

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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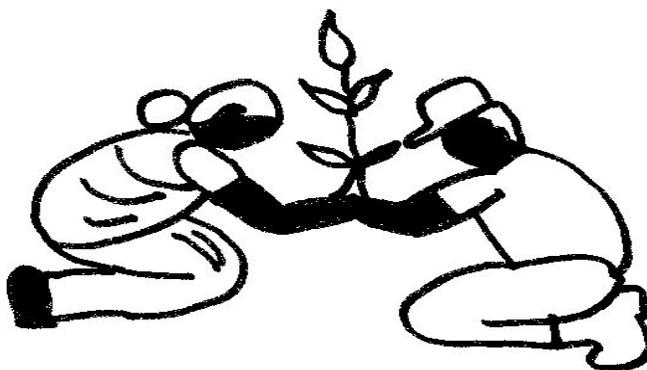
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Protected Area Update

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<http://indiaenvironmentportal.org.in>

EDITORIAL

Many reasons to oppose a PA

There have been many reasons and arguments against the creation of new protected areas (PAs) or the expansion of existing ones. The general impression is that governments and forest departments are always keen on expanding the PA network and communities or those who speak on their behalf are the ones opposing these moves.

The picture on the ground is actually more complex and this issue of the *PA Update* has two interesting examples – one from Uttarakhand and another from Maharashtra. In both these cases it is the state machinery that is against the expansion (or creation) of protected areas for reasons that have nothing to do with interests of wildlife or of the local communities. An interesting parallel was seen more than a decade ago when the Himachal Pradesh Government denotified about 10 sq km of the Great Himalayan National Park on the pretext that local communities were being negatively impacted by the national park. The real reason was that the Parbati Hydel Project had been held up and the only way to get it through was to have the river valley excluded from the PA.

Now, in Uttarakhand the state government is opposing the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) recommendation for expansion of the Askot Wildlife Sanctuary on the grounds that this will restrict their capacity to tap the high hydro-electric potential of the area. Already there are 14 such projects proposed within the existing sanctuary area (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 2) and many others in the entire region. Local communities here have also been opposing the protected area, but then, they (at least some of them here) have also vehemently opposed the spree of dam building that the region is likely to see. The cancellation of the Loharinag Pala Hydel Project and the decision to declare the Gomukh – Uttarakashi stretch of the River Bhagirathi as an eco-sensitive zone is perhaps one outcome of this.

In Maharashtra, similarly, the long pending notification of the Mansinghdeo Wildlife Sanctuary is being held up because part of the land belongs to the Forest Development

Corporation of Maharashtra. The Corporation which has logged these forests for timber has in the past opposed handing over the land for inclusion in the sanctuary and the decade old proposal continues to languish. In 2004 (*PA Update* 50) it had even moved an application before the High Court, arguing that it would lose nearly Rs. 1400 crores if the ban on timber logging was implemented in the 10 km radius of PAs as had been suggested.

This is a situation we have seen happening repeatedly with only minor variations in the script. In the present scheme of protected areas and wildlife conservation, local communities are clearly the most dispensable entities. And in the present dominant paradigm of ‘development’ and primacy to commercial interests it is protected areas, wildlife and local people that are all together in being at the bottom of the list of priorities, if they find a place in that list at all.

There are different sets of people opposing wildlife conservation and protected areas for different reasons. It is important to realize that it is generally one set that manages to have its way.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Demands for removal of speed breakers inside Nagarjunsagar Srisailam TR

The Andhra Pradesh police has written to the forest department (FD) to remove around 20 speed breakers from the Mannanur-Dornala road that runs through the Nagarjunsagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve. They argue that vehicles carrying VIPs have to slow down due to these speed breakers when they visit the pilgrim centre or pass through the forest. This makes them vulnerable to Maoist attacks.

Forest officials have, however, opposed this demand as the speed breakers had been built to decrease incidents of animals being run over by speeding vehicles (see *PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 4). Removing them

would also increase the speed of all other vehicles passing through the reserve.

Wildlife experts have recommended the closure of the Dornala-Atmakur road which passes through the forest as heavy traffic is posing a major threat to wildlife here. The Chief Wildlife Warden is reported to have proposed an alternate route which would be 25 km longer than the existing road. This re-alignment is however being opposed by locals.

Meanwhile, the Srisailem temple authorities have asked the government to allow the movement of vehicles on the 130 km-stretch between Mannanur and Dornala up to 11 pm. Traffic is, presently, banned after 9 pm.

Source: 'VIPs want to vroom in forests', www.deccanchronicle.com, 10/08/10

Contact: **Field Director**, Nagarjunsagar - Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Srisailem Dam (East) – 512103, Andhra Pradesh, Tel: 08524-286089 / 286140(R). Fax: 08524-286071

Culling of wild boars to be allowed in state

The Chief Wildlife Warden of Andhra Pradesh has allowed Divisional Forest Officers in the state to kill wild boars that are destroying crops.

A number of districts in the state – Chittoor, Anantpur, Kurnool, Adilabad, Mahboobnagar, East Godavari and West Godavari are said to have been badly affected by the wild boar problem. The animal not only destroys fields but is known, on occasion, to also attack human beings.

Concern has been expressed by conservation groups that this might lead to large scale killing of the animal. The Forest Department has however said that the permission is only a temporary one and will be reviewed in about a year's time.

Source: Mir Ayoob Ali Khan. 'Culling orders may see boars vanish from the wild', *The Times of India*

Contact: **CWLW**, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhavan, Saifabad, Hyderabad - 500004, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 040-23230561 / 23232668. Fax: 337889

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Tiger density goes up in Pakke TR

The Pakke Tiger Reserve has recorded a density of 1.9 tigers per 100 square km. This is higher than the density of 1.15 tigers per 100 sq km recorded in 2006.

The census was carried out jointly by the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature – India in collaboration with the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department. Automated cameras were used to capture the photographs of wild animals. The effectively sampled area for camera trapping was 261.81 sq km of the reserve's total area of 862 sq km. The camera trap was laid at 30 locations in both Sijusa and Tipi ranges. The census was carried out from February 4 to March 30 this year.

Large areas of the park were not covered due to their inaccessibility.

Source: Roopak Goswami, 'Big cats hit a low in Pakke sanctuary - Clouded leopard on camera in tiger reserve for first time', *The Telegraph*, 30/07/10

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary Division, P.O. Seijusa, Dist. West Kameng – 790103,

ASSAM

River islands of Assam are new corridors for wildlife

A study by the NGO Aaranyak, has found that tigers, rhinos and elephants are using the Brahmaputra river islands as corridors and habitats while migrating and to establish new territories. The river islands dotting the 185 km stretch of the Brahmaputra from Kaziranga National Park to Orang NP — which is being called the Kaziranga-Orang riverine landscape (KORL) — have been found to be a major corridor for animals migrating within the protected areas on the Brahmaputra floodplains.

