

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Protected Area Update

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<http://indiaenvironmentportal.org.in>

EDITORIAL

The Western Ghats in focus

The Western Ghats are, without doubt, one of the richest eco-regional systems in the entire subcontinent. Straddling six states from Gujarat in the North to Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south, the 1600 odd kms long mountain range is home to a wide diversity of life just as it supports innumerable human communities and cultures. The beauty of the landscapes here is unmatched, endemism in the forests is high and many rivers that nourish large parts of peninsular India originate here. Not surprisingly a large number of protected areas dot the entire length of the ghats.

It is only to be expected then that the Western Ghats have appeared regularly in the pages of the *Protected Area Update* over the years; something of interest and importance is always happening here. Nothing however matches the presence they have in this particular issue – it is almost like it's become a Western Ghats special.

There has been a lot of very localized activity along the length of the mountain range that you will see reports of: children in schools in the vicinity of the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary in Maharashtra demanding that plastic be banned from within sanctuary limits, the creation of 12 new Important Bird Areas in Kerala or the ongoing controversy over the ban on night traffic on national highways inside the Bandipur National Park.

A lot is also happening that has an appeal and relevance cutting across state and political boundaries. A large conservation research and action initiative has been going on under the aegis of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), the well known Save Western Ghats movement is on the way to being revived, a new Nilgiri Natural History Society has been formed and the Ministry of Environment and Forests has also set up an 'Expert panel on the Western Ghats' to 'assist in the preservation, conservation and rejuvenation of this environmentally sensitive and ecologically significant region.'

In another commendable development the Minister of Environment and Forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh, recently organized a special meeting of 43 Members of Parliament from the 51 districts which have the Western Ghats running through them. It is one of those rare political initiatives where politics is not bound by political boundaries.

It has been argued often that if political constituencies had been carved out on ecological or eco-regional criteria, politics would have been different. Ecological systems, be they mountain ranges, river systems or the coast often get looked at in a piecemeal manner. The integrity of what is a single unit is completely overtaken by other considerations and the consequences have only been adverse. The Minister's initiative could well be the starting point of some kind of a more holistic approach and other eco-regional systems too might try and pick up from what is being attempted here.

The Western Ghats have also been lucky in that there have always been vibrant local communities, NGOs, researchers and officials who have continued to engage with the complexities and work with the challenges of this unique mountain range. To say, however, that things will now be different in the Western Ghats would be putting the cart much ahead of the horse. We have to wait and watch to see how the present initiatives unfold. There is no denying that they look very promising and one hopes that some of the promise will indeed be realized in the future.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Nuapada swamps to be declared a conservation reserve

The Central government is reported to have taken a decision to declare the Nuapada swamps in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh as a conservation reserve to protect the rich bird life here. The swamp was recently recognised as an Important Bird Area by

Birdlife International. The move to grant protection to the wetland has been welcomed by environmentalists and bird lovers as this, the last surviving marshy patch in Srikakulam, was seriously threatened by the 2640 MW Bhavanapadu Thermal plant. The power plant to be located about 5 kms from the village of Telineelapuram was being set up by East Coast Energy and would have covered an area of over 2000 acres (*PA Update* Vol XIV, No. 6)

The Centre turned down the proposal for the plant at a meeting of the Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife and also asked the state not to set up any projects in the area that will threaten the birds.

In a subsequent event organized on February 2, World Wetlands Day, the Environment Protection Committee of Sompeta, representatives of Anti East Coast & NCC Thermal Power Plants and environmentalists urged the government to cooperate with the farmers, fisher people and others to save and protect the state's wetlands from destruction by power plants. A statement signed by various organizations demanded that necessary action be taken to withdraw the proposals of thermal power plants in the region.

People affected by the Sompeta and Bhavanapadu Thermal Projects, experts and political party representatives organized a massive rally in Srikakulam and a public meeting was also held in the Press Club. A memorandum was subsequently submitted to the District Collector N. Srikanth.

Source: 'Make Nuapada bird haven: Centre', *Deccan Chronicle*, 27/01/10
'Anti Thermal Power Plants Movement urges Govt to protect Wet lands' Press release by Samata dated 02/02/10

Contact: **G Srinivas**, C/o Samata, D. No. - 14-37-9, Krishnanagar, Maharanipeta, Visakhapatnam. Mobile: 9989860484. Telefax: 0891-2737662. Email:

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ASSAM

Four suspected poachers arrested from Orang NP



Four poachers, suspected to be involved in rhino poaching at the Orang National Park were apprehended from two different places on the periphery of the park in January. While three of them were arrested from Beesimari village, one

was apprehended from Rongagora village.

The group had killed a female rhino in the southern part of the park and exchanged fire with forest guards. The .303 rifle used in killing the rhino and six live cartridges were recovered from them.

A police official in Sonitpur district is reported to have said that the nationality of a large number of people who had settled in the area was doubtful and suggested that a proper survey would help in establishing this fact. All those who were arrested too are believed to be Bangladeshi nationals. One of them, Abdul Rashid, had surrendered five years back, but the rifle recovered from his possession confirmed that he was still involved in poaching activities.

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

Source: 'Four rhino poachers arrested in Orang', *The Telegraph*, 14/01/10.

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

Call to declare Poba Reserve Forest a wildlife sanctuary

A number of individuals and organizations including the All Assam Students Union, TMPK (Mising) and Nature's Beckon have called for the Poba Reserve Forest to be declared a wildlife sanctuary. A memorandum with this demand was handed over to the Assam Forest Minister Mr Rockybul Hussain during his recent visit to Dhemaji.

The 102 sq kms Poba Reserve Forest is located on the outskirts of Jonai town of Assam and also covers a large portion of the Ruksin forest range under East Siang forest division in Arunachal Pradesh.

Source: 'Wildlife sanctuary status for Poba RF urged' *Assam Tribune*, 04/02/10

BSF to help protect Kaziranga NP

The Assam government has joined hands with the Border Security Force (BSF) for providing manpower and intelligence assistance in protecting the Kaziranga National Park. Though the park has about 500 guards, forest officials occasionally take help of other agencies. Now, the BSF unit at Panbari based close to Kaziranga, has agreed to extend help in checking poaching and other wildlife crimes.

The principal chief conservator of forests, Assam is reported to have said that the BSF would provide manpower for patrolling both inside and outside the 860 sq km national park and its dog squad located at Panbari will also be used to help track down poachers.

An unified combat team consisting of personnel from the BSF, Police, Forest and representatives of the district administration has also been formed to keep a check on poaching in the park.

Source: 'BSF to help Kaziranga park check poaching', www.indianexpress.com 01/03/10
'Unified team to check KNP poaching', *The Assam Tribune*, 26/02/10

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

SSB proposal to set up border outpost in Manas NP

The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has sought permission from the Assam Forest Department (FD) to set up a border outpost inside the Manas National Park (NP) along the Indo-Bhutan border. Similar outposts have been set up in the Valmiki National Park in Bihar, along the border with Nepal.

The SSB has, in a letter to the FD, mentioned that there are five outposts in Chirang district but those were nearly 20km from the border and were not helping in preventing subversive activities, including wildlife crimes. The SSB now has border outposts in Panbari, Lakibhora, Bishnupur, Donsiapara and Kumarshali, which are part of the buffer area of MNP.

Forest officials are reported to have expressed their concern about the setting of the outpost on account of the disturbance this would cause to the wildlife here. It is feared that road construction itself would be a disturbance and further that better and more roads will also lead to more road kills of wild animals. The SSB is reported to have said that it's structures will be temporary and all care would be taken to conserve wildlife.

