued a notification under the Biological Diversity Act (2002) with a revised list of endangered species in the states of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala.

According to this list there are 13 animal and 26 plant species threatened with extinction in Kerala, the state with the most number of threatened species. The 13 threatened animal species in Kerala include Fruit bats, the Malabar Large- Spotted civet, Blue whales, the dugong, tiger, the Leatherback and Hawksbill sea turtles, Murthi's frog, and the Toad-skinned frog. The 26 plant species named include *Syzygium palghatense*, *Syzygium periyarensis*, *Vanda thwaitesii*, and *Janakia aryapathra*.

Uttarakhand was listed with 16 plant species and 15 animal species as threatened; Himachal Pradesh has eight plant species and Uttar Pradesh has just one plant threatened with extinction. The details can be viewed at <http://www.nbaindia.org/notification.htm>

Source: 'Endangered species list released', www.expressbuzz.com 20/10/09

National Tiger Conservation Authority reconstituted

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was reconstituted following the issuing

of a gazette notification in the month of September. The term of the new members would be three years. The Minister, Environment and Forests is the Chairman of the Authority. Those on the authority now include Members of Parliament, Ms Maneka Gandhi (Lok Sabha) and Mr Santosh Bagrodia (Rajya Sabha).

The other members include Mr Brijendra Singh, Mr. Valmik Thapar, Mr. PK Sen, Dr. Prakash Amte, Dr. Urmila Pingle, Dr. Ullas Karanth, Mr Samar Singh, Dr. Aparajita Dutta; secretaries of the Central Ministries of Environment and Forests, Tribal Affairs and Social Justice & Empowerment; Chairpersons of the National Commissions of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes and Chief Wildlife Wardens of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Karnataka, Mizoram and West Bengal.

Source: Gazette of India, No. 170, 04/09/09.

Contact: **Dr. Rajesh Gopal**, NTCA, see above

NTCA to issue identity cards for tigers; also to use new tool 'payment of ecosystem services' for conservation

In order to strengthen tiger conservation efforts at the ground level, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has issued an advisory to the 17-tiger range states to maintain an identity card of each tiger in their respective tiger reserves.

Madhya Pradesh has already taken an initiative to implement it and the system is to be adopted in all 37 reserves in the country as a part of the Central government's policy.

The identity card will have a photograph of the tiger and its skin print, kill data, and camera trap & radio collar records. It is hoped that this will enable forest guards to keep a track of tigers' movements and also gather regular updates of their behaviour. The Union Minister of Environment and Forests Mr Jairam Ramesh gave the go-ahead to the proposal during a recent meeting of the NTCA.

Though the move will help understand tiger occupancy, dispersal and other aspects of the tiger's ecology, it has been pointed out that it will be a difficult exercise as the predator has a potential to move far from its natal area.

In another move the Mr Ramesh has also given a nod to the NTCA to consider use of 'payment for ecosystem services (PES)' as a new conservation tool that will provide direct incentives to the local communities for preservation of tiger habitats in particular and wildlife habitats in general.

On an experimental basis, the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) will start a pilot venture in Shencottah Gap between Periyar and Kalakad Mundanthurai TRs in Western Ghats. People living in the fringe areas of these reserves will be paid for preserving the sanctuaries.

Source: Tigers to get 'unique' identity cards, PTI 08/10/09
<http://news.rediff.com/report/2009/oct/08/tigers-to-get-unique-identity-cards.htm>
 'Centre for direct incentives to locals for preserving Tigers', *The Hindu* 09/10/09.

Contact: **Dr. Rajesh Gopal**, NTCA, see above

ZSI activities related to protected areas from July - September 2009

- Field surveys in the Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary, Andhra Pradesh and the Adyar Estuary, Chennai to study the impact of the solar eclipse on avian fauna and meiofauna in July
- A 10 day field survey in the Gulf of Manar Biosphere Reserve, Tamil Nadu, for the study of soft corals
- Field survey of the Kalesar WLS, Haryana
- Publication of a research document on the Pong Dam Wetland, Himachal Pradesh, comprising information on 638 species of various animal groups
- 10 day survey in September in the Malta estuary to study the taxonomy and ecology of Brachyuran crabs of Sundarbans, West Bengal
- Extensive faunal field survey in the Bhibhuti Bhushan WLS, West Bengal
- Publication of a book on the faunal resources of the Tal Chappar WLS, Rajasthan
- A two week fauna survey in the Singhori Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh

