

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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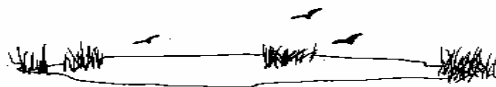
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EDITORIAL

Don't forget those on the frontlines

If technology, money and good intentions were enough, there would be no reason for any concern about the fate of Indian wildlife. There is plenty of that in evidence even in this issue of the *PA Update* – calls for more PAs, declaration of more tiger reserves, larger demands and commitments for money, sophisticated equipment for surveillance and use of newer technologies for various aspects of research, management, and protection. Much of this is necessary and welcome. But, is it enough? Are we, in the clamour for all this and more, losing sight of something more essential and absolutely fundamental?

There are at least two reports in the pages that follow that force these important questions – about the treatment and the neglect of the foot soldiers of conservation; those in the forest staff that are out there, working where it matters the most. What can be the justification for non payment of many months of wages to daily wage workers in the Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary in Maharashtra and in Uttar Pradesh's Dudhwa Tiger Reserve? It is indeed a sad state of affairs when these workers have to strike work and block tourist traffic (like in Nagzira) to bring attention to their plight.

Needless to say, these are not new happenings and delayed salaries are only one of an array of problems that they are forced to face – working conditions are poor and outright dangerous sometimes; there are no family care facilities; training and equipment are often inadequate and there are few avenues for promotions and other incentives.

If this is the treatment that will be meted out to the most vulnerable can we really hope that management, conservation or protection will happen effectively? Lofty hopes and pronouncements will remain merely those if issues of brass-tacks continue to be neglected in this manner.

When many crores of rupees are being allocated for wildlife conservation in general and to individual PAs and tiger reserves in

particular, why treat those at the bottom of the hierarchy with such callousness? And that too for only their legitimate dues.

The lesson should be a simple one – if conservation is to be successful, things need to be in order, first, inside the home. Everything else can come later.

In memorium

The last few weeks have seen the sad passing away of a number of stalwarts - individuals who inspired innumerable and who leave behind huge and important legacies: conservationist and bird man extraordinaire, **SA Hussain**; tiger man of the Dudhwa grasslands, **Billy Arjan Singh**; and the tireless fighter for the rights of the coastal fishing communities and ecosystems, **Harekrishna Debnath**.

The Kalpavriksh team expresses its heartfelt condolences to their families and close ones. Their absence will be deeply felt.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Jerdon's courser sighted in Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary

After several years, the first confirmed sighting of two Jerdon's coursers was reported from the Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh. The birds were seen by Bombay Natural History Society's (BNHS) senior research fellow Rahul Chavan in the Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The researcher also reported hearing the call of the bird on a number of occasions in the last few months.

The BNHS has a long term research project on the Jerdon's Courser that has been going for nine years. Those supporting the work include The Sheik Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, United Arab Emirates; the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK; the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department; and the Universities of Cambridge and Reading, funded by the UK

Government's Darwin Initiative. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XII, Nos. 2 & 1)

Source: 'Jerdon's courser sight for first time in many years in Andhra Pradesh'

www.wildlifewatch.in

Contact: **DFO, Wildlife**, Sri Lankamalleswara WLS, Cuddapah. Tel: 08562-244480
Dr. Asad Rahmani, Director BNHS, Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai 400 023 Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2821811. Fax: 2837615. Email: bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in

ASSAM

Database of all rhinos in Assam

Taking a cue from Kenya's Masai Mara National Park, the Assam forest department (FD) has



decided to prepare a database of rhinos in all the state's protected areas. The database will include date of birth, body structure, behaviour and the area of movement of each rhino. The Geographical Information System (GIS) and Global Positioning System (GPS) will be used to monitor the rhinos at the parks on a day-to-day basis.

It has been suggested that having such a database will give the FD an idea of the density of rhinos in the existing areas. The information will also be useful to plan for relocation of the animals if the need for the same arises.

Source: Pullock Dutta, 'Assam to build rhino database - Conservation efforts based on Masai Mara National Park in Kenya', *The Telegraph*, 28/11/09.

Increased human -elephant conflict in Assam

Following the deaths of five tea plantation workers in different incidents involving wild elephants, the Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTSA) had threatened to cease work. The ATTSA has demanded measures from Assam's wildlife authorities to keep elephant herds from entering plantation areas, and has warned that they would have to take the

path of agitation, if the government fails to protect people.

Four wild elephants have also been reportedly poisoned in the months of October and November. Locals allegedly mixed poisonous substances in country liquor, jackfruit, sugarcane and other eatables as a retaliatory measure

In 2001, close to 40 elephants were poisoned to death allegedly by the villagers. A report by the wildlife department states that wild elephants have killed about 260 people in Assam since 2001. 280 elephants have also died during the period, many of them victims of retaliation by angry humans. Satellite imagery shows that villagers have encroached about 280,000 hectares of thick forests in Assam. Villagers in the past drove away marauding herds by beating drums or bursting firecrackers. Now they poison the animals.

The last elephant census carried out by wildlife authorities recorded about 5,500 elephants in Assam, more than half of India's count of about 10,000.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 1; Vol XIV, No. 4 & 1; Vol XIII, No. 6, 2 & 1; Vol XII, No. 4 & 1; and Vol. XI, No. 4)

Source: 'Elephant depredations may force shutdown of Assam tea plantations', <http://www.news.calcuttatabe.com> 25/11/09

Over one lakh people visited Kaziranga National Park in 2008-09

Over one lakh people visited the Kaziranga National Park (KNP), during the year 2008-09. This included 100,284 domestic tourists and 5,767 foreign visitors. This is twice the number as compared to the previous year.

The revenue earned from tourism for 2008-09 was Rs. 1.12 crores.

Source: 'Over one lakh people visited Kaziranga National Park in 2008-09' www.wildlifewatch.in 03/11/09

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

PWD study for diverting traffic from NH 37 section through Kaziranga NP

The Assam Public Works Department (PWD) is undertaking a feasibility study for diverting traffic from the 100 km stretch of the NH 37 which passes through the Kaziranga National Park. The study comes after the Centre shelved plans for four-laning of the portion of the highway following opposition from conservationists fearing the threat to wildlife here. Tens of animals are killed every year in road accidents when crossing the highway. This occurs mainly during the monsoons when the floods force animals to flee the low lying grasslands to the higher grounds of the Karbi Anglong hills (see *PA Update* Vol XIV, No. 5).

The feasibility study will take about 18 months to be completed and will be considering the construction of a new 115 km route with two bridges over the Brahmaputra. One of the bridges has been proposed to be constructed parallel to the existing 3.2-km Bhumuraguri bridge near Tezpur in order to make the route four-lane. The second bridge over the Brahmaputra has been proposed between Gohpur and Bokakhat. The main idea is to divert the traffic from Nagaon to Tezpur and then via Biswanath Chariali and Gohpur to rejoin the road with the South bank of the Brahmaputra through the second bridge near Bokakhat.

The report of the feasibility study will be submitted to the Ministry of Surface Transport (MoST) and work on the detailed project report would be taken up only after receiving a nod from the ministry.

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

Source: 'Two bridges over Brahmaputra, four-lane road by pass Kaziranga', *DNA*, 11/11/09

14 rhinos poached in Kaziranga NP in 2009

A total of 14 rhinos have been poached in the Kaziranga National Park in year 2009. The latest two deaths were reported on December 22 from inside the park. They were



killed with the help of automatic weapons in separate locations and their horns had been cut out. Forest department officials have suggested that the same poacher gang was involved in both the killings.

The spurt in rhino killings has forest officials and conservationists worried. 18 rhinos were killed by poachers in Kaziranga in 2008, the first time in a decade that the number had reached double digits. Between 1980 and 1997 some 550 rhinos were killed by poachers in Kaziranga - the highest being 48 in 1992.

(See *PA Updates* Vol XV, Nos. 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, & 1; Vol XIV, No. 2; and Vol XIII, Nos. 6& 5).