Source: 'Manas frowns on outposts - Foresters say SSB hub inside park may affect wildlife', *The Telegraph*, 21/01/09

Health camps for patrol elephants and staff of Manas NP and Pobitora WLS

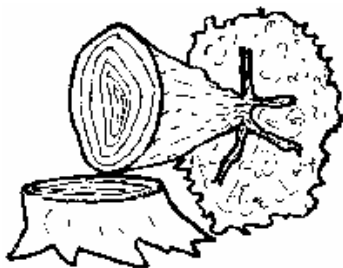
Three health camps for forest staff and elephants working under Basbari Range of the Manas National park were organised in the month of December 2009 and a similar one day camp was organised in Pobitora WLS in January 2010.

The Manas camps were organized by the North Bank Landscape team of WWF-India, ATREE (UNESCO-WHS program) and Assam Forest Department in collaboration with the Dept. of Health and Family Welfare, Barpeta district; Indian Medical Association, Barpeta Road; College of Veterinary Sciences, Khanapara and Blue Cross Society, Guwahati.

The Pobitora health camp was conducted with support from International Hospitals, Guwahati in association with the Assam Forest Department and Pobitora Conservation Society.

Source: 'WWF-India strengthens patrolling of Assam's wilderness during winter', <http://www.wfindia.org/?3960/strengthens-patrolling>

Timber cut illegally from Manas NP seized



A team from the Bureau of Investigation into Economic Offences (BIEO) of the Assam State Police seized 227 logs allegedly cut from the Manas National Park. The seizures estimated to be worth Rs. Three lakhs were made from different parts of Barpeta district: Bhaluki, Solmara, Joyshreehati under Barpeta Road Police Station; Helpaguri Gohain Kamal Ali under Howly Police Station and Gellipara under Sarbhog Police Station.

According to the BIEO the logs were smuggled out of the MNP through the Beki river. Some licensed saw mills and another 150 odd illegal bench saw mills in various parts of Barpeta district are reported to be operating based on timber procured in this manner from the Manas NP.

Source: 'Timber seized in Barpeta dist', *Assam Tribune*, 24/01/10

Contact: **Director**, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd.
Dist. Barpeta – 781315, Assam. Tel:
03666 – 261413. Fax: 232253 / 260253

Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam,
Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam.
Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386

GUJARAT

Cell proposed for management plans for PAs

The Gujarat Forest Department (FD) has proposed the setting up a special cell in Gandhinagar in order to prepare management and conservation plans for all sanctuaries in Gujarat. The cell would have eight new posts.

The creation of the cell has been proposed because it was felt that most of the attention so far had been paid only to a couple of protected areas while the state has four

national parks and 22 wildlife sanctuaries. Officials said the idea to prepare the management plan came to them after the formation of the task force for the Gir national park (*PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 3).

The government is also reported to have proposed a mobile forensic laboratory for carrying out investigation of wildlife crime in the field itself.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik, 'Forest management cell on cards' Times News Network 01/03/10

CAG points out deficiencies in wildlife and forest management in Gujarat

The recently released report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has raised a number of questions and pointed out many deficiencies related to wildlife and forest management in Gujarat. Some of the matters raised are as follows:

- Continued operation of leases of salt units of more than 5000 hectares within the boundaries of the Gulf of Kutch Marine National Park though the leases have expired
- Pending final notification of the Gir National Park
- Pending declaration as wildlife sanctuary of 38.23 hectares of land that was given to the Forest Department in lieu of denotification in 1998 of 26.36 hectares of Gir Wildlife Sanctuary for Maghardi Minor Irrigation Scheme
- Continued operation of 13 mining units within a five km boundary of Gir NP and WLS
- Presence of over 2600 open wells in the vicinity of Gir that pose threat to lions and other wildlife. (Over 6024 wells of the 8696 wells reported in 2004 have been covered up in the interim period) (*PA Update* Vol XV, No. 4; Vol. XIII, Nos. 5, 2 & 1 and Vol XII, No. 6)
- Continued presence of 376 maldhari families within the boundaries of the Gir PA, which includes the 87 families that returned inspite of being relocated in the period 1972-78
- Non utilization of the hovercraft since its purchase in 1994 for the patrolling and management of the Gulf of Kutch Marine National Park. The hovercraft had been bought at a cost of Rs. 6.44 lakhs

- Only six out of the 21 boats purchased in the period 1982-2007 being operational in the Gulf of Kutch Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park
- Non establishment of the Oil Spill Monitoring Unit in the Gulf of Kutch Marine National Park. The monitoring unit was to be established with funds provided by the Indian Oil Corporation limited (IOCL) in lieu of 9.60 hectares of land that were diverted from the national park in 1992 for the establishment of IOCL's Single Point Mooring System. An agreement for the establishment of the monitoring unit was signed in 2001

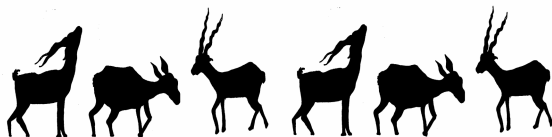
Other issues raised include the non-formulation of a State Forest Policy inspite of the recommendations of the National Forest Commission, non take over of the Banni Grasslands in Kutch by the Forest Department though they were declared protected forests in 1956, low survival of plantations on account of poor monitoring and diversion of funds released under the National Afforestation Program to state schemes.

The report was tabled in the recently held budget session of the Gujarat Assembly. The report can be accessed at http://www.cag.gov.in/html/cag_reports/gujarat/re_p_2009/civil_cont.htm

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10 per cent rise in black buck population in and around Velavadar NP



A 10 per cent increase has been reported in the black buck population in and around the Velavadar National Park.

The count that was carried out in the last week of January reported 3950 blackbucks, which is 10 per cent higher than the 2005 census figure of 3590. Of the 3950 animals counted this time, 2308 numbers have been reported from outside the national park. In the 2005 this figure was 2,183.

Additionally 13 wolves and six hyenas were also sighted during the census operations.

Source: Vijaysinh Parmar, '10 pc rise in blackbuck population in Bhavnagar' Times News Network, 03/02/10

Contact: **ACF**, Black-Buck National Park, Velavadar, F/10 Bahumali Bhawan, Bhavnagar – 360001, Gujarat. Tel: 0288-2552077. Fax: 0288-2555336

Gir staff poorly equipped with knowledge of wildlife and wildlife law: study

A study conducted recently by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) has shown that only 16 per cent of the staff of the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park knows the exact application of The Wildlife (Protection) Act (WLPA), 1972. 490 staff from Gir had attended the training session on the WLPA that was conducted in the month of December.

Many were not aware of the fact that every forest officer is empowered to arrest a person, detain vehicles and even seize property under provisions of the WLPA. 25% of the staff failed to identify a wildlife crime, 324 did not know what a protected area was and not all were able to identify the pug/horn marks of wild animals like antelopes, lions, sloth bear, chital, hyena, sambhar and black bucks.

WTI has pointed out that most of those who attended the training had already completed 30 years of service as beat guards and range officers.

Source: 'Few foresters in Gir know wildlife nitty-gritty: study', www.indianexpress.com 17/01/10

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.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Red Jungle Fowl breeding program in Renuka and Simbalbara WLSs in HP

A conservation breeding programme has been initiated by the Himachal Pradesh state wildlife

department to ensure increase in the number of Red jungle fowl, which is believed to be threatened on account of genetic contamination. The bird is facing a threat because of the domesticated free ranging chickens in the villages on the forests fringes. Poaching is said to be another major threat to its survival.

The fowl is said to be the originator of all modern domestic chicken in the world. As the bird also holds significance in pharmaceutical research, efforts are being made to increase its numbers.

The Himachal Pradesh Zoo Conservation Breeding Society recently held a meeting to discuss the strategy to be adopted. Two breeding centres are to be set up at Renuka and Simbalbara Wildlife Sanctuaries in the state's Sirmour district. The Wildlife Institute of India will help in the process.

While the captive breeding centre would be based at the Renuka WLS, in situ efforts will be made in the Simbalbara WLS in the Shivalik foothills in Paonta Valley.