- Publication of a Field Guide to the Fishes of the Chilika Lake, Orissa
- 10 day undersea survey of fauna in islands of the Ritchie's archipelago including the Rani Jhansi Marine National Park, A&N Islands
- Undersea surveys in October at Rutland, Jolly Buoy and Grub Islands in the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park and off the coast of Little Andaman Island
- Two day survey in the Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam for quantitative and qualitative sampling of plankton

Source: *ZSI e-NEWS*, Vol 1, No. 8, August 2009
ZSI e-NEWS, Vol 1, No. 9, September 2009
ZSI e-NEWS, Vol 1, No. 10, October 2009

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

Nepal Army gears up for anti-poaching drive

In a bid to effectively control rising poaching of wildlife animals and other illegal activities in the country's national parks, the Nepal Army (NA) has proposed a high-level Wildlife Crime Control Bureau on lines similar to the one created recently in India (*PA Update* Vol XV, No. 2). The Prime Minister will be the chairman and the bureau will have the forest minister, chiefs of security agencies and secretaries of home, defense and forest ministries as members.

In addition, the army, which has been assigned with national park security, is also set to introduce a highly-technical 'smart patrolling' in 11 buffer zones through the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) and other equipment and to form a Professional Jungle Formation (PJF) force within three months.

As per the proposal incorporated in the SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) to be endorsed by the cabinet soon, the NA would be allowed to patrol inside the buffer zone areas where poaching is highest. Through 'small

team operations,' the NA intends to intensify the intelligence and lead operations in the most dangerous poaching sites.

The PJF, on the other hand, would be a professional force trained exclusively for jungle protection. The PJF will have 10-12 personnel and will function in coordination with the warden office of the parks. The NA is also looking at making the commanders more accountable and it will put in place a mechanism to replace the unit itself if found to be either weak in operation or taking part in any other malpractices.

There are five battalions and seven independent companies (a total of 5,900 army personnel) currently deployed at 93 army posts in various parks.

Source: Akanshya Shah, *My Republica*, 01/10/09

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Tiger population falls in Myanmar's Hukuang TR

The tiger population in Myanmar's Hukuang Tiger Reserve (TR) has declined from 150 to less than a 100 as per the records of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

The fall is reported to have been caused by multiple reasons such as food scarcity caused by the hunting of prey animals for human consumption, illegal trading, poaching for use of tiger body parts in traditional medicines, and expansion of forest plantations.

Authorities have said that the major challenge for them is to strike a balance between the needs of local communities and those of wildlife. Traditional medicine practitioners in the country have been asked to stop using tiger bones and body parts and special training programmes to combat wildlife trade and crimes have been introduced jointly by the Myanmar forest ministry and the WCS.

The Hukuang TR was established over a 22,000 square kilometers area in the northernmost Kachin state in 2004 and is considered the biggest such reserve in the world (see PA Update Vol. XIII, No. 2).

Source: 'Tiger Population Declines to Less than 100 in Myanmar' 07/10/09,
<http://english.cri.cn/6966/2009/10/07/1821s520976.htm>

OPPORTUNITIES

CEPF Call for Proposals for Western Ghats

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) and the Western Ghats Regional Implementation Team (RIT) based in the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) have invited Letters of Inquiry (LoIs) from civil society organizations such as non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, academic institutions and private enterprises for biodiversity conservation projects in the Western Ghats. Applicants are expected to have adequate experience in implementing biodiversity conservation projects in the Western Ghats region of India.

The LoIs should be sent electronically to cepfgrants@conservation.org before 1800 hrs of December 17th 2009. LoIs accepted by a Grant Review Committee will pass on to the second phase of application for developing full proposals that will be further evaluated to make final funding decisions by CEPF.

The LoIs for grants should be based on the strategic directions, investment priorities and geographic locations as laid down in the Western Ghats Ecosystem Profile. The focus should be on conservation of the region's flora and fauna that are in critical danger at key biodiversity sites and corridors in the Western Ghats. Specific information for this round of grants, guidelines, instructions and format for grant applications can be downloaded from http://www.atree.org/CEPF_WGhats/WGLoi.