Source: 'Poachers kill two rhinos in Kaziranga; 2009 toll rises to 14', www.wildlifewatch.in 27/12/09

Ramsar tag proposed for Dhir Beel, Son Beel, Kaziranga Beel and Dordoibam Beel

The Assam government has proposed the inclusion of four wetlands in the state in the list of Ramsar sites. The wetlands are Dhir *Beel*, Son *Beel*, Kaziranga *Beel* and Bordoibam *Beel*. Deepor *Beel* is the only Ramsar site in the state at the present.

The state government has also said that it will take all necessary steps to protect and develop the 3,513 wetlands in the state that cover an area of over one lakh hectares. The government has assigned the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council with the task of preparing maps and compiling data of all the wetlands in the state. The government has said that it is also in touch with international funding agencies to avail funds for conserving the wetlands.

Source: 'Assam push for Ramsar tags - State forest department zeroes in on four wetlands' *The Telegraph*, 09/12/09

Two senior Nagaland officials suspect in rhino poaching

The rhino horn trail has led the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau to two senior Nagaland state government officials. One of them is a senior education department official and the other is a medical officer. Both are based in Dimapur.

Their telephone numbers were found on the cell phone of Harmuj Ali, the alleged poacher who had died in an encounter with forest guards at Orang Rajiv Gandhi National Park on the night of October 17 (see *PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 6).

Officials have said that a number of calls were exchanged between these numbers and that of Ali on the 17th of October. There were also several missed calls on Ali's cell phone from these numbers after he died in the encounter. The calls kept coming till late in the morning the day after the encounter.

It was also found that the SIM card recovered from Ali's mobile had been stolen from the employee of a Guwahati-based construction company. The police had arrested the owner of the SIM card. He was subsequently released following information that he had lodged a complaint with the police that the SIM card had been stolen.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol XIV, No. 3 & 2; Vol XIII, Nos. 6, 5 & 1; Vol. XII, Nos. 3 & 2; and No. 49)

Source: '2 Nagaland officials suspect - Wildlife crime bureau tracks 4 calls on poacher's cell phone' *The Telegraph*, 07/11/09

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

Railway track creates new rhino habitat adjoining Valmiki TR

New swampy habitat of roughly 1000 hectares has been created adjoining the Valmiki Tiger Reserve by the Bagha – Chitauni rail link that prevents the natural flow of some rivulets into the reserve. The link that had been converted to a broad gauge line in the 1990s had been opposed by the Bihar forest department (FD) and a legal battle had also been fought on the grounds that it would be detrimental to the habitat of the reserve.

Blockage of the flow of water has now created the swampy habitat and has attracted rhinos from across the border from Nepal.

Earlier the rhinos used to visit the area for a few days but since 2004 they are reported to have taken up permanent residence. Three rhinos are regularly found here now.

The FD now plans to undertake a survey of the area to figure out the feasibility of creating a protected area here for rhinos.

Source: 'New habitat for rhinos in Bihar', Times News Network, 01/12/09

Contact: **Director**, Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bettiah, Dist. West Champaran, Bihar.
Tel: 06254 – 235331/232909.

Tourism promotion plans for Valmiki TR

Special efforts are being made to promote tourism in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve. The authorities have prepared a Rs 30-lakh proposal for improving the condition of forest roads falling under Divisions I & II of the reserve. Another proposal is for enhancing the accommodation capacity of the reserve's rest house which can presently accommodate only four persons at a time.

A website on the reserve is also to be launched. Part of the Rs 1.08 crore fund received from Centre under the Annual Plan of Operation head is to be used for the purpose.

Source: Sanjeev Kumar Verma, 'Efforts to help promote eco-tourism begin', Times News Network, 17/12/09

Tiger Protection Force proposed for Valmiki Tiger Reserve

The Bihar Forest Department (FD) has sent a proposal to the Centre seeking Rs. 2.22 crore for the Valmiki Tiger Reserve. Of this an amount of about Rs. 20 lakh would be spent on raising the Tiger Protection Force (TPF). The fund would also be used for habitat development and to meet other recurring costs related to the management of the reserve.

The TPF would consist of 20 personnel of which 10 would be either ex-army men or those from the special task force and remaining 10 would be locals.

The process of raising the TPF would start once the Central fund is released. Bihar was ineligible for seeking central funds as it

had not signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), which is now a statutory requirement for being eligible to receive central funds.

Source: Sanjeev Kumar Verma, 'Bihar likely to have tiger protection force soon' Times News Network 21/11/09



Mining ban shows positive results in Valmiki Tiger Reserve

The ban by the Supreme Court (under the Godavarman case) on mining of stones from the bed of the Pandai river has started to show positive results in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve. The green cover is reported to have reappeared along the banks of the river and this in turn is allowing easier movement of both prey and predator species. Tiger movement that was previously restricted to only the west of the river has now been reported from the eastern part as well.

More recent reports however indicate that mining is still continuing within one kilometer of certain parts of the reserve boundary. Though licenses for sand and stone mining have been issued for areas outside the reserve, illegal mining is occurring even within the boundaries. 19 tractors with sand and stones mined allegedly from within the reserve, were seized by the police in the month of November.

Source: Sanjeev Kumar Verma. 'Ban on mining a boon for tiger reserve', Times News Network, 10/12/09
Reena Sopam. 'Sand mining in Valmikinagar forests threatens habitation of tigers', *Hindustan Times*, 11/11/09
Contact: **CWLW**, Government of Bihar, Patna, Bihar. Tel: 0621-287507. Fax: 284425

GUJARAT

Bio-tech efforts to conserve Gir lion

Gujarat has planned to set up a genetic laboratory for the conservation of the Asiatic lion. The laboratory will have a gene map, and a sperm, egg, cell and tissue bank of the lion for biological use and genetic studies.

The proposed laboratory, the Gujarat Institute of Wildlife Genomics (GIWG) will come up at Sakkar Baug Zoo in Junagadh. The estimated cost of this joint project of the state forest department (FD) and the Gujarat State Bio-technology Mission (GSBM) is over Rs 10 crore. The work was to be started in November, and is expected to take about three years to complete.

The laboratory will have facilities for DNA banking, cellular studies, proteomics, cryogenics and bio-informatics. It will later work on similar conservation plans for other endangered species in the state as well.

The project includes two pilot studies on Asiatic lions — development of micro satellite markers or specific sequence of DNA unique to the Asiatic lion, and preliminary DNA banking of the species. GSBM and the FD will jointly conduct these studies.

A detailed genetic profiling of the Asiatic lion will reportedly help scientists find out any genetic structure that links the animal to some known disease or disorder/disease susceptibility, help in their long term conservation, facilitate correct medical treatment in case of a disease and provide forensic help in case of poaching.



Source: Vikram Rautela, 'State-of-the-art genetic lab to aid conservation of Asiatic lion', *Indian express*, 12/10/09
Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/630051. Fax: 631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in
CWLW - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar-382010, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-230007. Fax: 221097.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Satellite collars for black bears in Dachigam National Park

The Jammu-Kashmir Wildlife Department has initiated a project for satellite tracking of black bears in the Dachigam National Park.

Researchers from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) recently put satellite collars around three black bears; a male, female and a cub in the park .

It is hoped that the study will help gain a better understanding of the behaviour, habitat and food habits of the animal and also help in dealing the escalating human-wildlife conflict here. More than 25 people have been killed and another 150 have been injured in the Kashmir valley in such incidents in the last four years.

(Also see *PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 2)

Source: 'Satellite collars to track bears in Valley', *The Indian Express*, 17/11/09

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Dachigam NP, C/o. Chief Wildlife Warden, J&K State Tourist Reception Centre Srinagar – 190001. Tel: 0194-2492627

KARNATAKA

Work to proceed on Mysore –Mananthavadi road through the Nagarhole NP

The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of the Karnataka State Highway Improvement Project (KSHIP) has decided to go

ahead with the Mysore-Mananthavadi road through the Nagarhole National Park disregarding the recommendations of the Monitoring Committee constituted by the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of the Supreme Court. The work is part of KSHIP's project to improve 34.50 km of the Mysore-Mananthavadi road, which was initially planned through Nagarhole National Park. However, the CEC, in March 2009, directed that work be suspended.



A 10-km stretch of the Mysore-Mananthavadi Road (State Highway 17D) was initially proposed through the southern side of the national park. But the Mysore-Mananthavadi Road Monitoring Committee (MMRMC) constituted by the CEC suggested diversion of the original alignment between Dammanakatte and Udburu to avoid the national park limits.