Source: Anand Bodh, 'HP to conserve red jungle fowl at Sirmour', Times News Network, 25/01/10

Contact **DFO Wildlife**, In-Charge Simbalbara WLS, Shimla Division, Talland, Shimla – 171001. Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 0177-223993

KARNATAKA

Large fire in BRT WLS

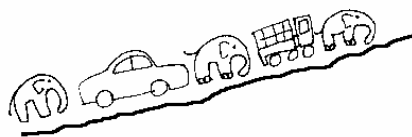
Tress on hundreds of acres of forests were reportedly burnt in the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary (BRT WLS) in the 2nd week of March. The fire is said to be have broken out at Gavibore, Muntipalya Krishnaiahana Katte, Bethal Katte and spread up to the Gumballi side.

Forest officials said that the fire was caused by miscreants and that high temperatures and strong winds helped in its rapid spread.

Source: Trees on hundreds of acres burnt in fire in BRT sanctuary. *The Hindu*, 11/02/10

Contact: **DCF**, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Wildlife Division, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka. Tel: 08226-222059(O), 222156(R)

Ban on night traffic through Bandipur NP lifted again



The ban on night traffic on National Highway (NH) 212 (Gundlupet-Wayanad) and NH 67 through the Bandipur National Park has been lifted again. This follows a recent directive by the Union Ministry of Surface Transport (MoST) to its Regional Officer in Bangalore, to take appropriate legal steps to restore the night traffic on these routes. The Union Minister for Surface Transport Mr. Kamal Nath is also reported to have recently written to the Karnataka Chief Minister in the matter.

It will be recollected that night traffic on the relevant sections of the two national highways was banned in June 2009 by the Chamrajnagar DC on grounds of threat to the forests and wildlife in the Bandipur NP. The ban evoked strong opposition from various sections of people in Kerala. It was then withdrawn within a week of its issuing.

The matter was then taken to the Karnataka High court which in an order in July 2009 had stayed the withdrawal of the ban leading to halting of the night traffic as originally envisaged. The latest change of status comes, as mentioned earlier, after hectic lobbying at various levels.

The lifting of the ban has again been challenged in the Karnataka High Court and hearings were conducted recently in the matter. The Kerala State government has argued in the court that Karnataka's earlier submission on the presence of an alternative route and that it was only 34 kms longer than the present was false. It was also pointed out that three districts would be affected by the ban and that the real threat to the wildlife came from private reports and illegal safaris operating within the park.

MoST is also planning to challenge the state government's power to regulate night traffic on the NHs. Though traffic regulation comes under state jurisdiction, there is a legal provision for the Union Ministry to intervene if two states are involved. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, Nos 5 & 4 and Vol XIV, No. 6)

Source: 'Centre lifts night traffic ban', <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/51580/centre-lifts-night-traffic-ban.html>
'Forest Dept against lifting night traffic ban', *Deccan Herald*, 20/02/10
'No option to road via Bandipur', *Deccan Herald*, 23/02/10

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

25 acre Kollegal-BRT WLS corridor handed over to Forest Department

A 25 acre patch of forest connecting Kollegal to the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary (BRT WLS) (Edayarhalli-Doddasampige) was recently purchased from its private owner and handed over to the Karnataka Forest Department to ensure the integrity of this important wildlife corridor.

The purchase was made possible by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) with support from its partner – the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). The land ownership transfer agreement was signed recently between the WTI and Karnataka FD and the forest area is expected to be brought into the protected area network soon.

A second elephant corridor restoration agreement has been signed by the WTI with the Kerala Forest Department for the Tirunelli-Kudrakote corridor that connects the Brahmagiri Hills near Coorg in Karnataka to the northern Wayanad region in Kerala. Four families have been re-settled and given new homes to clear this corridor. Works are also on to secure the Siju-Rewak Corridor in the Garo Hills in Meghalaya.

These corridors are among 88 corridors identified by the WTI as traditional routes for elephants to move between forest areas.

Source: 'Elephant corridor, a new year gift of Karnataka jumbos'
www.deccanherald.com 15/01/10

Bhimgad declared as a WLS

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has reportedly agreed to the creation of

the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Belgaum district of Karnataka. The forest here is home to a large number of endangered animals, including, prominently, the Wroughton free-tailed bats. The Baripadi caves in Bhimgad are believed to be the only colony of these bats in India. The forest is also an important corridor for tigers and elephants moving between Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra. (*PA Update* Vol. XII, No. 3)

The declaration of the sanctuary is also significant in light of the political issue of sharing the Mahadayi river waters between Karnataka and Goa. Karnataka wanted to build two check dams at Kalasa and Banduri for supplying drinking water to Hubli-Dharwad. The project involved submerging 323 hectares of forest and the issue had been referred to the forest advisory committee for clearance. The main Mahadayi project involved three dams at Potli, Alsara and Harinala. Karnataka argued that its catchment contributed water to the Mahadayi river and wanted a share of this water. Goa had objected to this (*PA Update* Vol XIII, No. 2).

The issue was politically hot till 2004, during Congress rule. Subsequent coalition governments didn't show much interest in this issue. Now, if the irrigation project has to be taken up, additional clearance will have to be obtained under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972).

Source: Vinay Madhav, 'Bhimgad now wildlife sanctuary' Times News Network, 06/02/10

HC notice on night safari in Bannerghatta



The Karnataka High Court recently issued a notice to the Central government and the Karnataka state government in relation to a petition challenging the permission given for a night safari at Bannerghatta National Park.

A public interest litigation filed by a resident of Chamaraanagar argued that the implementation of night safari in Bannerghatta NP would affect the wildlife in the park and would be violative of provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) and also the constitution of India.

The Karnataka Forest Department (FD) has said that 731 hectares of forest land will be utilised for the night safari. It has also sought permission from the Central Zoo Authority of India for the safari.

Notices were also issued in the matter to the Central Zoo Authority, the State Zoo Authority and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.

Source: 'HC asks for project report on night safari proposal', *Deccan Herald*, 13/01/10
'Bannerghatta night safari: HC notice to Centre', www.expressbuzz.com 05/01/10

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KERALA

12 new IBAs in Kerala

12 new areas have been added to the list of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Kerala. The decision was taken during the recent national conference of IBA State co-ordinators.

The new IBAs are the following: Camel's Hump Mountains (Wayanad), Banasura hills and Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary, Muthikulam-Siruvani Reserve Forest, Purathur estuary, Mankulam Reserve Forest, Achenoil Reserve Forest, Kurinji Wildlife Sanctuary, Anamudi Shola, Pampadam Shola, Mathikettan Shola National Park, Ponnudi Hills and Idamalayar-Pooyamkutty.

Source: KS Sudhi. 'Birds get 12 more havens in Kerala', *The Hindu*, 15/03/10.

Contact: **Dr. Asad Rahmani**, Director BNHS, Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai 400 023 Maharashtra.
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MANIPUR

Save Loktak Lake Campaign

The first phase of a worldwide Save Loktak Lake Campaign was launched on March 7 in Imphal, Delhi, Shillong, Guwahati and Silchar. The campaign is a year-long awareness campaign initiated by the North East Centre for Environmental Education and Research, Imphal for the conservation of the lake. It will be initiated in 23 cities in India, two cities abroad (New York and London) and also in five towns across the globe.

The lake is the main source of income and sustenance for inhabitants of the area besides being the only home of the *sangai*.

Contact: **Khuraijam Jibankumar Singh**, North East Centre for Environmental Education and Research (NECEER), Sagolband Tera Akham Leikai, Imphal - 795 001. Email: redjiban@yahoo.co.in
Web: <http://neceer-imphal.blogspot.com/>

MADHYA PRADESH

State Forest Minister calls for CBI inquiry into tiger disappearance from Panna TR

Unhappy with a recent report submitted by a state committee tasked to find out why tigers went missing from the Panna Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh Forest Minister Mr Sartaj Singh has now asked for a CBI inquiry into the disappearance of the tigers.