Contact: **Dr. Bhaskar Acharya**, CEPF Western Ghats RIT, ATREE, Royal Enclave, Srirampura, Jakkur Post, Bangalore 560064, India Tel: +919008322664. Email: cepfwgghats@atree.org Web: http://www.atree.org/CEPF_WGhats/

PROTECTED AREAS IN THE COUNTRY

There are 661 Protected Areas in the country which cover around 4.8% geographical area.

No.	State	National Parks	Wildlife Sanctuaries	Conservation Reserves	Community Reserves
1	Andhra Pradesh	5	22	0	0
2	Arunachal Pradesh	2	11	0	0
3	Assam	5	18	0	0
4	Bihar	1	13	0	0
5	Chhatisgarh	3	11	0	0
6	Goa	1	6	0	0
7	Gujarat	4	22	0	0
8	Haryana	2	8	2	0
9	Himachal Pradesh	2	32	0	0
10	Jammu & Kashmir	4	15	34	0
11	Jharkhand	1	11	0	0
12	Karnataka	5	21	2	1
13	Kerala	6	15	0	1
14	Madhya Pradesh	9	25	0	0
15	Maharashtra	6	35	1	0
16	Manipur	2	5	0	0
17	Meghalaya	2	3	0	0
18	Mizoram	2	7	0	0
19	Nagaland	1	3	0	0
20	Orissa	2	18	0	0
21	Punjab	0	12	0	2
22	Rajasthan	5	23	1	0
23	Sikkim	1	7	0	0
24	Tamil Nadu	5	21	1	0
25	Tripura	2	4	0	0
26	Uttar Pradesh	1	23	0	0
27	Uttaranchal	6	6	2	0
28	West Bengal	5	15	0	0
29	Andaman & Nicobar	9	96	0	0
30	Chandigarh	0	2	0	0
31	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0	1	0	0
32	Lakshadweep	0	1	0	0
33	Daman & Diu	0	1	0	0
34	Delhi	0	2	0	0
35	Pondicherry	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	99	515	43	4

GRAND TOTAL - 661

Source: <http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=54028.12/11/09>

Awardees – CMS Vatavaran Environmental Film Festival – 2009

No	Award Name	Title	Director	Company	CITY
	NATIONAL				
1	Best Cinematography Award	A Shawl to Die For	Rita Banerji	Dusty foot Productions	New Delhi
2	Best Story Award	S.O.S. - Save Our Sholas	Shekar Dattatri	Trust for Environmental Education	Chennai, Tamil Nadu
3	Best Editing Award	The Silk Route	Gurmeet Sapal	Explorers	Gaziabad, Uttar Pradesh
4	Amateur Film Award	My Purple Sunbird	Sunil Raj	NONE	Ahmedabad, Gujarat
5	Films for Children Award	A Fable from the Himalayas	Nitin Das	Filmkaar Productions	Pune, Maharashtra
6	Public Service Announcements (PSA) Award	Don't Buy Trouble	Himanshu Malhotra	Multi Media	New Delhi
7	Student Film Award	Garbage Island/ a lost People	Amar Sharma		Kolkata, West Bengal
8	Low Budget Films Award	Kaanam - Life Story of a Midland Hill	Babu Kambrath		Kannur, Kerala
9	Viewer's choice Award	Traffic Light	Rajesh Saathi	Keroscene Films	Mumbai, Maharashtra
10	2009 Festival Theme: Climate Change and Sustainable Technologies Award	IN THEIR ELEMENTS	Inder Kathurai	Self	New Delhi
11	2009 Focus: Natural Heritage Conservation Award	Reviving Faith	Rishu Nigam	TERI	New Delhi
12	Climate Change Award	The Final Tide	Vikram Mishra	The Big Film Company	New Delhi
13	Ecotourism Award	Leave Nothing but Footprints	Sanjay Barnela	Moving Images	New Delhi
14	Forest for Life Award	Gaon Chhodab Nahin	K. P. Sasi	Visual Search	Bangalore, Karnataka
15	Livelihood Award	Chilika Banks	Akanksha Joshi	TERI	New Delhi
16	Nature Award	Rolling Dunes of Thar	Naresh Bedi	Bedi Films	New Delhi
17	Water for All Award	Kali Bein (The Black River)	Surendra Manan	Time-Image Productions	New Delhi
18	Wildlife Conservation Award	The Asiatic Lion - on a roll call	Praveen Singh	Fulgens Productions	Noida, Uttar Pradesh
19	Environmental Conservation Award	Goa Goa Gone	Kurush Canteenwala		Mumbai, Maharashtra
20	Best of the Festival Award	Deeply Superficial	Veneet Raj Bagga	Onions Creative Media Pvt. Ltd.	New Delhi