While the diversion suggested by MMRMC will increase the distance by just 3 km — from 10 km to 13 km — it has been suggested that it will benefit nearly 25,000 people who live in villages along the route. In contrast, the original alignment of the road through the national park avoids villages and would have affected wildlife.

The diversion had been suggested because the Mysore-Mananthavadi road is used by timber, spirit and sand smugglers, poachers and those seeking to evade sales tax. Also, there is livestock smuggling from Karnataka to Kerala. The district administration too had expressed its support to the realignment. It has been pointed out that the alternative stretch would pass through Honnamankatte, Hosaholalu, K.R. Pura, Magge, Malali, N. Belthur, Kharapura, Gundattur and Udburu villages and benefit them by increasing their connectivity.

The PIU has, however, questioned the MMRMC's credentials to make such a recommendation. It has pointed out that the committee was constituted as part of the five conditions of the CEC with the specific task of monitoring the mitigation measures for environment and wildlife during the implementation of the project along the original alignment. As such the proposal of improvement of the alternative route and consequent revision of the project scope was not under the purview of the MMRMC. The PIU has also stated that it conducted a feasibility study through Scott Wilson Ltd., U.K. and found that the alternative route was neither feasible nor economically viable.

The Forest Department meanwhile has come out in support of the suggested 3 kms diversion and extension. It has argued that if the monitoring committee's recommendations benefited the villagers and would not impact wildlife it had to be considered feasible and economically viable.

Source: R Krishna Kumar. 'Road to cut through Nagarhole', *The Hindu*, 28/11/09

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

KERALA

Joint initiatives with Tamil Nadu for Periyar

Joint patrolling, sharing of intelligence, including information on poaching, and creation of more eco-development committees on the Tamil Nadu border are the measures to be taken up for protection of tigers in the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) at Thekkadi in Kerala.

This was decided at an inter-State coordination meeting for preparation of a tiger conservation plan for the Periyar Tiger Reserve. Attended by forest officers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the meeting also decided to set up new permanent camps in Tamil Nadu. The officers decided to take up survey of the inter-state boundary and also its consolidation and maintenance annually. The PTR staff will also be allowed to move through the forest division within Vellimalai and Manalar in Tamil Nadu.

Restrictions on issuing licences for rifles and guns to people living along the forests were also discussed. Institutional mechanisms for regular joint-patrolling, collection of non-timber forest produce and sharing of resources and Ariyankavu corridor were the other issues that came up for discussion.

Officials said that inter-state coordination for conservation planning was inevitable as the PTR shares a 100 km-long common border in the east and north side with the state of Tamil Nadu.

Source: 'Joint patrolling agreed upon to protect tigers in Periyar reserve', *The Hindu* 13/01/10.

MADHYA PRADESH

State signs tri-partite agreement with NTCA for tiger conservation

The Madhya Pradesh Government has finally signed the tripartite agreement with the Centre

and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for tiger conservation. The state had been reluctant to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the grounds that it would make the Directors of its tiger reserves accountable for any lapses and liable to penal action if the tiger numbers decline. The state also did not want the NTCA to deal directly with the reserve directors by bypassing the state government.

The state has instead suggested a bilateral pact between the centre and the state with the chief wildlife warden of the state signing an individual agreement with the director of reserves on tiger conservation. Not signing the agreement would have resulted in the state losing substantial funds from the centre for tiger conservation.

MP is now the 16th state in the country to sign this tri-partite agreement.

Source: Sanjay Sharma. 'Madhya Pradesh could lose tiger conservation funds', <http://india-forums.com/news/article.asp?id=209732> 'MP inks pact with Centre for tiger conservation' www.wildlifewatch.in 26/11/09

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

Wildlife law enforcement and training held in Bhopal

TRAFFIC India, in collaboration with the United Kingdom Government's Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) held a training workshop on wildlife law enforcement for forest and police officers in Bhopal in November. The workshop was attended by 55 personnel from the two departments.

The workshop was inaugurated by Mr RS Negi, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Madhya Pradesh. Those who spoke during the course of the workshop included Mr Sartaj Singh, Madhya Pradesh Forest Minister; Mr Anup Naik, Joint Director of WCCB; Mrs Rina Mitra, Additional Director of WCCB; Mr C Behera, Deputy

Director of WCCB, Central Zone; Mr Samir Sinha, TRAFFIC India; Dr Harsh Sharma, Senior Scientist, Regional Forensic Science Laboratory; Dr D K Satpathy, Director of the Medico Legal Institute of the Government of Madhya Pradesh; Dr SP Goyal of the Wildlife Institute of India; and Mr Saurabh Sharma, Supreme Court Advocate.

The second phase of the Sniffer Dog Training for Wildlife Enforcement was also inaugurated at the Dog Training Centre, 23rd Battalion of the Special Armed Police, Bhopal. Five German Shepherd Dogs and 10 forest department (FD) staff were inducted into the training that will continue for nine months. The FDs of Haryana and Uttarakhand already have one sniffer dog each that has been supported by TRAFFIC India.

TRAFFIC India has said that following the success of the pilot project, the dogs have been made available to the states of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Maharashtra, who have sent their staff to be trained as handlers and assistant handlers. Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand will get two dogs each whereas Maharashtra will get one fully trained dog for sniffing out tiger and leopard skins and bones.

Source: Shubhobroto Ghosh. Email dated 17/11/09.

Contact: **Shubhobroto Ghosh**, TRAFFIC India, WWF India Secretariat, 172-B, Lodi Estate, New Delhi 110003. Tel: 011-41504786. Fax: 43516200. Email: shubhobrotoghosh@gmail.com Web: www.traffic.org

MAHARASHTRA

Dismantled film sets degrading forests adjoining the Sanjay Gandhi NP

The reckless dumping of waste from dismantled film and television sets has been degrading the forest area inside Film City at Goregaon in Mumbai. This 500-acre lush green area of Film City borders the Sanjay Gandhi National Park.



Most of the sets used in the entertainment industry are made using non-biodegradable items such as plaster of paris, plastic and thermocol and this aggravates the problem. The reckless dumping is not only degrading the forests but also polluting the water bodies in the area.

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) which has its education centre adjoining the Film City has raised concerns about this. Volunteers from the BNHS recently collected 12 bagfuls of waste during a clean-up drive that was conducted within a one kilometre radius of Film City.

The Chief Administrative Official of Film City is reported to have said that the television and film units are responsible for the disposal of the sets and to keep the area clean. He also said that if environmental groups had complaints, those would be looked into.

Source: Simit Bhagat, 'Film sets killing Film City', Times News Network, 05/12/09

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

Van majoors protest non-payment of wages; stops tourists from entering Nagzira WLS

Over 150 *van majoors* (temporary forest workers) organized under the banner of Maharashtra State Forest Guards, Forest Employees and Foresters Union stopped over 200 tourists from entering the Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary in December. They were protesting the non-payment of wages for the period June to November 2009.

The forest workers launched peaceful protests by sitting on a *dharna* in front of the sanctuary gates at Pitezari, Chorkhamara and Kosamtondi. 30 vehicles, including those of two MLAs were stranded at the Pitezari gate as a result.

The union also warned that if the wages were not released by January 1, the forthcoming tiger census work would also be boycotted. Forest officials tried to pacify the agitated workers by promising them to pay wages for three months (June, July & August)

but workers were firm on their stand. Official sources said that Rs 19 lakh and Rs 75 lakh had been released recently for wildlife and the Nagpur territorial circle towards payment of wages and other works.

The MLAs who were stranded on account of the agitation also offered to take up the matter of the non-payment of the wages and that of the regularization of the workers with the state forest minister.

The latest in the matter is not known.

Source: 'No wages, no entry into sanctuary' Times News Network, 14/12/09

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

Deer and *neelgai* translocated from Nagpur to Bor WLS

115 deer and *neelgai* were translocated from the Seminary Hills in Nagpur to the Bor Wildlife Sanctuary situated some 60 kms from the city. The process was carried out by the Nagpur Forest Division (FD) and Nagpur Wildlife Circle. The re-location site was selected after considering forest density, distance from villages and water availability.