In addition to Kaziranga and Orang this landscape also includes the Laokhowa and Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuaries and a few reserve forests. The Forest Department (FD) is reportedly keen to connect the meta-

population of tigers in these areas by declaring it a single tiger conservation unit. The study covering an area of 1100 sq. km was undertaken in collaboration with the Assam FD and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - India in order to assess the potential of the Brahmaputra river islands to support dispersing tigers within Central Assam. Some river islands that were included in the study were Cibe Tapu, Lahoroni Chapori 1 and 2, Kartikay, and Maj Chapori.

Of the 78 small and large river islands (ranging from three to 37 sq km) in the landscape, 52 were sampled for the presence of tigers, prey, habitat suitability, human beings and livestock. Direct presence of tigers was found in six of them and indirect evidence in five others. Remote sensing data has revealed that most of these islands are riverine grasslands and only one-fifth are used for agriculture. This indicates that these can be good habitats and corridors for tigers and other animals as they move across the landscape.

The recent citing of tigers in Koliabor, Naltali and Dhakuakhana, about 10 to 40 km from Kaziranga, has also confirmed that the animals are dispersing over considerable areas. The riverine stretch is also important for the Gangetic dolphin.

The report has suggested that a detailed study should also be made to understand the socio-economics, land holding and land use by the communities settled on some of the river islands and that the communities should be taken into confidence for their long-term conservation and management. It was pointed out that as some of *khuti* owners might be completely dependent on the livestock raised on the river islands, this aspect needed to be investigated thoroughly while preparing strategies for planned rehabilitation of the *khuti* owners.

A co-management approach for the riverine areas has also been suggested as a section of local villagers are dependent on fishing for their livelihoods.

Source: 'River islands find favour with tigers - NGO study reveals new corridors', *The Telegraph*, 13/08/10

'Contiguous riverine stretch mooted', *The Assam Tribune*, 23/08/10

Contact: **Firoz Ahmed**, Aaranyak, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati - 781028, Assam. Tel: 2230250. Fax: 2228418. Email: firoz@aaranyak.org

FD officials to be allowed use of firearms



The Assam government has authorized the use of firearms by forest staff to ensure better protection of forests and wildlife. The order that was issued by the governor's office on July 14 allows all forest officers from front-line staff to the senior-most members of the department to use firearms. The order also provides immunity to forest officials from prosecution without prior sanction in case of firing incidents. A magisterial enquiry will, however, be conducted in the firing cases and criminal proceedings can be initiated against erring officials if the use of firearms is proven unnecessary, unwarranted and excessive.

The Forest Department (FD) is reported to be now checking with the police if they have spare weapons that FD can now use. The FD had said it will take a decision about buying new weapons based on the availability of funds.

Wildlife NGOs have welcomed the decision saying that the under-equipped front-line staff was in a disadvantaged position when fighting organised poaching gangs.

Source: 'Assam allows forest officials to use firearms', www.thaindian.com, 06/08/10

Poachers killed, apprehended in two different incidents in Orang NP

Two alleged poachers were killed in the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park in July by personnel of the Forest Protection Force. Two firearms were also recovered from them.

According to a range officer of the park, the unidentified poachers were killed in an encounter with the forest guards near Rowmari forest camp. An automatic 7.65 mm pistol, one 303 rifle and 10 rounds of live bullets were recovered from the encounter site. The two bodies were subsequently sent to the Mangaldoi civil hospital for post-mortem.

In another incident in August, authorities claimed to have apprehended another group of four rhino poachers, including the alleged 'most wanted' poacher, from Bihudia village on the fringe area of the park. The four, it is believed, were about to enter the park when they were held. Several items, including food, medicine and mosquito repellents were recovered from them.

Forest officials claimed that Joynaluddin, one of those arrested, is involved in the killing of several rhinos at Orang and Kaziranga NPs. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVI, Nos. 2 & 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: '2 poachers shot in Orang National Park', *The Assam Tribune*, 31/07/10
'Poachers held near Orang park - Leader in net, search on for rifle', *The Telegraph*, 22/08/10

Contact: **DFO**, Orang NP, Mangaldoi Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Darrang - 784 125, Assam. Tel: 0914-22065(O), 22349(R)

Elephant killed in road accident on NH-37 in Kaziranga NP

An elephant was knocked down by a speeding truck on NH-37 in Kaziranga National Park in the month of July. It was hit on the head by the truck while it was crossing the road in the Amguri area under Burapahar forest range of the park early in the morning. A week before that, about three deer were run over by vehicles on the highway.

There was significant movement of animals on the highway in that period following inundation of several parts of Kaziranga. During floods, animals from Kaziranga cross over the highway to reach higher grounds in Karbi Anglong district. Soon after floods engulfed the park in June, park authorities started issuing time cards to vehicles taking the highway between Amguri and Kohora. It is a distance of 37 km which they have to cover in not less than 51

minutes. The guards deployed at the two ends slap a fine on the driver if a vehicle was found to have reached less than the prescribed time. Also, forest guards man all the posts along the highway between Amguri and Kohora from evening to early morning for restricting vehicular speed. However, in this case the animal was said to have been knocked down at a time when the guards were not at their posts. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XVI, Nos. 4 & 1; Vol XIV, No. 6; Vol XIII, Nos. 6, 2 & 1 and Vol XI, Nos. 6 & 4)

Source: 'Speeding truck knocks down jumbo at Kaziranga', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, 18/07/10

Investigation demanded into forest official involvement in Kaziranga NP rhino poaching

The Bokakhat subdivision units of the Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTSA) and the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) have demanded an immediate inquiry into the alleged involvement of the anti-poaching staff in incidents of killing rhinos for their horns in the Kaziranga National Park.

Seven persons had been arrested by the Numaligarh police at Labanghat area on NH-39 on May 17 in a rhino horn recovery case in Kaziranga NP. The prime accused, Tarun Ganak, had escaped then but he surrendered at the Numaligarh police station in the last week of July. After his surrender, Ganak had in his confessional statement alleged that a number of forest officials employed in the Kaziranga NP were also involved in rhino poaching. Though Ganak refused to divulge the names of the officials involved to the media, he alleged that he had been threatened by forest officials to hush up the matter after the rhino horn was recovered by the police on May 17.

ATTSA submitted a memorandum to the Bokakhat Sub Divisional Officer demanding an immediate magistrate-level inquiry. The AJYCP also submitted a similar memorandum to the Kohora range officer on July 30. The organizations criticized the

indifferent attitude and negligence of the state forest department which they said, had led to an increase in poaching in the park.

The Numaligarh police out-post in-charge is reported to have said that the police would conduct an investigation into the matter soon.

Source: 'Forest officials involved in rhino poaching', *The Sentinel*, 31/07/10, 'ATTSA demands probe into rhino poaching case; AJYCP gives ultimatum of seven days', *The Sentinel*, 03/08/10

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

Road widening threat to wildlife in Sonitpur Elephant Reserve and buffer of Nameri Tiger Reserve

The Assam Forest Department (FD) has allowed the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to widen the Balipara-Bhalukpong road in Sonitpur district, raising concerns about impacts on wildlife and its habitat in the Sonitpur Elephant Reserve and the buffer of Nameri Tiger Reserve (TR).