The state government had ordered its own probe because it disagreed with the findings of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up earlier by the Union Environment and Forests Ministry. The central team's report, submitted in June 2009, had said the reserve lost most of its tigers to poachers and alleged that the forest officials did little despite adequate warnings.

The state committee's report, on the other hand, has said that a skewed male-female ratio, territorial fights, revenge killings by villagers, unbridled tourism activities and poaching were among the reasons.
(See *PA Updates* Vol. XV, Nos. 4, 3, 2 & 1).

Source: Milind Ghatwai. 'Unhappy with Panna probe, forest minister calls for CBI inquiry', <http://in.news.yahoo.com>

Contact: **Field Director**, Panna National Park, Panna – 488001, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07732-252135. Fax: 07732-252120

MAHARASHTRA

Village inside Tadoba Andhari TR to sue FD for mining on their community land

The village of Kolsa inside the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) has decided to sue the forest department (FD) for mining sand and gravel from their community (nistar) land. The decision was taken in a Gram Sabha meeting held on the 26th of January after the FD had ignored an earlier notice from the village asking for a fine of Rs. 11 lakhs.

The villagers have said that the FD was regularly extracting sand, gravel and boulders from their land for road repair inside the tiger reserve and this was violation of the provisions of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 (the Forest Rights Act).

Source: Aparna Pallavi. 'Tribals challenge forest department' *Down to Earth*, 01/03/10

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

Students ask for plastic ban within Bhimashankar WLS

Children from two *Ashramshalas* (residential schools) from Terungun and Tokawade villages on the periphery of the Bhimashankar WLS appealed to authorities recently to strictly enforce the ban on use of plastic within the sanctuary. A petition with their demands was also sent by the children to the District Collector and other concerned authorities.

The children pointed out that indiscriminate disposal of plastic was polluting 'their forest and river' and that the plastic was also a big threat to endangered wildlife like the Giant squirrel and sambar. They demanded that

shopkeepers and vendors at the temple not be allowed to give these carry bags to visitors and that there be a law banning entry of plastic carry bags into the sanctuary.

The appeal was made in the context of the festival of Mahashivratri in the month of February when thousands of pilgrims visit the temple inside the sanctuary and leave behind tons of plastic and other waste. A number of organizations have been tried, albeit unsuccessfully, in the past to deal with the problem.

The students who made the appeal are part of an ongoing environment education program being conducted jointly by Kalpavriksh and the Maharashtra Arogya Mandal (MAM). A government representative is reported to have subsequently issued a statement saying that the ban would be strictly implemented but reports from the field indicated that there was finally no control on the use of plastic bags.

Source: Chaitrali Chandorkar. '*Bhimashankar Abhayaranyala Vachva*', Sakal, 9/02/2010

Dipannita Das. 'Implement ban on plastic bags in Bhimashankar, say students', *The Times of India* 9/02/2010. '*Mahashivratriisathi Bhimashankarla prashasan sajja*' Sakal, 12/02/2010

Contact: **Sharmila Deo**, C/o Kalpavriksh, editorial address. Email:

sharmiladeo@gmail.com

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

Proposal to remove temple area from Bhimashankar WLS rejected

The Central Committee on Reconciliation of Boundaries of Protected Area headed by the Additional Director General (Forests) M B Lal, has rejected a proposal to remove the Jyotirlinga temple area from the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary

The argument for the proposal was based on the fact that the temple attracts thousands of devotees on Mahashivratri and

Tripuri Pournima days and people were complaining of lack of facilities due to strict forest and wildlife laws.

The Committee was of the opinion that development needs could be taken care of without making any changes to the boundary of the sanctuary.

Source: 'Panel nod for reducing area of bustard home, with rider, www.expressindia.com 16/01/10

CCTV cameras at Sanjay Gandhi NP gates to track visitor movements

In a move to keep track of visitors, the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) authorities have installed Closed Circuit Cameras (CCTV) at its two gates at Borivali and Yeoor. The idea is to ensure that all vehicle entries into the national park are recorded.

Others in the Forest Department (FD) have however said that the cameras were necessary to keep a check on a number of 'heavyweights' who entered the park beyond the allowed timings. The Bombay High Court too has asked the FD not to allow anyone to enter the forest, especially from the Yeoor gate after 6 pm.

Source: 'Cameras at SGNP gates for tracking visitor movements', www.indianexpress.com 17/01/10

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

GIB Sanctuary area down by 7000 sq km

The Central Committee on Reconciliation of Boundaries of Protected Areas has accepted the demand for reduction of the nearly 8,500-sq km Great Indian Bustard (GIB) Sanctuary spread over the Solapur and Ahmednagar districts to 1,223 sq km, provided the Maharashtra government compensates for it by increasing the area of PAs elsewhere. The state had earlier proposed the reduction of the sanctuary to 347 sq km, but the Central committee had rejected

it. The committee is headed by the Additional Director General (Forests) M B Lal

According to the Maharashtra Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), the condition was put because the removal of nearly 7000 sq km would result in halving the protected area coverage in the state. The committee also insisted that forest areas presently controlled by the Revenue Department should also be handed over to the FD.

People in Nannaj and other areas in the two districts as also the adjoining Nashik have been demanding for a long time that the GIB Sanctuary be reduced as it had put considerable restrictions on their activities. Developmental work could not be taken up and agriculture was also not being allowed. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 6; Vol XIV, No. 4; Vol XII, No. 3; Vol XI, No. 5 and No. 29)

Source: 'Panel nod for reducing area of bustard home, with rider, www.expressindia.com 16/01/10

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

NBWL rejects widening of NH-17 because of impact on Karnala WLS

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) recently rejected the state governments' proposal for the widening of the Mumbai-Goa National Highway – 17 (NH-17) as it would have needed a large chunk of land from the Karnala Wildlife Sanctuary (see *PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 3)

The widening had been approved by the Maharashtra State Wildlife Advisory Board a year ago though the State Forest Department (FD) and the Chief Wildlife Warden had expressed their opposition to it.

Source: Ashwin Aghor, 'Proposal to widen NH-17 rejected', *DNA* 06/01/10.
'Fresh lease of life for Karnala Bird sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 04/01/10

Contact: **DCF (Wildlife)** Thane (I/c Karnala WLS), L.B.S. Rd, Naupada Near High Way Naka Thane-400602

ORISSA

Public-private initiative for Simlipal TR

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has planned to launch a new project for tiger conservation in Simlipal Tiger Reserve by involving the RBS Foundation of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group. The first of its kind project - a public-private partnership will involve an expenditure of Rs. 10 crores to provide livelihood support to the people living in the buffer and fringe areas of the reserve. The funds will be utilised over a period of three years and if necessary, the project will be extended with the foundation releasing additional funds.

After a team of tiger experts from the Centre visited Simlipal in November 2009, the MoEF had urged the State government to rebuild the damaged infrastructure of Simlipal TR, expedite village relocation and fill up of the vacant posts. Out of the total sanctioned staff strength of 281 for this reserve, 101 are reported to be presently vacant. (see *PA Updates* Vol. XV, No. 5 and Vol XIII, No. 3)

The MoEF has also requested the State government to prepare a special plan for the buffer zone of Simlipal to provide livelihood options to local people. As the notified buffer of Simlipal had not been placed under the administrative control of the Field Director, the Centre has also asked the State government to accelerate the matter.

Source: Prafulla Das, 'New project for tiger conservation' *The Hindu*, 19/01/10

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

MoEF asks for specific wildlife management plan for electricity transmission line through Chandaka-Dampara WLS

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has asked for a specific wildlife management plan for the construction of the 400 KV Baripada-Mendhasal transmission line. The demand has been made in light of the rising

incidences of electrocution of elephants in Orissa.

The specific proposal for the transmission line project by the Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd requires diversion of 0.55 hectare forest land in the Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary. The entire project would require 1,242 ha.