The relocation task was taken up in presence of senior forest officers and veterinary experts. It had to be carried out as the National Zoo Policy does not allow small zoos or orphanages to keep more than 10 deer. The excess animals are required to be transferred to other zoos or released in the wild. Former PCCF (Wildlife) B Majumdar had in 2007 directed the Nagpur FD to shift these animals to the Melghat Tiger Reserve. However, considering the long distance between the two places, it was decided to relocate them to Bor.

While some of the animals have been born at the orphanage, most of them have been rescued. The deer park will now house only animals which are not fit for release. In a similar exercise six years ago, around 75 animals had been released from an orphanage at Ramtek.

Source: 'Deer, neelgai being relocated from Seminary Hills to Bor', Times News Network, 11/10/09

Contact: **DCF, Pench National Park**, Near Govt. Press, Civil Lines, Nagpur-440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 - 2524727(O) , 2227282(R). Fax: 2539226

Shifting of villages from Tadoba Andhari TR to be expedited

The Maharashtra state government has asked the revenue and forest department officials to expedite the relocation of villages from the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). This includes five villages that are still inside the reserve and some families from the village of Kolsa that have continued to stay on.

The issue was discussed in a meeting called by the State Principal Secretary in Mumbai in October. This meeting was followed by another one that was called by the Divisional Commissioner and attended by the chief conservator of forests (CCF) for Nagpur Wildlife Circle, who has also been named as the nodal officer for the work. Others attending included the Chandrapur district collector and officials from Chandrapur *zilla parishad* and the irrigation department.

Officials were asked to prepare a revised estimate for resettling 778 families from four villages- Jamni, Navegaon (Ramdegi), Palasgaon (Shingru) and Rantalodi. Individual families were to be asked whether they wanted money or wanted to be resettled by the department.

As per the new norms, each family will get a Rs 10 lakh package. It includes 35% for agricultural land, 30% for settlement of rights, 20% for house construction, 5% as incentive and 10% for community facilities like drinking water, electricity, irrigation, sanitation, roads, place of worship, and cremation and burial. Those not wanting to be resettled can opt for Rs 10 lakhs in cash.

Till now, around 116 families - 45 landless families from Botezari and 71 from Kolsa have been rehabilitated in compartment number 524 in Tolewahi in Mul forest range. However, over 70 landholders from Kolsa still remain and efforts are on to persuade them to move out.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XV, No. 4 and Vol. XIV, Nos. 5 & 3).

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Shifting of Tadoba villages gets fillip', Times News Network, 12/11/09

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

MoEF rejects mining project near Tadoba Andhari TR

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has refused permission to the Adani Power Limited and the Maharashtra Coal Company to mine coal near the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve. The decision was taken in a November meeting of the environmental appraisal committee of the ministry.

Adani Power Limited had applied for environment clearance for mining at Lohara, while the Maharashtra Coal Company Limited had applied for mining near Agarzari.

After detailed discussions, the committee came to the conclusion that at the time of grant of Terms of Reference (ToR), the MoEF was not aware that the projects were so close to the tiger corridor. It also recommended that the MoEF and the Ministry of Coal must work together in the future to identify 'go' and 'no-go' areas while considering allotment of coal blocks in the country.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XV, Nos. 3 & 1)

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'No mining at Tadoba, says forest ministry', *DNA*, 04/12/09

ORISSA

Seven month ban on marine fishing in Orissa from November 2009

The Orissa Government has imposed a seven month fishing ban starting November along the 20 km stretch of Dhamra-Barunei mouth within Gahirmatha marine sanctuary. The ban was imposed in view of the commencement of mass nesting of Olive Ridley sea turtles and resulted in protests and opposition by local fisherfolk. An estimated 25,000 traditional marine fishermen in coastal Kendrapara and

Jagatsinghpur districts are likely to be affected by the prohibitory measures.

The ban has been imposed in accordance with the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act (OMFRA), 1982 and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1971. As many as 212 marine fishermen were arrested and 84 sea worthy trawlers and vessels were seized during the ban imposed last time for fishing in the prohibited water zones.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, Nos. 4 & 1; Vol XIV, No. 1; Vol. XIII. Nos. 6, 2 & 1; Vol. XII, No. 6 & 1; and No. 59)



Source: 'Ban imposed on marine fishing in Orissa for 7 months', www.wildlifewatch.in 03/11/09

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

Oriental small-clawed otter reported from Karlapat WLS

Recent surveys done by the NGO Vasundhara has revealed for the first time the presence of the Oriental small-clawed otter from the Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary. Signs of the presence of the animal were found in most streams in the sanctuary and the maximum presence was noticed in the Karlapat stream as the water depth was maximum and flow rate was minimum.

The survey has found a healthy population of the otters in 16 streams of the sanctuary. The research team also found out that the crabs are the favoured food item of the otters. Local tribal communities here are reported to believe that if anyone eats the otter, his/her body will not decompose even after death.

Source: 'Ecologists find large population of otters', www.expressbuzz.com 21/12/09

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer-cum-Wildlife Warden**, I/c Karlapat WLS, At / P.O. Bhawanipatana, Dist Kalahandi, Orissa.
Tel: 06670-230526. Fax: 230526
CWLW– Orissa, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa.
Tel: 0674- 2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840.
Fax: 512502

PUNJAB

Illegal fishing rampant in Harike WLS

Large scale illegal fishing appears rampant in the waters of the Harike Wildlife Sanctuary. A party of officials led by the State Chief Wildlife Warden recently recovered three nets, each 100 metres long. The nets had been laid out in the water bodies fronting the Harike headworks and Churrian area on the Harike Left Marginal Bandh (LMB). The forest department burnt the nets after taking photographs.

The recoveries came a day after a similar seizure from Churrian area by range officers. A total of 18 nets were found by the forest officials.

Source: Vikram Jit Singh, 'Fish mafia lays siege to Harike sanctuary', Times News Network 24/11/09

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

RAJASTHAN

Illegal fishing in Sariska TR; four arrested

Four persons were arrested for allegedly fishing in a water body located inside the Sariska Tiger Reserve. They killed around 400 kg of fishes of four species and several frogs and snakes by dropping poison in the Bara Bear dam.

Forest guards reached the dam when the accused were trying to carry away the dead fish. Four of the alleged offenders were arrested, while four of their accomplices managed to escape.

Source: 'Fishes found dead, four arrested from Sariska', www.wildlifewatch.in 09/12/09

Contact: **Director**, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Sariska, Alwar – 301022, Rajasthan.
Tel: 0144-241333 (O)

NTCA approves Darrah Tiger Reserve

The National Tiger Conservation Authority has given its in-principal approval to the Rajasthan state government proposal for the formation of the Darrah Tiger Reserve. It will be the third tiger reserve in the state after Ranthambhore and Sariska and it has been proposed that the 'surplus' tigers of Ranthambhore will be eventually translocated here.

The tiger reserve will be constituted of the Darrah National Park and the Chambal and Jaswant Sagar Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Source: Anindo Dey, 'Third tiger reserve in state at Darrah' TNN 07/11/09

Contact: **DCF (WL)**, Darrah Wildlife Sanctuary, via Kamalpura, Dist. Kota, Rajasthan.
Tel: 0744-2321263(O), 2324856(R),
Fax: 2322074/ 2329406

New road threat to Ranthambore TR

The Rajasthan state government has proposed the construction of a new road connecting Sawata and Hadoti that will cut through the forest corridor connecting the Ranthambore National Park and the Keladevi WLS.

While most of the tiger population in the reserve is found in the national park, tigers are known to migrate to Keladevi and the Sawai Mansingh WLS and hence, the connectivity of these parks is considered very important.

Source: 'New Ranthambore road spells trouble for tigers', *The Pioneer*, 16/12/09.

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

TAMIL NADU

New facilities, tourism initiatives at Mudumalai TR

A number of new facilities and initiatives for tourism promotion are coming up at the

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve. An eco-shop is being set up that will be run by an eco-development committee (EDC) comprising tribals of the region. It will sell wildlife related souvenirs and also products produced by the tribal communities like the Kurumbas, the Todas and the Kotas.