It has been reported that the BRO has started massive hill-cutting in the area to facilitate the widening despite the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) not issuing the mandatory clearance. A three-member expert committee of the FD, which was asked by the FD to give an on-the-spot report, had observed massive earth-cutting from the adjoining hillocks and also found that 4 km of the road inside the buffer area has already been constructed.

The BRO had sought right of way of 36 metres, which was later reduced to 22 metres. As compensation, the FD has asked the BRO to pay five per cent of the proportionate project cost for wildlife conservation and human wildlife conflict mitigation measures. The BRO has also been asked to put up speed restriction signals on the road similar to what has been done in Kaziranga National Park.

The request for widening of the road was made in light of its strategic importance and relevance in the context of concerns on the Indo-China border. An expert committee of the FD had pointed out the serious impacts this would have but the recommendations have been overlooked. The committee had pointed out that elephants

from the Nameri TR use this road frequently as a corridor throughout the year, more so in the winter season and move to Sotai Pahar, which is a part of Balipara reserve forest on the western side of the road. A major part of Sotai Pahar is still intact with the presence of bamboo at many places. The construction and widening of the road is also expected to lead to cutting down of a number of trees.

Source: Roopak Goswami. 'Road threat to wildlife', *The Telegraph*, 21/08/10

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Nameri Tiger Reserve Western Assam Wildlife Division, P.O. Koliabhomora, Tezpur – 784001, Assam. Tel: 03712-220854(O), 220803(R)

Women take up frontline jobs of protection in PAs, other forest areas



As many as 21 women foresters and 35 women forest guards have recently started working in different wildlife divisions in Assam, thanks to the Forest Department's (FD) move to recruit 30 per cent women in all posts. The total strength of the FD in the state is 6000 personnel.

These women have been appointed in a number of areas that include the Kaziranga and Dibru-Saikhowa National Parks and the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary.

Women who join the FD are being trained by experts from the Assam Forest Protection Force, National Security Guard, Assam Police and the Assam Olympic Association in areas like physical fitness, arms bearing, yoga and martial arts. This is in addition to rigorous classroom training in wildlife management, forest engineering and social forestry.

In the Kaziranga National Park, authorities have got the women involved in Eco Development Committees (EDC). 110 villages have been identified for the EDC programme and 55 EDCs have been formed since 2008. The idea is to involve 50 per cent of the village women and generate livelihood

opportunities through self-help groups and it is hoped that the female staff will help initiate livelihood opportunities for the village women. Presence of women staff is also expected to help in anti-poaching activities, particularly while conducting search or raid operations, as the female relatives of poachers act as accomplices.

Source: 'Jungle belles - Assam reinforces its frontline forest protection force with trained women guards.' *The Hindu Business Line*, 06/08/10

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

GUJARAT

Details of wildlife cases filed by Amit Jethva



Right to Information (RTI) and wildlife activist from Gujarat, Amit Jethva, was shockingly murdered outside a Ahmedabad court room in July 2010 (*PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 4). The investigation into his murder is going on and some arrests have been made in the matter. Close relatives of a local MLA are said to be linked to the murder.

Amit Jethva had initiated a number of cases related to wildlife conservation through the Gir Youth Nature Club (GYNC). Following are some details where the Legal Initiative for Forests and the Environment (LIFE) was representing GYNC before the Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee:

IA No. 1243 – regarding the operation of many mining leases within a 5 km radius of the Girnar Wildlife sanctuary and also the encroachments in the area by religious institutions in connivance with politicians and influential people by construction of huge ashrams.

The application had also noted that in October 2005 a 2.5 km cement road of 10 ft width

had been constructed in Datar Hill of Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

IA No. 829 – regarding an encroachment in the form of an ashram in the Kantala Beat of Tulshishyam Range of Gir East Forest Division. The ashram, named Hanumangala Ashram was using timber from the forests for fuelwood.

IA No. 803 – regarding an encroachment in survey no. 290 of Mitiyala Wildlife Sanctuary, which is an important corridor of the lion from Gir to Palitana.

Source: Ritwick Dutta and Rahul Choudhary.
Email dated 30/07/10

Contact: **Ritwick Dutta**. LIFE N-71 LGF
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Tel: 011-49537774 / 9810044660.
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www.ercindia.org
www.accessinitiative.org

Tourism department requests for more permits in Gir; FD refuses

With the increased influx of tourists after the actor Amitabh Bachchan's shoot in Gir (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 4), the state tourism department (TD) has proposed to the forest department (FD) to keep a part of the forest open throughout the year. It has also requested the FD to issue more permits between October and June 15 when the park is open to tourists. According to the TD, tourist visits to Gir increased by 15-20 per cent in the aftermath of the film star's visit here.

At present, 90 vehicles are allowed twice a day and the TD requested the FD to increase the number by at least 30 more vehicles. It has also requested to keep the Devaliya interpretation zone open during the rainy season so that visitors can watch the animal in a semi-wild area.

The FD has, however, not agreed to the proposal stating that increasing the number of permits was not in the interest of the wildlife. An official is reported to have said that in the entire nine-month tourist season only 20-25 days go totally packed. In the remaining days only 60 per cent of the 90 permits are used.

Senior forest officials have also pointed out that the centre at Devaliya is never closed except on Wednesdays, but not many people are aware of this. The FD is planning to create awareness about Devaliya being open round the year so that more people can visit.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik, 'Post Big B visit, tourism dept seeks hike in Gir visitor permits', <http://epaper.timesofindia.com>, 02/07/10

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

Committee to recommend 'critical wildlife habitats' met only once in three years



A special state committee formed in August 2007 to give recommendations to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for notifying 'critical wildlife habitats' has met only once in the last three years.

The committee is headed by State Chief Wildlife Warden R V Asari and has Tribal Welfare Department Secretary Urvashi Devi from Devgadhi Baria, Snehal Patel from Surat Nature Club, and a sociologist as members. Besides, a representative of the local gram sabha and manager of the concerned protected area were also to be co-opted as members.

Source: Hitarth Pandya. 'In 3 years special panel to mark wildlife habitat met only once', *The Indian Express*, 29/07/10

CWLW - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar-382010, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-230007. Fax: 221097.

KARNATAKA

An estimated 1000 pangolins hunted in 2 months in Bellary region

An estimated 1000 pangolins have been hunted between June and August 2010 in the Bellary region on the Karnataka – Andhra Pradesh border. Pangolin scales have become a valued product in the international market because they are believed to have medicinal properties that can cure arthritis, fever, venereal diseases and skin disorders. A kg of pangolin scales fetches local hunters Rs. 70,000 and each pangolin has about 2kgs of scales on its body.



Lured by the big money involved, many local hunters and trappers use snares and dogs to trap the pangolins and sell them to traders in Bengaluru, Delhi and Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh and they in turn tap buyers in the international market.

A complete ban on international pangolin trade was imposed in 2000 by parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, but this does not seem to have deterred those involved in the hunting and the related trading.