While recommending the proposal, the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) maintained that certain conditions stipulated by the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state must be accepted. The Chief Wildlife Warden had recommended a management plan for the entire stretch of the line passing through the forest areas, sanctuaries and other reserve forests in view of the large number of incidences of electrocution of elephants. He has also suggested plantation of dwarf trees under the corridor and a dense trees strip for about 1 km with a width of 120 metre.

The NBWL has further recommended that the existing trenches along the strip of corridor be renovated and a stone guard wall be provided on both sides so that animals don't stray towards the nearby human habitation or towards the towers.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol XIV, No. 4; Vol. XIII, No. 6, 3 & 1; Vol XI, No 4 and Nos. 49, 46, 41, 39, 32 & 29)

Source: 'Ministry seeks specific wildlife management plan', *The Indian Express*, 04/01/10

Contact: **DFO**, Chandaka WLS, SFTRI Campus, Ghatikia, P.O. Barmunda Colony, Bhubaneswar – 751003. Tel: 0674-2440168 ®

Management plans for 14 elephant corridors in Orissa

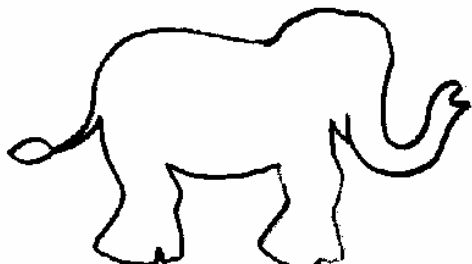
The Orissa government has identified 14 elephant migratory corridors and decided to implement a corridor management plan in each of them. The plan is to be ready by March-end.

The proposed elephant corridors will be spread over an area of 870 sq km with a length of 420 km and width of 0.08 to 4.6 km. The identified corridors are Badampahar-Dhobadhobi, Badamapahar-Karida, Deuli-Suliapada, Simlipal-Hadagarh-Kuladiha,

Telkoi-Palalhada, Karo-Karampada (Jharkhand), Maulabhanja-Jiridimal-Anantpur, Buguda-Nayagarh, Kanheijena-Anantpur, Nuagaon-Baruni, Tala-Kholagarha, Barpahad-Tarava-Kantamal, Kotagarh-Chandrapur and Karlapat-Urladani.

Provision for food and water would be made in these corridors besides paying special attention to safety of elephants. According to 2007 census, there are 1,862 elephants in the state. Human – elephant conflict has become a serious problem in Orissa in recent years. Elephants are reported to have destroyed over 54 sq. kms of crops and killed 48 people on an average every year in the state for the last few years (*PA Updates* Vol. XV, Nos. 6 & 4; XIII, Nos. 6, 3 & 1; Vol. XI, No. 4; and Nos. 49, 46, 41, 39, 34, 32, & 29).

Increased poaching has also been a concern and the government has constituted 51 anti-poaching squads and engaged 98 elephant trackers to deal with the problem.



Source: '14 safe corridors marked for elephants in Orissa', www.wildlifewatch.in 26/01/10

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

TAMIL NADU

Bi-lingual nature guide to Kalakad Mundanthurai TR

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) has produced a first of its kind bi-lingual, multi-taxa nature guide to the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) The guide, authored by T. Ganesh, R. Ganesan, Soubadra Devy and Jahnvi Pai aims at disseminating basic information about the

common and unique plants and animals of the region among school children and other individuals interested in knowing more about the reserve.

It has been designed in a way so as to appeal to children and lay people who have little or no knowledge of biology. The 330 page guide consists of basic information of about 300 species belonging to six taxa of plants, butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Information on common names, habits, key identifying characters and occurrence have been given in English and also in Tamil.

Contact: **T Ganesh**, ATREE.

Email: tganesh@atree.org

Nilgiri Natural History Society launched

The Nilgiri Natural History Society (NNHS) was officially launched on the 18th of February 2010 by the Minister for Environment and Forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh at Keystone Foundation in Kotagiri. He also announced a grant that would be given towards the start up of the society. Those present during the launch of the society include the District Collector of the Nilgiris, Mr Anandrao Patil; Conservator of forests – Coimbatore, Mr R. Kannan and Field Director – Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Mr Rajiv Srivastava. The launch of the society was part of the Save Western Ghats meeting which was held in Kotagiri.

The Society aims to:

- promote ecological awareness among people through campaigns and programs
- design and implement projects aimed at promoting ecologically sound and socially responsible value systems
- undertake research activities towards furthering the knowledge base on the natural history of the region
- network and exchange information with other organisations, groups and individuals
- disseminate information among the public on ecological issues, natural history etc.
- promote and support research by other individuals, institutions, groups on areas of interest to the Society

The NNHS is the initiative of the Keystone Foundation and a group of

individuals who have been working in the region of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve for more than 15 years. The society is in the process of being registered and will soon be formally open for membership. It will function from the Bee Museum in Ooty. More information on the society, its goals and objectives can be found at www.nnhs.in

WEST BENGAL

Villagers invoke Forest Rights Act; take over forest tract adjoining Jaldapara WLS

In an incident in the first week of January more than 500 forest villagers 'took control' of a 2,985-hectare forest tract on the outskirts of Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary by invoking their rights under the forest rights act (Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006).

They nailed boards to tree trunks announcing that no one would be allowed to conduct any activity in the Kodal Bon Basti area of the wildlife III forest division without the permission of a gram sabha they had formed. They invoked Section 3(i) and Section 5 of the FRA. When contacted forest officials said that they would initiate legal action against the villagers if the reports were found to be true.

In November 2009, the villagers had stopped the forest department (FD) from felling trees in the Bania V compartment of the Chilapata range of the same division. The forest officials had tried to sort out the issue with the villagers but no solution was reached and the felling has been suspended since then. Legal action was threatened against the villagers but nothing was done.

Source: Anirban Choudhuri. 'Fringe dwellers cite act for control of green patch', *The Telegraph*, 07/01/10.

Contact: **DFO**, Jaldapara WLS, Cooch Behar Division, P.O. & Dist. Cooch Behar, West Bengal. Tel: 03582-227185.
CF (Wildlife), North Bengal, West Bengal Forest Dept. Aranya Bhawan (Near Court) Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-25627(O) 25596 (R)

Drive to demolish illegal structures in the East Kolkata Wetlands

The East Kolkata Wetland Management Authority (EKWMA) has finally decided to take up a drive to demolish the encroachments in the East Kolkata Wetlands. The decision was taken during a meeting of the EKWMA officials with State Chief Secretary in February in Kolkata.

Officials said that there were many unauthorised garages, godowns and one-room structures that had come up in the area and the drive was to be initiated by demolishing these garages and godowns.

Further details on the drive that was to have been undertaken in February are however not known. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVI, No. 1; Vol XII, Nos 5 & 4; Vol XI, No 4 and Nos 40 & 24)

Source: 'Drive to smash illegal wetland structures', *The Times of India*, 16/02/10

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

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Internet group for tracking insect migration

An internet based discussion group InsectMigration_India@yahoo.com for sharing information about migratory insects of India has been launched recently.

Contact: **Kishen Das**.
Email: tigers.crows@gmail.com

NTCA regional office to be set up in Nagpur

A regional office of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is to be set up in Nagpur. It is hoped that this step will help

better co-ordination between Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.

The setting up of regional office in Nagpur is significant as there are seven tiger reserves in the region: Melghat, Tadoba-Andhari, and Pench in Maharashtra, Pench, Kanha and Satpuda in Madhya Pradesh and Indravati in Chhattisgarh. Besides, there are at least 15 sanctuaries in the Satpuda region bearing tigers. These reserves and part of its landscape supports over 500 tigers as per the Wildlife Institute of India's report of 2008.

The office will be handled by an officer of the rank of conservator of forests and it is hoped that it will be operational within the calendar year 2010.

Source: 'NTCA office in city soon', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>

Expert Panel on Western Ghats constituted

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) recently announced the constitution of a 'Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel' to recommend measures and to assist the government in the preservation, conservation and rejuvenation of this environmentally sensitive and ecologically significant region.