Another tribal EDC is to soon start eco-camps at places like Pudhu Natham and Chemanatham and another will promote rural tourism in places like Bhoodhanatham and Kurumbarpadi. Finishing touches are also being given to a new reception centre and a new interpretation centre at Theppakadu.

The number of tourists visiting Mudumalai has steadily increased. From 94,945 visitors in 1995-96 it went up to 1,20,402 during 2005-2006 and last year it was 1,63,610.

Source: D Radhakrishnan. 'Mudumalai Tiger Reserve to sport new features', *The Hindu*, 02/11/09

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Mudumalai WLS, Mt. Stewart Hill, Udthagamandalam - 643001 Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0423-244098

Convention held on livelihood rights of peasants, Repatriates, and adivasis of Nilgiri District

A convention of the 'forest people' of the Nilgiri district was held in Chennai in the 2nd week of December. It was organized by the Vyavasayikal Thozhilalarkal Munnetra Sangam (VTMS) and those participating included adivasis, repatriates, plantation labourers, minorities and peasants from Gudalur.

A resolution passed at the convention raised a number of issues and put forward a list of demands. These included among others, the demand that land and forest rights of all sections of the poor and oppressed be protected; that all land, forest and water management in the area be done through democratic processes under the control of the people; that the right and power of the *ooru sabha* to protect and manage forests be respected; that all estates whose lease period is over be taken over by the government; that the Silver Cloud and Glenrock estates should withdraw their case pending in the Supreme Court on the Janmom lands to enable the settlement of rights of the people; that the

notification declaring Mudumalai as a Critical Tiger Habitat was illegal and that it should be withdrawn; that the illegal ban on basic facilities and development such as water supply, schools, hospitals, electricity and housing be withdrawn; that the elephant corridor which the traditional inhabitants of Gudalur are aware of should be protected but that take over of agricultural and other lands under the garb of elephant corridor be stopped immediately; that land holdings below two acres should be exempt from the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Private Forest Act of 1949; that banning of night traffic on Bandipur – Thorappalli section of National Highway 67 connecting Mysore and Ooty was causing serious problems to local residents and that a flyover should be constructed over this section to protect the wildlife while ensuring the right to movement.

Source: 'Livelihood Rights Convention: Reclaiming livelihood rights of peasants, repatriates and adivasis of Nilgiri district', Press Release, 08/12/09

Contact: **M.S Selvaraj**, VTMS, No.13/341, Kasim Vayal, Gudalur, Nilgiri District, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0 9442085049

UTTAR PRADESH

Additional compensation from FD to those killed in feline attacks

The Tiger Conservation Society (TCS) of the Uttar Pradesh forest department (FD) has decided to give Rs 10,000 as compensation to the family of any adult killed in tiger or leopard attack. Similarly, a sub-adult will get Rs 5,000. This would be in addition to the ex-gratia payment made by the government. As per a 1996 government order, the family of an adult who gets killed in tiger/leopard attack gets an ex-gratia payment of Rs 50,000. In the case of a the amount is Rs 25,000.

In case of an injury due to an attack by tiger/leopard, the department will release Rs 5,000 for primary treatment to the injured. In case a tiger/leopard kills a domestic animal and the remains of that animal are handed over to the FD, the owner of the animal will be given the amount as decided by the government

under ex-gratia payment rules. The payment will differ according to animals.

The FD has also decided to put four members in rapid response teams which have been created at the level of divisions and circles to deal with incidents of human-animal conflict and also to check the entry of big cats into human habitations.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the TCS which was presided over by principal secretary, FD.

Source: 'Now, additional compensation to those killed in feline attacks', Times News Network 18/12/09

Advanced detectors to locate metal traps in Dudhwa TR

The Dudhwa Tiger Reserve has received advanced devices called deep search metal detectors (DSMD) to detect metal traps laid by poachers. The project is being implemented in collaboration with the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and TRAFFIC India.

Of the four DSMDs that were provided to the reserve, two are to be used in the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) while one each will be used in the Dudhwa National Park and Kishanpur WLS respectively. The DSMD is a device mostly used by the army personnel to detect explosive mines and has the capacity to detect iron traps even when they have been buried deep into the ground.

Source: 'More advanced device to detect traps in Dudhwa Tiger Reserve', www.wildlifewatch.in 17/11/09

Contact: **Director**, Dudhwa National Park, Dist. Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 05872-252106. Fax: 05872-252106

Daily wages in Dudhwa TR not paid for seven months

The Uttar Pradesh government has allegedly not paid daily wages for the past seven months to over 250 workers in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve despite the Centre releasing money for running of the park. This is based on reports received in November and the latest situation is not known.

Though the Centre is said to have released Rs 3.16 crore to the state government in September for maintenance of the reserve soon after it signed an agreement for tiger conservation, the workers were not paid even in the first week of November.

Daily wages are paid Rs 100 per day and their total salary bill for the period April – October 2009 stood at between Rs 60-70 lakhs.

Source: 'Workers in UP's Dudhwa Tiger Reserve waiting for their dues' www.wildlifewatch.in 05/11/09

17 tiger cubs sighted in Dudhwa TR

Dudhwa Tiger Reserve authorities have said that they have spotted at least 17 tiger cubs in the reserve that are less than one year in age.

A tigress with three cubs was sighted in Madraicha while Chhota Palia, Chaltua, Kakraha, Puraina and Jhadi Tal areas of the national park and Sadar beat of Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary were reported to have tigresses with two cubs respectively. A tigress with one cub was reported to be staying in Trans-Gerua area of the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary.

Source: Neha Shukla. 'Tiger cubs usher hope for Dudhwa reserve', Times News Network, 04/11/09
'15 new tiger cubs sighted in Dudhwa', www.wildlifewatch.in 10/11/09

Rhinos near Indo-Nepal border will get unique IDs

Wildlife officials are planning a database of the rhino population in Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary and Pilibhit forest area. They will assign a unique identity card to each rhino, in order to keep a track of the individual rhinos' movement across the Indo-Nepal border. Rhinos will be identified on the basis of physical parameters like shape of their horns, its length and its size. Each rhino will be photographed and the data will be incorporated in making the IDs.

Three rhinos – a male, a female and a sub-adult have moved to the Katarniaghat WLS from Nepal through the Khata corridor,

while six from the Shukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve in Nepal have moved to the Lagga Bagga area in Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit forest division.

Source: 'Rhinos wandering on Indo-Nepal border to get IDs', *Indian Express*, 12/12/09

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

UTTARAKHAND

70% resorts around Corbett TR used for non-wildlife tourism

A study conducted by the Institute of Hotel Management, Pusa has found that 70% of the resorts around the Corbett Tiger Reserve are used as venues for weddings, rain dances, parties, and bike races rather than for visitors interested in wildlife. The study has been commissioned by the Union Ministry of Tourism and Corbett is one of seven parks where similar studies are to be carried out (see National News for more details).

The study looked at resorts within a 10 km periphery of the reserve boundary. There are 77 resorts in the area and 17 more are to come up in the next few months. The study also found out that 31% of the properties dump their waste outside, while 26% burn it. 94% of the properties were found to be fenced or walled. This, the study says, has impeded two animal migratory routes between Corbett and Rajaji NP. Of the 77 vehicles plying in the park, 26 were reported to be running on diesel.

The tourism ministry is reported to have expressed concern over this state of affairs and intends to bring this to the notice of the Ministry of Environment and Forests for corrective action to be taken.

Source: Himanshi Dhawan. 'Corbett turns haven for party animals', *The Times of India*, 13/01/10.

Contact: **Field Director**, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar –244715, Nainital, Uttaranchal. Tel: 05947 – 285489. Fax: 285376

WEST BENGAL

Dalma WLS elephant herd caught in Maoist-police war in West Bengal



The 70 strong elephant herd from the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary that migrates regularly between Dalma and forests in West Bengal has now been caught in the gun battle between the police and the Maoists in the region.

It has been suggested that the herd could land up in Jhargram town on their journey back to the Jharkhand hills unless firing in Lalgargh in West Bengal ceases by January. Hulla-parties and *kunkis* (tamed elephants) have been kept ready to drive the pachyderms away in case they enter the town to avoid the jungles where the joint forces are now crossing swords with Maoist rebels.