Source: '1,000 pangolins hunted in 2 months', *Deccan Chronicle*, 15/08/10

KERALA

Special measures proposed for newly declared Malabar WLS

The Forest Department (FD) has proposed a series of measures for the better protection and management of the recently declared Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary. Two new forest stations and two wireless stations are to be set up at Kakkayam and Athikode for strengthening surveillance. New wireless sets are also to be given to forest guards. 10 wireless sets are to be initially bought for the staff, who are now part of the Peruvannamoozhi forest range. The staff

strength that is presently 30 is also expected to go up soon. A patrolling boat worth Rs. 4 lakh is to be bought to strengthen surveillance in and around the Kakkayam dam premises.

It has also been decided to renovate the roads leading to the sanctuary by utilising a major portion of the sanctioned fund. New vehicles will be purchased to ease the work of forest guards who presently depend on a patrolling jeep and a few motor cycles. It is also proposed to buy a pick-up van for the relocation of wild animals

The government is reported to have already sanctioned an amount of Rs. 15 crore to be spent over a 10 year period for various activities in the sanctuary. Rs. 30 lakh is to be utilized in the current fiscal.

Source: Action plan for Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary soon', *The Hindu*, 30/08/10

Five 'Biodiversity Heritage Sites' for state

Kerala is set to declare five areas as 'Biodiversity Heritage Sites' (BHS) under the provisions of the Biological Diversity Act 2002. These sites were identified by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board and include Kalasamala at Kunnankulam, Thrissur; Connolly's Teak Plantation in Nilambur, Malappuram; Paliyeri Mookambika kavu at Karivallur, Kannur; Pathiramanal Island in Alappuzha; and Iringole kavu in Perumbavoor, Ernakulam.

Experts have identified a grove of critically endangered tree species *Syzigium travencoricum* at Kalasamala, while the Connolly's Teak Plantation is considered as the first teak plantation in the world.

The Paliyeri Mookambika kavu houses a unique freshwater swamp ecosystem which is the habitat of *Myristica fauta*, a tree endemic to the Western Ghats. The Pathiramanal Island in Vembanad Lake is home to a number of mangrove varieties, birds and other species and the Iringole kavu is rich in biodiversity aspects.

Unique areas, ecologically fragile ecosystems rich in wild and domesticated species, presence of highly endemic, rare and threatened species and those of evolutionary significance are some of the criteria for sites to be declared as BHS. Management plans will have to be prepared for the sites and a state-level committee headed by

the chairman of the State Biodiversity Board will monitor the implementation of the plan.

Source: KS Sudhi. 'Safety net for five ecosystems', *The Hindu*, 09/08/10

For more information: www.keralabiodiversity.org

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden** – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-2322217 / 2360452 / 2204896. Fax: 2360452 / 2322217

MADHYA PRADESH

MoEF asks MP to scrap the proposed 'Patrolling the Tiger Land' plan

The Madhya Pradesh state Forest Department (FD) has been facing criticism for its proposed plan 'Patrolling the Tiger Land'. The Centre and a section of wildlife experts have expressed strong reservations over the proposal to allow visitors to move around in national parks along with forest guards.

According to a state government notification on August 3, the plan was scheduled to commence when the parks reopen for visitors on October 16. While the notification said tourists would be allowed to walk in the parks with forest guards and stay in camps, Union Minister of Environment and Forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh, is reported to have asked the state government to immediately scrap the plan as it could endanger the safety of the animals, as poachers could take advantage of the scheme by posing as tourists.

It has also been suggested that there are strong chances of the patrolling staff acting as 'guides' for the tourists with the latter luring them with rewards. The minister also mentioned that field patrolling is a specialised job involving lot of legwork and risk which may be possible only by the frontline staff that are recruited and trained to do it. However, tourists hardly have the physical or technical capacity to undertake the task. In addition to that, the attention of the field staff would also be diverted to cater to the needs of the tourists rather than to focus on patrolling.

He has reportedly sent a letter to the MP government mentioning that the scheme violates the guidelines of the 'centrally sponsored schemes' provisions and also the Wildlife (Protection) Act, which clearly states that core areas of national parks were to be protected for tigers and wild animals.

Wildlife activists also have vehemently opposed the move saying that the FD has failed to learn its lessons from the Panna debacle - where poachers had wiped out the entire tiger population and Bandhavgarh - where a tigress recently died after being hit by a tourist vehicle.

Meanwhile, State Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (wildlife) has claimed that the state FD was trying to boost security inside national parks through this scheme and, before implementing it all the concerns would be properly addressed.

Source: Vivek Trivedi, 'MP's 'Patrolling the Tiger Land' plan under cloud', <http://www.dailypioneer.com>, 09/08/10
'Ramesh asks Madhya Pradesh to scrap new tourist scheme', The Economic Times, 08/08/10

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

MAHARASHTRA

Students renew demand for plastic ban in Bhimashankar WLS

Students from the residential school at Tokawade on the periphery of the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary have written a 2nd letter to the authorities asking for a ban on plastic within the sanctuary. The letter was a follow up to a similar sent to the District Collector and other concerned authorities in early February on the occasion of Mahashivratri by students of the school in Tokawade and also Terungun (see *PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 2). The students had suggested then that shopkeepers selling flowers and other items should not use plastic and neither should pilgrims visiting the temple in the sanctuary.

The students have written the 2nd letter because no action was taken in response to their first request. It also coincides with the 'Shravan'

month which sees a large influx of pilgrims to the forest and the temple. The students have threatened to carry out a protest march if their demands are not implemented.

The Conservator Forests (WL) has acknowledged receiving the letter and said that he was figuring the provisions under which the ban could be implemented.

Source: Dipannita Das. 'Students from school near Bhimashankar seek ban on plastic bags; write to Collector', *The Times of India*, 18/09/10

Contact: **MK Rao**, Conservator of Forest (WL), Forest Colony, Salunke Vihar, Pune - 411040.

Sharmila Deo, Kalpavriksh at the editorial address

NHAI proposes eight underpasses on NH-6 through forests between Navegaon-Nagzira and the Tadoba-Andhari TR

The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has been recommended the construction of eight underpasses on the 80 km stretch of the national highway (NH) 6 in Bhandara and Gondia divisions. The road cuts through the corridor that joins the forests of the Navegaon National Park (NP) and Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) with those of the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). The recommendations have come from two former forest officials - RN Indurkar, former chief conservator of forests (CCF) - wildlife, and SS Deshpande, ex-assistant conservator of forests (ACF), who had been appointed consultants for the project.

The NHAI has planned to expand the NH-6 from Chhattisgarh border to Wainganga bridge near Bhandara to four lanes. Of the total 80 km stretch, about 24 km passes through forests. The NHAI had submitted a proposal to divert 85 hectare (ha) forest land for the project. In order to mitigate the damage that this project would cause to the wildlife, the consultants have recommended eight underpasses of 10 feet height and 20 feet width at every two km in the forest patch.