The 14 member panel will be chaired by Prof. Madhav Gadgil. Dr G V Subrahmanyam, Adviser in the MoEF will be Member-Secretary of this panel. The other members of the panel are Mr BJ Krishnan, Senior Advocate; Dr Nandkumar Kamat, Goa University; Dr KN Ganeshaiah, ATREE; Dr VS Vijayan, Kerala Biodiversity Board; Prof Renee Borges, IISc; Prof R Sukumar, IISc; Dr Ligia Noronha, TERI; Ms Vidya Nayak, Nagrik Seva Trust; Dr. DK Subramaniam; Dr PL Gautam, National Biodiversity Authority; Prof SP Gautam, CPCB; and Dr. RR Navalgund, Space Applications Centre.

The first task of the panel will be to assess the current status of the ecology of the Western Ghats region and to demarcate areas within the region which should be earmarked for notification as ecologically sensitive zones under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The panel will furnish its report to the MoEF within six months. A comprehensive consultation process involving people and

Governments of all the concerned states will take place after that.

The Minister of Environment and Forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh also met 43 Members of Parliament representing the 51 districts in six states that are part of the Western Ghats: Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat. It was decided that this Parliamentary group of Western Ghats MPs shall meet regularly to take stock of issues concerning the ecology and the suitable development of the region.

Source: Expert Panel on Western Ghats constituted, PIB Press Release <http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=58899> 04/03/10

Funds released for village relocation from core/critical tiger habitats

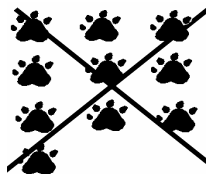
State-wise funds released for village relocation from core/critical tiger habitats under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Schemes-'Project Tiger' and 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats' for the last three years and current year are as follows:

(Rupees in lakhs) Figures rounded off

State	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Madhya Pradesh	230	2039	5819	-
Karnataka	58	980	-	-
Rajasthan	-	50	2343	10400
Uttarakhand	-	10	-	-
Orissa	-	-	350	-
Tamil Nadu	-	-	100	-
Assam	-	-	646	-
Chhattisgarh	-	-	-	1000
Total	288	307	9258	11400

Source: 'Relocation of human settlements from wildlife sanctuaries' PIB Press Release, 20/01/10

Figures for tigers and leopards killed in India since 1994



Following are figures of tigers and leopards killed in India since 1994 that have been put together by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI).

No.	Year	Tigers	Leopards
1	1994	95	38
2	1995	121	143
3	1996	52	110
4	1997	88	145
5	1998	39	69
6	1999	81	135
7	2000	52	1,278
8	2001	72	167
9	2002	46	89
10	2003	38	148
11	2004	38	123
12	2005	46	199
13	2006	37	163
14	2007	27	126
15	2008	29	161
16	2009	32	161

WPSI also has records of a large number of tigers that were 'found dead'. Without verification of poaching evidence these deaths have not been included in the above figures. For tiger bone seizures, in the absence of skulls the number of dead tigers have been calculated by using an average of 12 kg of bones per tiger. Customs authorities multiply known offences by ten to estimate the size of illegal trade.

Source:

<http://www.wpsi-india.org/statistics/index.php>
<http://www.wpsi-india.org/statistics/leopard.php>

Save Western Ghats Meet 2010

The Save Western Ghats Meet 2010 was held from February 18 to 20 at the campus of the Keystone Foundation in Kotagiri. The purpose

of the meet was to highlight the issues and challenges being faced by Western Ghats over the decades in the light of its importance as an ecologically sensitive and biodiversity hotspot area. The meeting was also attended by the Union Minister for Environment and Forests, Mr. Jairam Ramesh.

A large number of issues were discussed during the meeting. These included among others the efforts needed to protect the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, large dams and thermal power plants, issues of indigenous people, human-wildlife conflict, GM and organic farming and mining.

It was further decided that there will be a number of regional meetings in 2011. This will be followed by a bigger meeting in Pune in 2012 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the first save Western Ghats meet.

Contact: **Samita Vasudevan**, Email:
samita@keystone-foundation.org

Comprehensive database launched for tiger mortality and crime in India

TRAFFIC India in collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has developed an online database on tiger mortalities and tiger crime in India.

The principal objective is to track each and every tiger death in India and make this data available to various agencies for necessary action. The website was launched in January 2010 by Mr Jairam Ramesh, Minister for Environment and Forests.

The website (<http://tigernet.nic.in/>) aims to bring in greater transparency and clarity in the process of tracking and evaluating tiger mortality in India. Chief Wildlife Wardens and Field Directors of Project Tiger Reserves will be able to log on to the website to load and view significant data related to tiger mortality and crime. The website also collects data on seizure of tiger products across the country.

It is anticipated that the new website will simplify the whole tiger mortality reporting system and allow a more accurate and transparent picture to be generated of poaching and other threats facing India's tiger population. Automatic reminders will be sent

to official staff to upload details, including the findings of post mortem examinations.

The website also provides a resource for concerned citizens to send in details about wildlife crime that they may be aware of.

Source: 'India's first comprehensive database on tiger mortality and crime launched', <http://www.wildlifeextra.com/go/news/tiger-crime010.html>

Workshop on Marine Mammal Stranding held in Kochi

A workshop on Marine Mammal Stranding was organized recently by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi in collaboration with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), USA. The workshop was sponsored by the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF).

The workshop was held at the CMFRI from January 21-23, 2010 was attended by 42 participants from 23 organizations. They included scientists, professors, students, veterinary surgeons, and government and non-government officials.

An effort is being made to now establish a national stranding program that will deal with a range of issues including stranding authorization, event preparedness, funding, communication, public outreach and research.

Some of the workshop outcomes/recommendations are as follows:

- (i) Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India will serve as the lead agency in establishing and supporting a National Marine Mammal Stranding Network in India by allocating and distributing funds. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) will serve as the nodal agency for executing and managing the network.
- (ii) The Existing MoU between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) to be leveraged to set up bilateral research projects and capacity building/training in three areas: fisheries management, impact of climate change on living marine resources, and marine

mammal conservation including stranding response.

- (iii) Annual workshops to be conducted within each regional ecological zone (NW, SW, SE, NE, Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands) and at national ministerial level subsequent to the approval of guidelines submitted to the forest department.

Contact: **Mridula Srinivasan**, NOAA, USA.
Email: Mridula.Srinivasan@noaa.gov

Two day seminar on Gangetic Dolphin held in Patna

A two day international seminar on the conservation of the Gangetic River Dolphin was held in Patna in the last week of February. Those participating included representatives from the Wildlife Institute of India, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Patna University and the Bihar State Government.

Various threats and challenges to dolphin conservation were discussed in the meeting that was organised by the Working Group for the Action Plan for Dolphin Conservation, set up by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to finalise India's dolphin conservation plan. The group is expected to submit its report to the ministry by April. The Gangetic dolphin was declared India's national aquatic animal last year (see *PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 6).

Source: 'Call goes out to save the Ganges Dolphin' www.deccanherald.com
24/02/10

Task Force on Project Elephant

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has recently constituted a Task Force on Project Elephant. It will provide detailed recommendations to upgrade the project to bring about more effective conservation and management of wild as well as captive elephants in India. The Task Force is expected to submit its report by May 2010.

The Terms of Reference of the Task Force are as follows:

For Wild Elephants:

- recommend measures to strengthen elephant conservation in the country and keeping in view the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 suggest amendments needed, if found necessary.
- devise an institutional framework for Project Elephant exploring and explaining the functioning of the same at the Centre and State level with the objective of ensuring that it receives the same impetus and is brought at par with Project Tiger.
- identify, catalogue and define the elephant reserves and ranges at the landscape level. The Committee shall simultaneously develop a framework for preparing long-term perspective plans for elephant ranges.
- examine issues relating to human-elephant conflict and recommend appropriate short-term and long-term solutions.
- recommend appropriate methodologies for the tracking, estimating and the monitoring of wild elephants. It shall also recommend measures for specialised training of the field staff in the states if requires.
- explore any other issues that it may find relevant to its charge.