The traditional route of the elephant takes them to Lalgargh after passing through Sankrail and it is feared that if the gun-battle continues they will run into trouble here. It is expected that the firing will force the elephants to the alternative Jhargram-Belpahari-Bhulabheda route. This is believed to be tricky as Jhargram town is just two kms from the forest and the elephants could enter the town like they had done on their journey into Bengal about six months ago.

Maoist camps deep inside the forests at Lalgargh and Jhargram have forced the Dalma herd to stray from their corridor. On entering the state from Jharkhand through Bhulabheda, the jumbos usually travel through Belpahari and Lalgargh via Silda. With these forests now witnessing a fierce gun battle, the jumbos stayed away from Lalgargh this year and passed through the Sarenga forest instead, which is 10 km away. They then proceeded through Homgarh, Amlaghora and Garbeta on their way to Bankura.

The deviation from the original route was as much as 25 km and this, foresters

believe, is worrisome because the area does not have a good forest cover and there are chances of increased human-elephant conflict. The herd has been regularly trampling through agricultural fields, destroying crops and property and three people were also killed in elephant attacks in September and October.

Forest officials also fear that the elephants could get killed by the land mines laid out in this area. Officials are trying to figure out ways of dealing with the problem; including one that will use tractors to block the main road leading to Jhargram town.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 1; Vol XIV, No. 4; Vol. XI, No. 6 and Nos. 55, 52, 47, & 39)

Source: Prithvijit Mitra. 'Survival battle', Times News Network, 24/12/09

Pollution, road widening project threaten East Kolkata wetlands

A study conducted recently by the Institute of Wetland Management & Ecological Design has pointed out that the East Kolkata Wetlands are under increasing threat. Over 36 fish varieties recorded here have become rare and than 50% of the rest are found only sporadically. The shrinking water spread is also altering the character of the Ramsar site and threatening the livelihood of nearly one lakh fishermen.

It has been pointed out that there is a rise in the salinity level of the waters and the overload of the city's sewage has also caused a fall in the oxygen in the water. Another concern is the excavation of ponds to a depth of 10-12 feet to scoop up earth to fill up low-lying land at New Town.

The East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority (EKWMA), meanwhile, has planned to kick start its conservation plan by dredging channels that carry sewage. While EKWMA will dredge 95 km of canals, the Kolkata Municipal Council will handle a further 100 km under the Asian Development Bank funded Kolkata Environmental Improvement Project (KEIP) project.

The West Bengal government has also, in alleged violation of the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Act, 2006, announced a road widening project through the Ramsar site. The State Urban Development Minister Asok

Bhattacharya and Kolkata Mayor Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya recently laid the foundation stone for widening the single-lane Chowbagha Road to four lanes. The project to expand the 4.3 m single-lane Chowbagha Road to 18 m four-lane expressway connecting Basanti highway at Chowbagha to Kalikapur on Eastern Metropolitan Bypass requires conversion of over 60,000 sq m of wetland area into metalled road.

The approval of East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority (EKWMA), is mandatory for all projects proposed in the wetlands, but is reported to have not been taken for this road widening project.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XII, No. 5 & 4, Vol XI, No. 4 and Nos. 40 & 24)

Source: Subhro Niyogi. 'Species vanish with wetlands', Times News Network, 24/12/09

Subhro Niyogi & Swati Sengupta. 'State violates wetland act for 4-land road', *The Times of India*

State signs tri-partite agreement for tiger conservation; allotted Rs. 300 crores for Buxa and Sunderbans TRs

The West Bengal State government signed the tri-partite agreement for conservation with the Centre and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in the month of October. This was followed by a release of Rs. 300 crores for tiger conservation in the Sunderbans and Buxa Tiger Reserves.

Sunderbans received Rs. 260 crores while Buxa got Rs. 38.58 crores. The money is to be used to make the reserves free from human management and also to initiate steps for their better management.

Source: 'Centre gives Rs 300 crore to West Bengal for tiger conservation', www.wildlifewatch.in 06/11/09

Contact: **Field Director**, Buxa Tiger Reserve, P.O. Alipurduar, Dist. Jalpaiguri - 736122. West Bengal. Tel: 03564-256333 /255979. Fax: 03564-255577

Gaur run over by train near Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary

An adult female gaur was mowed down by the Delhi-bound Mahananda Link Express at Hilajhora, near the Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary. The train hit the animal early in the morning and dragged it about 300 feet, tearing the body apart in the process. The forest department (FD) has lodged an FIR with Nagrakata police. The incident occurred in the last week of November and is the latest in a long list of such accidents and deaths.

The track, connecting New Jalpaiguri with Alipurduar, cuts through the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, Chapramari WLS, Jaldapara WLS and the Buxa Tiger Reserve. In the past nine years, 20 elephants and at least 17 other animals — including leopards, gaur, deer and pythons — have died on the track.

The accidents have increased drastically since 2003, when the track was converted to broad gauge from metre gauge. Though the Calcutta high court has set guidelines on the speed of trains running on this track through the Dooars, environmentalists and forest officers allege that these are never followed. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XV, No. 1; Vol. XIV, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol XIII, Nos. 6, 3 & 1; Vol XII, No. 3 and Nos. 49, 47, 39, 36, 34, & 29)

Source: 'Bison run over by train in Jalpaiguri', Times News Network, 29/11/09

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

Growth in elephant, rhino & gaur population in Dooars region

The West Bengal Forest Department (FD) is reported to be concerned over the considerable increase in populations of the elephant, rhino and gaur in the Dooars region of North Bengal.

The gaur population here is said to have increased from 250 to 3000 over the past two decades while that of elephants has risen to 400 from about 150 three decades ago. The same situation is seen in the case of rhinos. While rhino numbers in 1984 were 14 and three in Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary and Gorumara

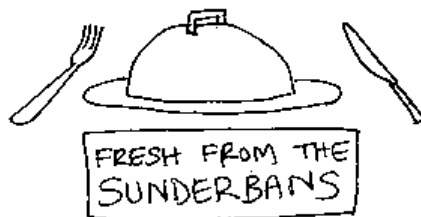
National Park respectively, their combined population now is 161.

With no increase in corresponding forest area, this situation had led to an increase in human-wildlife conflict in the region. The FD has records of 10 cases of human deaths being caused by wild animals and another 50 where villagers have been attacked by animals. There are also many reports of villagers having killed wild animals in retaliation.

Source: Subrata Bosu. 'Growth in elephant, rhino & bison population puts the West Bengal Forest Department in trouble in Dooars', *Anandabazar Patrika*, 29/11/09.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)**, North Bengal, West Bengal Forest Dept. Aranya Bhawan (Near Court) Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561- 25627(O) 25596 (R)

Deer in Sunderbans being poached for Kolkata hotels



The high demand for deer meat at some select Kolkata hotels has led to deer poaching in the Sunderbans. This was revealed after the forest department (FD) arrested four poachers and busted a deer-poaching racket in the month of December. Forest officials also seized 20 nylon traps (the same traps used to entrap tigers), and two deer antlers from the poachers.

Preliminary investigations revealed that patrons of some hotels in south and central Kolkata were ready to pay any price for deer meat delicacies and a kilo of the meat could fetch suppliers anything from Rs 450 to Rs 600. The FD started investigations following two cases of recovery of deer meat; 50 kgs of deer meat had been recovered from the Baruipur market followed by a seizure in the first week of December of 70 kgs of meat while it was being transported to Kolkata from the Sunderbans.

An operation was then conducted on the Kumirmari Island in the Sunderbans following which the arrests were made.

Source: Monontosh Chakraborty & Krishnendu Bandopadhyay. 'Deer poaching racket busted, 4 held', Times News Network, 14/12/09

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

Move to supplement tiger prey base in Sunderbans

To combat the situation of an increasing number of incidents of tigers straying into the inhabited areas of the Sunderbans islands and attacking the locals, the authorities have decided to introduce deer in the forested areas to supplement the prey base for the big cats.

The decision was taken based on an old recommendation made by the State Wildlife Advisory Board which said that prey-base depletion may be responsible for the increasing incidents of tigers straying away from forests. Officials have pointed out that 12 incidents of tiger attacks on humans or their livestock were reported in 2009. This included the cases of four human deaths.