The mitigation plan has suggested other measures including fencing, water conservation works and providing a tractor

and tanker with a pump for Navegaon National Park – water being important constraint that makes wildlife move to fringes of protected areas. The consultants also identified nine places including two compartments (202 and 203) of Navegaon NP, for water conservation works that include dam repairs, de-silting water holes, deepening of tanks and construction of nulla bunds.

The implementation of these mitigation measures would cost the NHAI Rs 10 crore. This includes Rs 45 lakh for each underpass, Rs 1.20 crore for erection of fencing upto 40 km, Rs three lakhs towards 10 rescue gates and ramps, Rs 2.10 lakh for 14 cattle guards, Rs 32,000 for each wicket gate and other expenses towards sign boards. Additional expense of Rs 35.65 lakh for repair of old water tanks and construction of new has also been recommended.

A copy of the report will be submitted to the forest department and the NHAI headquarters in Delhi. It was also noted that that the right of way (ROW) of NH-6 will now be 45 metres instead of 60 metres in forest stretches, and the requirement of land had subsequently reduced to 38.32 hectares.

The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), had in June 2009, moved an application before the Supreme Court appointed central empowered committee (CEC) pointing out that the proposed four-laning would cut the corridor between Nagzira-Navegaon and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. It was pointed out that the road widening would impede the dispersal of tigers as its falls between nine tiger reserves in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Following the objection, the CEC members had inspected the stretch and asked for the CCF (wildlife) to send a report in the matter. The report that was submitted in August 2009 had recommended 8-13 underpasses in five stretches - Shirpur-Nawatola; Maramjob-Duggipar; Duddipar-Bamhni; Soundad-Sendurwafa; and Mundipar-Sakoli.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Build eight underpasses on NH6', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 18/08/10>

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

State cautioned against curtailing area of proposed Mansinghdeo WLS

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has written to the Maharashtra Chief Minister cautioning against any move to curtail the area of the proposed Mansinghdeo Wildlife Sanctuary, adjoining Pench Tiger Reserve. It has pointed out that this could lead to holding back of the denotification of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) Sanctuary in Solapur district (see *PA Updates* Vol XVI, Nos. 3 & 2; Vol XV, No. 6; Vol XIV, No. 4; Vol XII, No. 3; Vol XI, No. 5 and No. 29).

The National Board for Wild Life had asked the Maharashtra state government to notify six sanctuaries including Mansinghdeo WLS in lieu of reducing the area of 8,500 sq km bustard sanctuary in Nannaj to 1,200 sq km. However, the state government has decided to reduce the proposed Mansinghdeo sanctuary area from 182 sq km to around 143 sq km, keeping out 39 sq km area of Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) forests and a portion of the Nagpur forest division. Of the proposed three blocks, the state has planned to exclude entire block I consisting of 4,256 hectares (ha) (14 compartments) of the FDCM and 727 ha (3 compartments) area of Nagpur division totaling 4,985 ha. (*PA Update* 50) As the Mansinghdeo area will be left out, the government has planned to rename the proposed sanctuary as the Pench WLS.

It has been pointed out that the FDCM area is prime tiger habitat and without it, the sanctuary will have no meaning. The block I area that may not be included has rich forest and it connects to Nagzira, Pench, Tadoba and Melghat.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, MoEF warns state govt on Mansinghdeo pruning, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 13/08/10>

Contact: **CWLW**, Maharashtra Dr. Ambedkar Bhawan, 4 & 5th Floor, M.E.C.L. Building Seminary Hills & Campus, Nagpur – 440001. Tel: 0712-2526758 / 2530126. Fax –2510671. Email: cfwl@nagpur.dot.net.in

MEGHALAYA

Wildlife awards instituted for conservation in the Garo Hills

The conservation NGO Samrakshan has instituted 'Wildlife Conservation Awards' to acknowledge individuals working on conservation issues in the Garo Hills. Asith Sangma and Lambu Sangma of Baghmara were awarded the first of these awards for their contribution towards wildlife rescue and conservation recently.

Other officers from the Tourism Department, Industries, educational institutions and citizens from Baghmara and Tura participated in the awards function.

Source: 'Conservationists honoured in Garo Hills', *The Shillong Times*, 23/08/10

Contact: **Samrakshan Trust**, Bolsalgre, PO Baghmara, Dist South Garo Hills – 794102, Meghalaya Tel: 03639-234187
Email: contact @samrakshan.org
Web: www.samrakshan.org

ORISSA

Call for more protected areas in Orissa

In a recent letter written to the Orissa Chief Minister, Mr Naveen Patnaik, the conservation group Wild Orissa has suggested a list of 14 areas that need to be brought under the protected area network of the state. These are:

1. Kondakamberu in Malkangiri district
2. Naryanapatna in Rayagada district
3. Chandrapur in Rayagada district
4. Pradhanpat in Deogarh district
5. Berbera-Dhuanali in Khurda district
6. Kapilas in Cuttack-Dhenkanal districts
7. Mahendragiri in Gajapati district
8. Malyagiri in Angul district
9. Gupteswar in Koraput district
10. Rushikulya Magarmukh in Ganjam district
11. Gandhamardhan in Baragarh-Bolangir districts
12. Niyamgiri in Rayagada-Kalahandi districts
13. Satkosia in Keonjhar district
14. Madanpur-Rampur in Kalahandi-Phulbani districts

The letter was written in the context of the recently released Orissa Forests Vision 2020

statement and in light of the following as suggested in the vision statement:

1. 10% of the geographical area of the State needs to be brought under the protected area (PA) network comprising of sanctuaries, national parks, conservation reserves and community reserves, (in place of the present 4.2%).
2. Representative and critical habitats, species and genetic biodiversity need to be secured within the protected area network.
3. Each forest/wildlife division in the State has at least one protected area.

Source: Monalisa Bhujbal. Letter to Mr. Naveen Patnaik, CM, Orissa dated 22/08/10

Contact: **Monalisa Bhujbal**, Wild Orissa, Plot 3A, Janpath, Satyanagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674-512044. Email: wildorissa@hotmail.com

Three member MoEF team to look into elephant deaths in Simlipal TR

In light of the recent elephant deaths in the Simlipal Tiger Reserve in Orissa, caused due to electrocution, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has decided to constitute a three member committee to look into and suggest preventive and ameliorative measures to address the same. Three engineers of the North Eastern Electricity Supply Company of Orissa Ltd (NESCO) were also booked under various sections of the Wildlife Protection Act, in this context.

The investigation team is to be made up of Mr A K Biswal, Conservator Forests (Central), Bhubaneswar; Mr. Prahalad Gaan, Retd GM, NALCO & Consultant Dastur Co Ltd and Mr. Avadh Jha, Ex-Chief safety officer and Retd GM NALCO.

The terms of reference of the committee are as follows:

1. The committee shall examine the cause of death of elephants in the present case and earlier reported cases of electrocution in the area.
2. The committee shall examine the status of protection system available in the electrical lines passing through the forest area and;
3. The committee shall suggest improvements

in the electrical system/ protection systems so as to prevent the electrocution of elephants and other wildlife in the area.