	INTERNATIONAL				
1	Best of the Festival Award	The Soul of Water (Vattnets Sjal)	Kurt Skoog	Dynamo Fil	Faker
2	2009 Festival Theme: Climate Change and Sustainable Technologies Award	Satoyama: Japan's Secret Forest	Tetsunori Kikuchi	NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corp.)	Tokyo
3	Animation Award	Save Our Planet!	Filip Vandewiele	K&TKW Ghent	Gent
4	Climate Change Award	The Antarctica Challenge: A Global Warning	Mark Terry	Polar Cap Productions, Inc.	Toronto
5	Environmental Conservation Award	One Man, One Cow, One Planet	Barbara Burstyn and Thomas Burstyn	Cloud South Films Ltd	Napier
6	Films for Children Award	Liliputi Mimikri (Liliputian Mimicri)	David Attila Molnar	Termesztetfilm. hu Egyesulet	Budapest
7	Nature Award	Rain Forest - The Secret of Life	David Warth, Michael Balson	David Warth Production	Byaon Boy
8	Student Film Award	Why Don't we Ride Zebras?	Hannah Smith Walker	NONE	NONE
9	Water for all Award	The Soul of Water (Vattnets Sjal)	Kurt Skoog	Dynamo Fil	Faker
10	Wildlife Conservation Award	Eco-Crimes: Tibet-Connection	Heinz Greuling and Thomas Weidenbach	WDR Cologne, 3 Sat	Cologne

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS:

1) CMS-UNEP Prithvi Ratna Award

Krishnendu Bose

"For his sustained and concerted efforts towards enhancing people's understanding and spreading awareness on diverse environmental issues through films and documentaries"

2) Environmental Journalist Award (Print)

Aarti Dhar, The Hindu

"For ensuring that regional, national and global environmental issues get effectively highlighted and disseminated through her thought provoking and insightful stories"

3) TVE AP Environmental Journalist Award (Electronic)

Pierre Fitter, NEWSX

"For his insightful, analytical and fact finding stories focusing on diverse issues related to environment and climate change"

Contact: **Alka Tomar**, Festival Director, C/o CMS. Email: alka@cmsindia.org

UPCOMING

International meeting of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC)

The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) in association with Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University and The Research Center for Biology of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, University of Indonesia are organizing 'The 2010 International meeting of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC)' with the theme: 'Tropical biodiversity: surviving the food, energy and climate crisis'

The meeting is to be held in Bali, Indonesia from July 19 to 23, 2010.

Contact: **Indrawan**. Web: <http://atbc2010.org>

IN THE SUPREME COURT

PA related matters in the Supreme Court (SC) in August 2009

- Alleged construction of a power house inside the Askot Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttarakhand by the Uttaranchal Jal Vidyut Nigam Ltd.
- Moving of 1390 families living inside the Rajaji National Park, Uttarakhand to 1123 hectares of land identified and allotted for the purpose
- Illegal constructions including shops inside the Rajaji National Park by the Uttarakhand State Electricity Department and the Uttaranchal Jal Vidyut Nigam Ltd.
- The National Hydro-Electric Power Corporation's need of 386 hectares in the Kishtwar WLS, Jammu & Kashmir for the Pakal Dul Hydro Electric Project
- Grant of permission to the Lanco Hydro Energies Pvt. Ltd for diversion of 17.78 hectares of land inside the Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttarakhand. (The National Board for Wildlife has recommended the diversion and the court has accepted the same)
- For the exclusion of 58.37 hectares from the Fambonglo Wildlife Sanctuary, Sikkim
- Regarding construction of a road in the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary, Jammu & Kashmir. Permission was sought by the Ministry of Home Affairs, which was allowed by the Central Empowered Committee and accepted by the SC.

'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

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