The reserve officials have been maintaining a population of spotted deer in Dobaki and Jharkhali since 2004. 70 of these deer are to be released in the wild this season and are being checked by veterinary doctors for any diseases before release.

Independent experts have however pointed out that habitat destruction and a depleting prey-base are responsible for the increase in human-wildlife conflict. They fear that supplementing the prey base in this manner will not be successful because the deer that have been reared by forest department staff won't have the capacity to survive in the wild and could become easy target for poachers.

Source: Ananya Dutta. 'Move to supplement tiger prey base in Sunderbans', *The Hindu*, 22/12/09

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Forest Area Under Encroachment (as on dates indicated in brackets)

No	State / UT	Area in Hectares
1	Andhra Pradesh	268853 (1/1/08)
2	Bihar	2634 (5/9/07)
3	Chhattisgarh	157092 (1/1/08)
4	Gujarat	22534 (1/1/08)
5	Goa	4882 (24/3/08)
6	Haryana	1463 (25/4/08)
7	Himachal Pradesh	2229 (28/2/08)
8	Jammu & Kashmir	14374 (1/1/08)
9	Jharkhand	16524 (25/2/08)
10	Karnataka	108405 (1/1/08)
11	Kerala	12474 (1/1/08)
12	Madhya Pradesh	184740 (1/1/08)
13	Maharashtra	177840 (1/1/08)
14	Orissa	53820 (1/9/08)
15	Punjab	8114 (1/1/08)
16	Rajasthan	29692 (30/6/08)
17	Tamil Nadu	15214 (1/1/08)
18	Uttar Pradesh	27281 (28/2/08)
19	Uttarakhand	8757 (1/1/08)
20	West Bengal	13086 (1/1/08)
21	Arunachal Pradesh	89062 (1/1/08)
22	Assam	485674 (30/10/08)
23	Manipur	5244 (25/2/08)
24	Meghalaya	9375 (1/1/08)
25	Mizoram	19127 (1/1/08)
26	Nagaland	1403 (16/5/08)
27	Sikkim	3614 (23/8/08)
28	Tripura	47758 (25/2/08)
29	A&N Islands	3326 (4/12/09)
30	Chandigarh	Nil (1/1/08)
31	Dadar & Nagar Haveli	Nil (6/11/08)
32	Daman & Diu	88(1/1/08)
33	Delhi	200 (15/3/07)
34	Lakshdweep	no forest area in this UT
35	Puducherry	Nil (1/1/08)
*	Total	17,94,879

Source:
<http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=55568> 09/12/09

SeasonWatch – A project to monitor plant phenology across India

The team of MigrantWatch, the participatory project in which volunteers contribute information on bird migration (see *PA Update* Vol. XIV, No. 5) are now launching a sister project SeasonWatch. This project seeks to monitor plant phenology (the timing of seasonal events) across the country and is seeking help and participation from volunteers.

The team is also looking for a person to help run the project.

Contact: **Uttara Mendiratta**. Email:

citizenscience@ncbs.res.in

Web: <http://www.ncbs.res.in/citsci>

IGNOU, WWF offer PG Diploma in environmental law

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Centre for Environmental Law (CEL), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India to jointly run a Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Law. The programme will be offered in the July 2010 session through the School of Law (SOL), IGNOU.

While, CEL is already offering the Diploma programme in Environment Law in the online mode and has trained 500 students, IGNOU Vice Chancellor, Professor VN Rajasekharan Pillai has said that IGNOU would be interested in introducing programmes in conservation of species and biodiversity as well.

Source: 'IGNOU, WWF to jointly offer PG Diploma in Environmental Law', www.wildlifewatch.in 25/12/09

New threat to vultures from Ketoprofen

After the drug Diclofenac, researchers have identified a second veterinary drug that can have serious impacts on vultures. The drug in question is Ketoprofen that is used in livestock treatment. Vultures feeding on the carcasses of recently-treated livestock were reported to have suffered acute kidney failure within days of exposure. Following this discovery, the Royal

Society for the Protection of Birds, the Bombay Natural History Society and Bird Conservation Nepal are calling for a mechanism to control the use of this drug in southern Asia.

The research, published in the Royal Society journal *Biology Letters* shows that Ketoprofen is lethal to the birds in the dosages that would be administered to livestock suffering from rheumatism or arthritis. Further, it states that Ketoprofen could already be contributing to further declines of the remaining vulture populations, and this trend is likely to increase if Ketoprofen replaces Diclofenac.

Other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs sold by veterinary pharmacies for treating livestock include Meloxicam, Phenylbutazone, Analgin, Nimesulide, Flunixin and Ibuprofen. Only three of these have been tested to determine their effects on vultures. Diclofenac and Ketoprofen cause fatal kidney failure and only Meloxicam is known to be safe.

Source: 'Second blow for Asian vultures, find researchers', www.wildlifewatch.in 09/12/09

Ministry of Tourism to carry out audit of seven protected areas

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) has assigned the Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) Pusa to carry out an audit of seven protected areas in India. IHM Pusa along with Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI) and Travel Operators for Tiger (TOFT) will undertake a survey of the PAs to assess the impact of tourism on the ecology of these parks and areas around them. The entire project will be funded by the MoT.

The project will start with a survey of the Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand and will also cover among others the Ranthambore, Kanha and Bandavgarh Tiger Reserves. A team consisting of one faculty, one M.Sc. student and five students from B.Sc. in Hospitality and Hotel Administration programme from IHM Pusa will take part in the survey, along with representatives from TOFT. The survey is intended at collecting data and assessing on how the working of

various stakeholders, especially jungle lodges operators are impacting the ecology of these protected areas.

Source: P Krishna Kumar. 'MoT assigns IHM Pusa to carry out audit of seven wildlife sanctuaries in India'
www.travelbizmonitor.com 10/11/09

Central Empowered Committee of the SC under purview of RTI

The Supreme Court (SC) appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) that is mandated with looking into issues of forests and wildlife protection has been brought under the purview of the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The Central Information Commission (CIC) recently rejected the plea of the CEC to review an earlier decision which had declared the CEC a public authority under the RTI Act. The CEC has now been directed to facilitate the processing of RTI applications and post all the information about its working on its web site in accordance with the proactive disclosure clauses of the transparency law.

Source: 'CEC should give info on Wildlife act violations: CIC', www.wildlifewatch.in 27/12/09

Contact: **Member Secretary**, Central Empowered Committee, Room No. 106, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110003. Tel: 011- 4361297

National Green Tribunal Bill cleared

The clearance granted to the National Green Tribunal Bill has paved the way for setting up the National Green Tribunal to settle civil disputes concerning environment related issues. The National Green Tribunal Bill had been cleared by the Cabinet in July, and introduced in Parliament that then referred it to a Standing Committee (see *PA Updates* Vol XV, Nos. 5 & 4). The committee, which submitted its report in late November, had suggested some changes of which the government has accepted ten and rejected two.

Among the recommendations accepted by the government are notifying the tribunal for the Centre and all States and Union Territories

simultaneously, and parity between number of judicial and expert members on the tribunal.

The government has, however, not accepted the suggestion of the Standing Committee to give the tribunal 'contempt of court' power to enforce their decisions. Neither has it accepted the recommendation that every amendment to Schedule I of the Bill be voted by Parliament.

With Public Interest Litigations on environmental issues flooding the courts, the proposed legislation aims to take off the pressure by handling all the civil cases related to forestry and environment. The tribunal will also address all substantial questions relating to environment.

There has however been considerable concern about the bill. Activists and lawyers have argued that the tribunal will not be effective because among other things it has only a limited jurisdiction, defines locus standi in a very narrow manner, denies social organizations the opportunity of taking up matters, does not have a provision for 'real experts', and provides only a limited and arbitrary time frame for matters to be taken up and decided upon.

Source: Aarti Dhar. 'Cabinet clears National Green Tribunal Bill', *The Hindu*, 04/12/09

Ritwick Dutta. 'The National Green Tribunal: A Trojan horse', Email circulated on 03/12/09

Contact: **Ritwick Dutta**, Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE), E-23 LGF Jungpura Extension New Delhi-110014. Telefax: 011 9810044660. Email: ritwickdutta@gmail.com

Sanctuary Wildlife Awards 2009

The Sanctuary Wildlife Awards for 2009 were given recently in association with the Royal Bank of Scotland. This is the 10th year of the awards.