The committee is expected to submit its report within a month from the date of its constitution. The information was made available in a release dated August 10 issued by the MoEF. The release also noted that Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW), Orissa, had recently submitted a report confirming the death of 6 elephants, four of which were inside the reserve (*PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 4). One range officer and three field staff had been subsequently placed under suspension.

The MoEF also acknowledged the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) constituted independent team's 25 recommendations made for dealing the problem of elephant poaching. The 10 needing immediate attention being:

- Action against field staff for concealment of elephant's deaths and destruction
- Independent monitoring committee to be formed by the NTCA
- Wildlife crime intelligence gathering system should be set up
- Special drive to seize country-made guns
- Protection funds should not be re-allocated
- Grant of Funds to DFOs for enforcement raids
- Filling up of vacant Dy. Director and 2 ACF posts should be immediately filled up
- Park management to exercise greater supervision and control
- Confidentiality of wireless message should be maintained
- Enlistment of local community support from peripheral areas bordering the park.

The expert committee had pointed out that the field staff of the reserve had burnt a large number of elephant carcasses to remove any evidences of poaching. The team visited Simlipal between June 6 and 11, and confirmed 14 elephant deaths, all of which were most likely killed by poachers. (For other reports on elephants being electrocuted in Orissa see *PA Updates* Vol XVI, No. 3; Vol XIV, No. 3; Vol XII, Nos. 6 & 1)

Source: 'Simlipal: Staff burnt elephant carcasses to destroy evidence', www.indianexpress.com, 02/08/10

'Engineers booked after elephants electrocuted in Orissa',

<http://www.thaindian.com/> 03/08/10

'Establishment of 3 member committee to look into elephant deaths in Simlipal Tiger Reserve', MoEF release, 10/08/10,

<http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/elephant-death.pdf>

Contact: **Dr. Rajesh Gopal**, NTCA, Annexe No. 5, Bikaner House, Shahjahan Road, New Delhi-110011. Telefax: 2338 4428. E-mail: dirpt-r@nic.in
Director, Simlipal Tiger Reserve, P.O. Baripada, Dist. Mayurbhanj – 757002, Orissa. Tel: 06792-252593(O), 252773(R) Fax: 256705
Biswajit Mohanty, Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack – 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671 – 334625. Fax: 610980. Email: kachhapa@gmail.com
CWLW– Orissa, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674- 2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840. Fax: 512502

TAMIL NADU

Buoys to mark boundary of the Gulf of Mannar NP

The Gulf of Mannar National Park (GoMNP) is to be marked by floating buoys along its boundary. Around 500 buoys would be laid at a distance of 500 meters each for the purpose.



Officials said the plan was not a new one and only those suggestions that had been made during the conservation program initiated with the support of the Global Environment Facility of the United Nations Development Program were being implemented now.

Source: 'Buoys to be laid in Gulf of Mannar', *The Hindu*, 24/07/10

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Gulf of Mannar NP, Collectorate Compound, Ramanathapuram – 623503, Tamil Nadu

UTTARAKHAND

Threat to wildlife in Rajaji NP from traffic and industries

Forest officials have said that the consistent disturbance from vehicular and railway traffic inside the Rajaji National Park and industrial activity in its vicinity is negatively affecting the wildlife here. The noise emanating from vehicles and trains and the strong headlights from the vehicles contribute to the problem. Additional pressure is being imposed by the industrial units that are coming up close to the border of the park, like the SIDCUL Industrial Area in Haridwar.

All of these are being held responsible for altering the movement of elephants and other wild animals; for instance, a herd of elephants is seen to have extended its annual stay in the Maldevta area on the outskirts of Dehradun. The elephants usually pass through this area every year, but it has been suggested that they may stay over because they found that area more peaceful than the park.

Park officials have said that many of the disturbing activities like those of industrial development are being undertaken outside the borders of the park and, therefore, beyond the jurisdiction of the park authorities. They have also said that tourism activities are comparatively less of a threat to the park and its wildlife. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 1; Vol XIV, Nos. 5, 4 & 3, Vol XIII, Nos. 5 & 3)

Source: Paritosh Kimothi, 'Rajaji animals don't enjoy this sound & light show', *The Pioneer*, 21/08/10

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

Gomukh to Uttarkashi stretch of River Bhagirathi to be declared eco-sensitive

The 135 kms stretch of the River Bhagirathi from Gomukh to Uttarkashi is to be declared an eco-sensitive zone under the Environment Protection Act. The decision was taken recently by a three member Group of Ministers (GoM) comprising Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee; Power Minister, Sushil Kumar Shinde and Environment Minister, Jairam Ramesh. The same group had

recently recommended that the Loharinag Pala Hydel Project could not be scrapped due to the financial implications involved.

The 600 MW hydel project of NTPC is now likely to be scrapped completely. The company had invested Rs 650 crore in the project and orders worth another Rs. 2000 crore had also been placed. Following protests, however, from academics, environmentalists, devotees and local villagers, the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh had asked the GoM to reconsider its earlier decision. The recommendation now is that the social and environmental costs outweigh the financial considerations and the project should be called off.

A technical committee will be set up to recommend dismantling and safeguard measures to protect the eco-geological balance and also to determine the losses incurred by NTPC. The GoM has recommended that the Union Government should compensate NTPC and bear the costs of maintaining the safeguards.

The eco-sensitive zone notification is expected in a few weeks following which no development projects will be allowed in the area. (Also see *PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 2).

Source: 'Loharinag Pala hydel project to be scrapped', *The Hindu*, 21/08/10

Uttarakhand government against expansion of Askot WLS

The Uttarakhand government has decided to oppose the proposal of the Supreme Court (SC) appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) for the expansion of the Askot Wildlife Sanctuary in the Pithoragarh district.

The CEC has recommended that the boundary of the sanctuary be reconfigured by excluding 111 villages presently located inside. It has also suggested that the area of the sanctuary which is 600 sq km presently be increased to around 2200 sq km.

The state government has expressed its concerns about the expansion, arguing that it will become an obstacle in the path of development of this hitherto neglected part of the state. It will also be unable then to tap the

high potential of hydropower in this region (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 2).

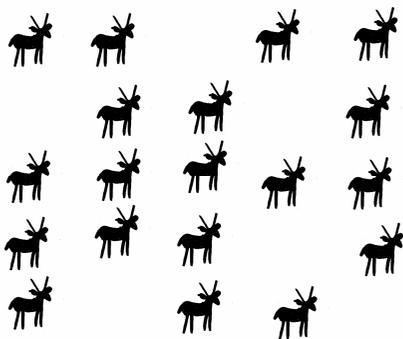
The state government had already approached the apex court on this issue. As the court did not agree with the government's views, the latter is going to file a supplementary affidavit in the apex court to put its case before the court.

Source: Rajendra S Markuna, 'State Govt to move SC against expansion of musk deer sanctuary', <http://www.dailypioneer.com>,

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Askot & Binsar WLS, Dist. Almora, Uttarakhand. Tel: 05964-225234/225390. Fax: 285376
CWLW, 5, Chandrabani, Mohobewala, Dehradun, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135- 2644691

WEST BENGAL

Deer die during transportation from Bibhuti Bhushan WLS to the Sunderbans



Six spotted deer from a herd of 25 died while being moved from the Bibhuti Bhushan Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) to supplement the prey base of tigers in the Sunderbans. The incident occurred on the morning of August 19. The deer were being brought to the Deer Acclimatisation Centre in Dobaki where they would be monitored before releasing them into the wild.