For Captive Elephants:

- The Committee shall, keeping in view the socio-cultural and religious sentiments attached to the same, recommend future strategies/guidelines for suitable human use of elephants;
- The Committee shall, with regard to the use of captive elephants, recommend measures, guidelines and standards for:
 - Training and certification of Mahouts
 - Veterinarian care and Management guidelines
 - Creation of rescue centres
 - Monitoring of captive elephants
- The Committee shall develop general and uniform rules for the better upkeep and care of captive elephants and any matter in furtherance of the same.

The Task Force is to be chaired by Dr. Mahesh Rangarajan of the Univ. of Delhi. The other members of the Task Force are Mr Ajay Desai, Dr. R Sukumar, Dr PS Easa, Mr Vivek Menon, Dr S Vincent, Ms Suparna Ganguly, Dr BK Talukdar, Mr Brijendra Singh, Dr Sushant Chowdhary. The Member Secretary of the Task

Force will be Mr AN Prasad, Director, Project Elephant.

Source: 'Task Force on Project Elephant constituted' PIB Press release

<http://pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=57833>

Expert committee for protected areas assessment in the North East

A three member expert committee has been constituted to assess whether the chosen approaches in PA management in the North East are apt and adequate. The committee has been constituted under the Wildlife Institute of India's program for 'Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Protected Area Network in India'. It comprises M.C. Malakar, former principal chief conservator of forests, Assam, and wildlife experts P.C. Bhattacharjee and Gautam Narayan. The evaluation has been initiated following a directive from the Prime Minister's office to conduct an independent evaluation of all PAs in the country.

The PAs to be evaluated include the Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Sikkim, the Balpakram National Park (NP) in Meghalaya, Dibru Saikhowa NP in Assam, Ngengpui WLS in Mizoram, the Trishna WLS in Tripura and the Dibang WLS

The initiative seeks to assess the chosen management approaches and to evaluate whether the funds allocated are used effectively. It will ascertain whether the values of the site and threats to them are well documented, assessed and monitored. Further it is expected to examine the adequacy or the constraints in the PA legislation and policy, administrative structures and procedures, and design in relation to management effectiveness.

The reports of each regional committee are to be submitted to the central monitoring and co-ordination committee of the MoEF each year following which it will be consolidated and presented to Parliament.

Source: 'Experts assess six protected areas', *The Telegraph*, 06/01/10

SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh launches Tiger Action Plan

Bangladesh has launched a programme to train field staff in the Sundarbans to prevent man-animal conflicts. Three tigers and 30 people were killed in Bangladesh in 2009 while the number of deaths since the year 2000 has been 193 people and 23 tigers respectively. Recent tiger casualty was reported in the southern district of Satkhira, where villagers initially tried to scare off a five-year-old tigress but eventually captured her and beat her to death.

Officials have said that strict enforcement of anti-poaching laws and better conservation efforts had helped the tiger population but they were unable to give a specific number. According to a 2004 survey by forest authorities, the Bangladesh part of the Sundarbans had 440 tigers.

A Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan is also being launched under which forest rangers and guards will learn to use tranquiliser guns to immobilise and capture tigers that stray into human habitations. More details were however not available.

Source: Anis Ahmed, 'Bangladesh tiger plan aims to cut clashes with humans', <http://in.reuters.com/article> 25/01/10

OPPORTUNITIES

MPhil in Conservation Leadership, University of Cambridge

The University of Cambridge has announced a new MPhil degree in Conservation Leadership which is a full-time, one-year, masters course aimed at graduates with at least three to five years of relevant experience.

The course is based in the University of Cambridge, Department of Geography, which is working in collaboration with partners in the

Cambridge Conservation Initiative (CCI). The course starts in October 2010 and the closing date for applications is 30 April 2010.

Contact: **Prof. Niger Leader-Williams**, Director of Conservation Leadership. Email: nigel.leader-williams@geog.cam.ac.uk
Web: <http://www.geog.cam.ac.uk/graduate/mphil/conservation/>

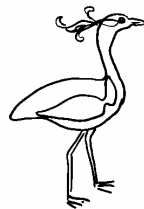
Ramsar Small Grants Fund

The Ramsar Convention has issued a call for proposals for its Small Grants Fund for projects in wetlands conservation and wise use. The deadline for applications is 30 June 2010.

For details check:

http://www.ramsar.org/cda/ramsar/display/main/main.jsp?zn=ramsar&cp=1-63-68-159_4000_0

Ravi Sankaran Inlaks Fellowship Program for Field Biology, Ecology and Conservation



The Inlaks Foundation has called for applications for the newly established Ravi Sankaran Fellowships for field biology, ecology and conservation.

The program will support three kinds of activities:

- Study in a Masters degree at an institution abroad
- An internship with an Institution abroad
- A short research or implementation project within India

Only activities that have an explicit focus on biodiversity conservation will be considered for this Fellowship Program. The Fellowship will cover course and other fees, a suitable stipend, and where appropriate, research or implementation funds will also be given.

Successful candidates will ordinarily be below the age of 30 on 15th April, 2010.

More details and application forms are available on www.ravisankaran.org
Email: rsfp2010@gmail.com

IN THE SUPREME COURT

PA related matters in the Supreme Court (SC) and the Central Empowered Committee in December 2009, January & February 2010

- Regarding the removal of kendu leaves from Satkosia, Badrama and Sunabeda WLSs in Orissa. The CEC concurred with the views of the MoEF and recommended that no collection should be permitted in the Satkosia WLS. For the other two sanctuaries, the CEC recommended that the proposal for collection of kendu leaf, with appropriate safeguards and recommendations of the Chief Wildlife Warden, should be examined by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life for a decision.
- Regarding the relocation of Gujjar families from inside the Rajaji NP, Uttarakhand
- Regarding the replacement of old pipelines within the Ramnagar WLS, Jammu & Kashmir
- Diversion of 0.52 hectares of land from the Chandaka WLS for a 400 KV DC transmission line
- Diversion of 241 hectares of land from the Dhrangdhara Wild Ass Sanctuary, Gujarat for construction of 400 KV transmission lines to evacuate power from the Mundra Ultra Mega power project
- Diversion of 3.72 ha. of land in Dhrangdhara Wild Ass sanctuary, Gujarat for installation of 7 windmills in the western part of the sanctuary in village Shikharpur
- Regarding the removal of the Hanumangala Ashram from the Gir WLS, Gujarat
- Directions to stop illegal hunting / baiting / teasing of Mahseer Fish inside the Cauvery WLS, Karnataka
- Construction of roads in forest areas of Kodagu including Bramhagiri, Pushpagiri and Talakaveri Sanctuaries and Kadamakal, and Pattighat Reserved Forests, Karnataka
- Illegal widening and tarring of road in the Reserved Forests of Manavan Shola, Kerala
- Regarding the exclusion of an area of 116.25 hectares of land of M/s Chowgule and Company Pvt. Ltd from the Netravali WLS, Goa
- Regarding the construction of a rope-way for the carrying of material in the Matheran Ecosensitive Area, Maharashtra
- Regarding the expansion of National Highway 7 through the Pench TR, Madhya Pradesh
- Regarding the construction of a submersible bridge across the Parvati River inside the National Chambal WLS, Madhya Pradesh. The CEC has granted permission subject to certain conditions being met
- Regarding the construction of an embankment of the left bank of the River Ganga from Village Sherpur to Village Theg in the Hastinapur WLS, Uttar Pradesh. The CEC has granted permission subject to certain conditions being met.

'In the Supreme Court' is based on the Forest Case Update, which is a web-based initiative to provide information and updates on developments related to forests and wildlife in the Supreme Court of India.