The 'Lifetime Service Award' was given to Brijendra Singh for his work in protecting the Corbett Tiger Reserve, while the Green Teacher Award was given to Dr MR Almeida and Dr (Mrs) Sarah Almeida who have over the years been associated with a

number of institutions including the Bombay Natural History Society, the Blatter Herbarium of St. Xavier College, the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and the International Society for Traditional Medicine.

Wildlife service awards were given to Prabir Kumar Palei of the Orissa Forest Department (Simlipal Tiger Reserve), Narhari Pandurang Bagrao of Maharashtra's Shahpur Forest Division, Paresch Porab of the Goa Forest Department, Drs. Divya Mudappa and TR Shankar Raman of the Mysore based Nature Conservation Foundation, and Delhi based filmmaker Mike Pandey.

Young Naturalists awards were given to Prosper Marak of the Garo Students Union in Meghalaya, Pune based student Aamod Zambre and Vishal Bhawe of Ratnagiri in Maharashtra. Vijay Pinjarkar and the Times of India, Nagpur were awarded the 'Wing Under the Wings' award.

Source: 'Guardians of the Earth', Sanctuary Asia, December 2009.

Contact: **Bittu Sahgal**, Sanctuary Asia, 145/146, Pragati Ind. Estate, NM Joshi Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 011. Tel: 022-23016848. Email: mail@sanctuaryasia.com Web: www.sanctuaryasia.com

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

Bardia NP expanded by 900 sq. kms

The Bardia National Park located in the Terai Arc Landscape has been expanded by 900 sq. kms. The decision was made by the Nepalese Government during the inaugural session of the Kathmandu Global Tiger Workshop that was held in Kathmandu, Nepal in October 2009.

The Prime Minister of Nepal, Mr. Madhav Kumar Nepal also announced that the country would set up a National Tiger Conservation Authority as well as a Wildlife Crime Control Bureau.

The workshop was hosted by the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation,

Government of Nepal, and co-organized and co-sponsored by the CITES Secretariat, Global Tiger Forum, Global Tiger Initiative, Save The Tiger Fund, and the World Bank.

Source: 'Nepal expands critical tiger habitat', <http://nepal.panda.org/news> 27/10/01

PAKISTAN

Virus kills more than 70 ibex in Khirthar National Park

More than 70 ibexes are reported to have died due to a virus infection in the Khirthar National Park in Pakistan's Sindh Province. The toll was 74 since the first death on September 24. DNA tests conducted subsequently by the Sindh Wildlife Department revealed the cause of the deaths to be a viral disease, Peste-de-Petits Ruminants (PPR).

The viral infection is the first ever reported since the declaration of the national park. Officials of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) visited the park in an effort to deal with the prevalent disaster as well as plan for the future.

Source: 'Ibex death in Khirthar National Park', *Pakistan Wildlife News*, Vol 1, Issue1, December 2009

OPPORTUNITIES

WWF Prince Bernhard Scholarships for nature conservation

The WWF Prince Bernhard Scholarship Fund (PBS) seeks to provide financial support to individuals wishing to pursue short-term professional training or formal studies that will help them contribute more effectively to conservation efforts in their country. As a priority, PBS supports mid-career training for those working in the field of conservation and associated disciplines directly relevant to the delivery and promotion of conservation (i.e. media, law, education).

Only nationals from Africa/Madagascar, Asia/Pacific, Latin America/Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Middle East or Mediterranean will be considered.

For more details check

www.panda.org/scholarships

CEPF-ATREE Western Ghats Small Grants

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) is inviting proposals for its Small Grants Program (SGP).

The objectives of the CEPF grant are to enable action by communities and partnerships to ensure conservation and enhance connectivity in corridors and improve conservation of globally threatened species of the Western Ghats through systematic conservation planning and action.

Those eligible to apply include non-governmental organizations, community groups, universities, private enterprises, and individuals. Individuals can apply for grants, but are encouraged to work with civil society organizations and communities to develop joint applications, rather than applying directly.

The projects must be located in one or more of the following states of the Western Ghats region: Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala and must support a strategic direction and investment strategy as outlined in the Ecosystem Profile.

Contact: **Dr. Bhaskar Acharya**, CEPF Western Ghats RIT, ATREE, Royal Enclave, Srirampura, Jakkur Post, Bangalore 560064, India Tel: 080-23635555, M: 919008322664 Fax: 23530070
Email: cepfwghats@atree.org
Web: http://www.atree.org/CEPF_WGhats/

Call for nominations: Wildlife Tourism Awards

Tourism Operators for Tigers (TOFT) has invited nominations for its First TOFT Wildlife Tourism Awards for 2010. The categories include:

a) The Most Inspirational Eco lodge

- b) The Best Park Guide/Naturalist
- c) The Best Park for Wildlife tourism
- d) The Best Destination Management Company for Wildlife Tourism
- e) Best Tourist related Community Initiative
- f) Best Wildlife and Tourism Initiative

The deadline for submitting nominations is 12th February 2010.

Contact: **Abhishek Behl**.

Email: A.Behl@conservationfootprints.com

JRFs needed for research in the Southern Western Ghats

The research organization FERAL is seeking Junior Research Fellows (JRFs) for research projects in the southern Western Ghats. The details are as follows:

a) A two year project starting from January 2010 for the project "Bridging the Shencottah Gap: How Payments for Ecosystem Services Can Restore Biodiversity Outside Protected Areas in India".

The project aims to assess connectivity between large mammal populations in the Periyar-Agasthyamalai landscape of the southern Western Ghats. The main work will involve carrying out large mammal surveys; assessing bird and butterfly community diversity and data entry and analysis

The applicant should be an Indian National with a relevant degree (undergraduate or postgraduate) in biological science, and/or relevant professional experience in wildlife research and conservation.

Contact: **V. Srinivas**.

Email: srinivasv@feralindia.org
(Mention 'Application for JRF4' in the email)

b) A three years project starting from January 2010 to assess carbon sequestration rates in mixed landscapes between Periyar Tiger Reserve and Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve.

Registration for a Ph.D., or using the information collected for a Ph.D. is desirable.

The applicant should be an Indian national with a relevant degree (undergraduate or postgraduate) in biological science, and/or

relevant professional experience in wildlife research and conservation. Knowledge of botany, or the ability to learn the local flora quickly, will be necessary.

Contact: **Dr. Rauf Ali.**

Email: rauf@feralindia.org

(Mention 'Application for JRF5 in the email)

UPCOMING

13th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Commons

The 13th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Commons is to be held in Hyderabad, India from January 10-14, 2011. The Conference is being hosted by the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) and will be chaired by Mr. Nitin Desai. The Co-Chair is Mr. Jagdeesh Puppala of the FES

The theme of the conference is 'Sustaining our Future' and will deal with a range of physical common resources such as forests, grazing resources, protected areas, water resources, fisheries, coastal commons, lagoon commons, irrigation systems, livestock and commons as well as new commons such as

information commons, cultural commons, genetic resources, patents and the climate.

The above subjects would be captured under the following sub-themes:

1. The Commons, Poverty and Social Exclusion;
2. Governance of the Commons: Decentralization, Property Rights, Legal Framework, Structure and Organization;
3. The Commons: Theory, Analytics and Data;
4. Globalisation, Commercialisation and the Commons;
5. Managing the Global Commons: Climate Change and other Challenges;
6. Managing Complex Commons (lagoons, protected areas, wetlands, mountain areas, rangelands, coastal commons);
7. New Commons (Digital Commons, Genetic Commons, Patents, Music, Literature etc);

The organizers have invited abstracts for panels, individual papers, poster and videos, which can be submitted through the online submission process.

Contact: **Subrat Singh**, FES, PO Box-29, NDDB Campus, Anand, Gujarat-388001 Tel: 02692-261239/261402. Fax: 262087 /262196. Email: subrat@fes.org.in
Web: <http://iasc2011.fes.org.in/>

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