It was pointed that there was delay during the transportation of animals as the road was severely damaged in one particular place. The deer had to be shifted from the trucks onto tractors, and then moved back into trucks again. Forest officials said that this may have caused considerable trauma to the deer resulting in the six deaths due to 'shock'.

Part of the reason that the deer are also being moved is serious shortage of space at the

Bibhuti Bhushan WLS. There are already 450 deer here whereas the capacity is only for 150.

Source: Ananya Dutta. 'Deer die during transportation to Sunderbans', *The Hindu*, 21/08/10

Contact: **Director**, Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve, Bikash Bhavan, 3rd Floor, North Block, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3211750. Fax: 3211529

Elephant attacks train in Mahananda WLS

A wild elephant was reported to have attacked and head-butted a train in the Gulma forest in the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) on August 17. The animal was chased off by forest guards but came back a while later to charge another train.

It has been speculated that the animal was taking revenge for the death of an elephant that was run over by a train here on August 5 as also for the juvenile elephant that was crushed on July 19. Forest officials suspect that the animal was part of the herd that had unwittingly run on to the track here in July and saw one of their own being hit and dragged 50 metres down the track, squealing and screaming in the agony of death.

The animal blocked the rail track at around 11 am on the morning of the incident. As the New Jalpaiguri-bound Inter-City Express steamed in, it pulled its ears back and waved its trunk at the train. The driver pulled the brakes and the train came to a halt about 50 metres from the jumbo. The elephant charged, kicked the engine, waited a few seconds and rammed it before walking away.

The driver informed the nearest station, which called the forest department. A team of foresters spotted the elephant about 100 yards from the track, and chased it 2 km into the forest. About three hours later, the jumbo returned to the track and blocked it yet again. This time, a train heading for Alipurduar screeched to a halt. Passengers reported that they saw the elephant sprint towards the engine and ram it.

A similar incident was reported about three years ago at Gulma when a herd of

elephants had chased a speeding train after it ran over a calf.

The 200-km track connecting Alipurduar to New Jalpaiguri cuts across five protected areas (Buxa Tiger Reserve; Gorumara National Park, and the Mahananda, Chapramari and Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuaries) and a number of forest patches. A number of animals including elephants, gaur and leopards have been killed here by speeding trains in the last few years. (See Edit *PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 4. Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVI Nos. 4 & 1; 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: Pinak Priya Bhattacharya. 'Jumbo in revenge attack on trains', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> 18/08/10

Contact: **DFO**, Gorumara NP, Aranya Bhawan, Old Court Campus, Jubilee Park, P.O. & Dist. Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-224907(O), 222838(R). Fax: 03561-223563. Email: wild2@dte.vsnl.net.in
CF (Wildlife), North Bengal, West Bengal Forest Dept. Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-25627(O) 25596

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

Cheetah re-introduction proposed in Kuno-Palpur WLS, Nauradehi WLS and Shahgarh region in Jaisalmer district

The Union Minister of Environment and Forests Mr Jairam Ramesh has recently approved the project for the reintroduction of the cheetah in the country (*PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 5). The report, "Assessing the Potential for Reintroducing the Cheetah in India", by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has suggested three locations - Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Nauradehi WLS in Madhya Pradesh and Shahgarh region of

Jaisalmer in Rajasthan for the purpose. As per the proposal, each site will host six cheetahs initially. The plan may take between 10 to 15 years to implement.

The project will cost around Rs 300 crore in the first year. It will involve the conversion of around 5,600 sq km of drylands and grasslands into habitat suitable for the cheetah and also displacing more than 100 settlements from these areas for the purpose. This includes the 80 odd seasonal settlements of nomads in the site in Jaisalmer, 23 villages in Nauradehi and three in Kuno-Palpur which are in addition to the 23 villages that have already been relocated to make way for the lions from Gujarat.

The report has suggested that in a decade Nauradehi could be home to as many as 50 cheetahs in the restricted area, with another 20 finding their natural habitat in surrounding forests. In the same period, Kuno-Palpur could support 32 animals and another 38 in adjoining forests and grasslands. A 140-km-long chain-link fence needs to be erected in Shahgarh following which 40 animals could be sustained.

10 sites in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh were assessed for the purpose. The Banni Grasslands and Kutch WLS in Gujarat could be re-evaluated at a later date for reintroduction of the cheetah provided the Gujarat government takes serious steps to restore this landscape.

The cheetahs are to be brought either from some West Asian countries, from Namibia or from South Africa, where the African cheetahs are bred in captivity. Iran will also be approached, but is believed to be reluctant to part with the animals since it has only a very small population of the endangered species.

Source: 'Ramesh nod to reintroduce cheetah in 3 sites', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 30/07/10
'Cheetahs will find a home in India again', *The Hindu*, 30/07/10
Himanshu Kaushik, 'Gujarat misses out on cheetah', <http://epaper.timesofindia.com>, 30/07/10

2nd bench set up to hear Godavarman (Forest) Case in the SC

The Supreme Court has set up a 2nd bench and appointed an additional Amicus Curiae to hear matters in the TN Godavarman case related to forests in the country. The decision was taken to ensure speedy disposal in light of the fact that the number of cases being discussed are large. The first bench comprising of the Chief Justice, Justice Aftab Alam and Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan will hear selected categories of cases while the bench comprising of Justice R.M. Lodha, Justice Nijjar and Justice Sudharshan Reddy will hear the remaining matters.

The court has also appointed Senior Advocate P. S. Narasimhan as Amicus Curiae. With his appointment, the number of Amicus Curiae has increased to five. The court also reiterated that the Central Empowered Committee will continue to assist the Court.

Source: *Forest Case Update 61*, July 2010

National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has initiated a new National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme to 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.

The programme 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 a MoU with the ministry. The selection of the fellows and of the thrust areas for research will be done by a management committee headed by Dr. K Kasturirangan, Member, Planning Commission, and comprising of eminent scientists.

Source: <http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/booklet.pdf>

Contact: **Adviser (RE)**, MoEF, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003. Tel: 011-24364594. Fax: 24364594. Email: sv.godavarthi@nic.in

No move to split the Indian Forest Service

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has reportedly rejected the proposal to split the forest services into two services, with one looking after wildlife. A number of conservationists and organizations had been demanding this split for a while and the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh was reported to have given his nod to the idea during a meeting of the National Board for Wildlife earlier this year (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 3).

The recent decision of the ministry was conveyed by Director General (Forest) Dileep Kumar while speaking at a meeting of the Field Directors of Tiger Reserves from different states, organised by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) in New Delhi recently.