Contact: **Ritwick Dutta & Kanchi Kohli**, Forest Case Update Editors, E-180, Greater Kailash 2, New Delhi-110048. Email: forestcase@yahoo.com Web: www.forestcaseindia.org

Member Secretary, Central Empowered Committee, II Floor, Chanakya Bhawan, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110021 Tel: 011-26884921 /23 /26, Fax: 24101925



Hydroelectric projects proposed inside Askot Wildlife Sanctuary

No	Name of Project	Instal- led Capa- city MW	Capa- city Plan- ned MW	Name of stream/ river	Main River Basin	Main Water -shed	Tehsil	Project Scale	Project Devel- oper
1	Bokang Baling	-	330	Dhauli Ganga E	Dhauli Ganga E	Kali	Dharchula	Large	THDC
2	Chirkila	1.5	-	Dukugad	Dhauli Ganga E	Kali	Dharchula	Small	UJVNL
3	Chungar Chal	-	240	Dhauli Ganga E	Dhauli Ganga E	Kali	Dharchula	Large	NHPC
4	Dhauliganga	280	-	Dhauli Ganga E	Dhauli Ganga E	Kali	Dharchula	Large	NHPC
5	Sela Urthing	-	230	Dhauli Ganga E	Dhauli Ganga E	Kali	Dharchula	Large	UJVNL
6	Chhiphalthara – Jauljibi Gori Stage I	-	60	Goriganga	Gori	Kali	Dharchula	Med- ium	NHPC
7	Gharudi – Kauli - Gori Stage II	-	120	Goriganga	Gori	Kali	Dharchula / Didihaat	Large	NHPC
8	Khartoli Lumti Talli Gori III B	-	55	Goriganga	Gori	Kali	Munsiari	Med- ium	
9	Madkot – Phaguwa/ Sera Ghat Bangapani -Gori Stage IIIA	-	120	Goriganga	Gori	Kali	Munsiari	Large	NHPC
10	Garba Tawaghat	-	630	Kali	Kali	Kali	Dharchula	Large	NHPC
11	Kalika Dantu	-	230	Kali	Kali	Kali	Dharchula	Large	
12	Kanchauti	2	-	Kanchautigad	Kali	Kali	Dharchula	Small	UJVNL
13	Kulagad	1.2	-	Kulangad	Kali	Kali	Dharchula	Small	UJVNL
14	Baram	1.5	-	Gosi Gad	Goriganga	Gori	Dharchula	Small	Private

Contact: **K. Ramnarayan**, Himal Prakriti, Village Sarmoli, Post Munsiari
District Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand 262554. Email: ramnarayan.k@gmail.com

MoEF introduces five specific scientific initiatives

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) recently launched five initiatives to give a renewed impetus to science in matters related to forests, biodiversity and wildlife. These are:

- 1) A Global Advisory Network Group on Environmental Sciences (GANGES)
- 2) A National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme
- 3) An Expert Committee to Enhance the Scientific Capacity of MoEF
- 4) An Action Plan to Enhance Forestry Science
- 5) An Indian Network for Climate Change Assessment (INCCA), announced in Oct 2009

1) Global Advisory Network Group on Environmental Sciences (GANGES)

GANGES is a new forum, comprising the world's leading environmental scientists of Indian origin, established to advise the Government of India on the country's environmental sciences agenda. GANGES will focus on questions such as:

- What areas of Environmental Sciences should we focus on?
- How should the government engage on this agenda (identify priority areas, directly conduct research, support and fund outside research, etc.)?
- Which institutional collaborations should be undertaken in specific areas and in what way? How should academia and private sector be engaged?
- How should innovation in this space be stimulated, and how do we fast-track development, demonstration and dissemination?

The scientists who make up this group are Subra Suresh, School of Engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA; Jagadish Shukla, Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic and Earth Sciences, George Mason University, USA; Purnendu Dasgupta, Department of Analytical and Environmental Chemistry, University of Texas, Arlington, USA; Veerabhadran Ramanathan, University of California, San Diego, USA; Asit Biswas, Third World Centre for Water Management, Queens University, Canada; Ashok Gadgil, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, USA; Pratim Biswas, Washington University in St. Louis, USA; Kamal Bawa, University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA; Tam Sridhar,

Faculty of Engineering, Monash University, Australia; Shankar Sastry, Dean of Engineering, University of California, Berkeley, USA; Venkatachalam Ramaswamy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, University of Colorado, Boulder Institute, USA; and Venky Narayanamurti, Science, Technology and Public Policy Programme, Harvard Kennedy School, USA

2) A National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme

This new programme will provide promising young scientists desirous of working in the forefront of environmental sciences, engineering and technology, the opportunity to do cutting-edge research on critical environmental issues in collaboration with leading institutes and scientists in India and the world. It will provide 10 young scientists under the age of 35, (age limit is extendable to 40 in exceptional cases), with a generous fellowship and institutional support to undertake this research. Each fellow would be attached to an institution which will sign an MoU with the Ministry. The selection of the fellows and thrust areas for research will be done by the Management Committee made up of eminent scientists.

This programme will allow young Indian scientists to enhance their areas of expertise under the mentorship of the leading scientists in the world and will help create a cadre of top class Indian environmental scientists for the future. The knowledge emerging from the research work under this programme will help inform our environmental policy agenda, ensuring that it is based on rigorous science.

3) An Expert Committee to Enhance the Scientific Capacity of MoEF

An Expert Committee has been set up to take a fresh look at scientific manpower and infrastructure in the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The committee will comprise of the following members: Dr. Kasturirangan, Member Planning Commission, Chairman;

Dr. Chandra Venkataraman, Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering, IIT Mumbai, Member; Dr. Kalpana Balakrishnan, Professor, Environmental Health Engineering, Sri Ramachandra University Chennai, Member; Shri Vishwanathan Anand, Retired Secretary, MoEF, Member; Dr. Deepak Pental, Vice Chancellor, Delhi University, Member; Ms. Swati A Piramal, Director of Piramal Healthcare Limited, Member; and Shri M.F. Farooqui, Additional Secretary, MoEF, Convenor

4) An Action Plan to Enhance Forestry Science

- A Forestry Fellowship Programme to recognise outstanding contributions to forestry sciences.
- A National Forestry Knowledge Forum: A platform where expert knowledge in various issues in forestry will be shared is being developed. This forum will facilitate virtual interactions of experts in forestry. It will be physically located in Delhi and will be open for national and international experts in the field of forestry science.
- National Forestry Information Network: A network is being established with a robust foundation using remote sensing, GIS and MIS. All land based forestry interventions will be geo-mapped and monitored on a time scale and will be put in the public domain. The process is being guided by a core group of forestry professionals.
- IT for fire monitoring: A programme to use satellite data for early transmission of fire signals to the mobile phones/ PDA's of field officers is being undertaken. The University of Maryland has agreed to share all active fire data obtained from TERRA and AQUA satellites of NASA every six hours for this. This will not only help in quick fire detection and reducing the response time, but has also

helped in identifying fire sensitive areas. This was originally conceived by the MP forest department, which also won a national e-Governance Award for the initiative.

- National Bureau for Forest Germplasm: A Forest Genetics Resource network is being established along the lines of the Plant Genetics Resource Bureau. The objective would be to identify, characterize and preserve the valuable germplasm of a wide number of forestry species in the country. This will protect our valuable genetic resource against extinction and exploitation

In the Union Budget for 2009-10, the government has already made a special grant of Rs. 100 crore to the Indian Council for Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) for modernisation of forestry research. This grant will be used to support some of these initiatives, among other things.

5) Indian Network for Climate Change Assessment (INCCA)

Established by the MoEF in October 2009, INCCA is a network-based programme to make science, particularly the “3Ms” – Measuring, Modelling and Monitoring – the essence of India's policy-making in the climate change space. It brings together over 120 institutions and over 220 scientists from across the country.

Source: 'Environment and Forests Ministry to give renewed impetus to science' PIB Press release
<http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=57612> 04/02/10

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