Source: 'Govt. rejects proposal to split Indian Forest Service', <http://in.news.yahoo.com> 11/08/10

Newsletter of the Nilgiri Natural History Society

The recently formed Nilgiri Natural History Society (NNHS) (*PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 2) has launched a new newsletter.

The first issue dated June 2010 covers a range of issues important to the Nilgiris and also has an entire section in the local languages. The editors of the newsletter are Anita Varghese and Archana Sivaramakrishnan from Keystone Foundation. The newsletter is also available on the website of the NNHS, www.nnhs.in

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SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

Tiger population increases in Chitwan NP

The Director General of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Nepal, recently released a report which records a substantial increase in the population of tigers in the Chitwan National Park. The present number of adult tigers in the park is said to be 125 as compared to 91 that were counted two years ago.

The adult tiger population in the country too had gone up from 121 in the 2008-09 census to 155 now. The report was prepared after a three-month monitoring program that started in December 2009 in forests adjoining Chitwan NP. The study was carried out by the DNPWC along with the National Trust for Nature Conservation and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - Nepal.

The Conservation Program Director of WWF Nepal was reported to have said that the growth in the tiger population inside Chitwan NP was observed after a survey in the Terai and Chure hill range in Chitwan that were not included in last year's count.

Experts are reported to have said a curb in poaching activities with effective conservation efforts inside the park and expansion of tiger habitats have contributed to the rise in tiger numbers.



Source: Pragati Shahi, 'Report shows rise in Nepal's tiger population', www.ekantipur.com, 31/07/10

Meeting of Indo-Nepal border forest officials to discuss conservation issues

A meeting of forest officers and protected area managers from India and Nepal was held in the month of July at the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (TR). The meeting that was organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India was attended by 58 participants.

While Regional Director of Forest, Chief Warden - Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) - Kailali and DFO - Kanchanpur represented Nepal, the Field Director and Deputy Director of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, as well as DFOs of Katarniaghat Wildlife Division, North Kheri and South Kheri Forest Divisions, Sub Divisional Officers (SDOs) and Range Forest Officers (ROs) of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and Katarniaghat Wildlife Division were the Indian participants.

Various issues discussed during the meeting included the need for better information sharing between authorities on either side of the border, joint patrolling, better data collection on repeat wildlife offenders, involvement of local population to ensure conservation and ensuring payment of compensation to the victims of cattle lifting cases to prevent retaliatory killing of wild animals, particularly the big cats.

The following decisions were taken at the meeting: DFOs from both sides of the border will meet on the second Wednesday of each month either at Katarniaghat WLS or Dudhwa TR; neighbouring ROs will meet at an interval of 15 days - on the 2nd and last Tuesday of each month; all DFOs and ROs will exchange the information on repeat wildlife offenders to prepare a dossier that can help track them; all participants of this meeting will sit together after six months to review the implementation of this program; efforts will also be initiated to increase participation of officials from the India's Uttarakhand state.

Source: 'Indo-Nepal border forest officials for better co-operation: Meeting held at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve to discuss issues' <http://www.wwfindia.org/>

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

SRI LANKA

Horton Plains slender loris, a primate considered extinct, but now photographed

Researchers in a central Sri Lankan forest have photographed a rare primate that was feared extinct for more than 60 years. A Horton Plains slender loris with wide eyes and short limbs was caught on camera after lengthy surveys of the forest by researchers from the society, the University of Colombo and the Open University of Sri Lanka.

The animal had not been sighted for more than 60 years until in 2002, when a researcher reported spotting its eyes during a search. This inspired the effort to prove the primate's existence by viewing it fully and photographing it.

The primate's population is thought to have begun dwindling in its mountain forest habitat after British colonial rulers from the 19th century cleared large tracts of forests for coffee and tea plantations. More of these lorises are thought to live in small patches of forest in Sri Lanka's hill country.

Source: Krishan Francis. 'Primate feared extinct photographed in Sri Lanka', <http://news.yahoo.com> 19/07/10

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Call for applications for the Whitley Award

The Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) is a United Kingdom registered charity offering the "Whitley Awards" to outstanding nature conservation leaders around the world. The awards are both an international profile prize and a form of project

grant (currently £30,000 over one year, with a top prize of £60,000 over two years).

They are open to conservation leaders working in countries or regions of which they are nationals and that are not defined as a High Income Economy by the World Bank (exceptions to this criterion include island nations in the Pacific and Caribbean and some countries in the Middle East).

The deadline for applications is October 31, 2010 and successful applicants will receive funding in June 2011.

A number of Indians have in the past won the Whitley Award. They include among others Dr Deepak Apte, Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai; MD Madhusudan; Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysore and Dr. R Sukumar, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Contact: Email: info@whitleyaward.org Web: www.whitleyaward.org

UPCOMING

International Workshop on amphibians in the Western Ghats

The Western Ghats Network of Protected Areas for Threatened Amphibians (WNPATA) is holding an international workshop on threatened amphibians of the Western Ghats in New Delhi from on Nov 2-3, 2010.

A number of national and international experts are expected to participate.

Contact: **Project Director**, WNPATA. Email: wnpata.project@gmail.com Web: <http://www.wnpata.org/>

Tiger Reserves in India

(All areas in sq. kms)

Sl. No.	Tiger Reserve	State	Area of the core / critical tiger habitat	Area of the buffer
1.	Bandipur	Karnataka	872.24	118.27*
2	Corbett	Uttarakhand	821.99	466.32
3	Kanha	Madhya Pradesh	917.43	NA
4	Manas	Assam	840.04	2310.88
5	Melghat	Maharashtra	1500.49	NA
6	Palamau	Jharkhand	414.08	NA
7	Ranthambore	Rajasthan	1113.364	NA
8	Simlipal	Orissa	1194.75	1555.25
9	Sunderbans	West Bengal	1699.62	885.27
10	Periyar	Kerala	881	NA
11	Sariska	Rajasthan	681.1124	NA
12	Buxa	West Bengal	390.5813	367.3225
13	Indravati	Chhattisgarh	1258.37	1540.70
14	Nagarjunsagar	Andhra Pradesh	2527	NA
15	Namdapha	Arunachal Pradesh	1807.82	NA
16	Dudhwa	Uttar Pradesh	693.70	NA
	Katerniaghat- (extn)		400.09	NA
17	Kalakad-Mundanthurai	Tamil Nadu	895	NA
18	Valmiki	Bihar	840*	NA
19	Pench	Madhya Pradesh	411.33	NA
20	Tadoba-Andheri	Maharashtra	625.82	NA
21	Bandhavgarh	Madhya Pradesh	716.903	NA
22	Panna	Madhya Pradesh	576.13	NA
23	Dampa	Mizoram	500	NA
24	Bhadra	Karnataka	492.46	NA
25	Pench	Maharashtra	257.26	NA
26	Pakke	Arunachal Pradesh	683.45	NA
27	Nameri	Assam	200	144
28	Satpura	Madhya Pradesh	1339.264	NA
29	Anamalai	Tamil Nadu	958	NA
30	Udanti-Sita Nadi	Chattisgarh	851.09	991.45
31	Satkosia	Orissa	523.61	453.25*
32	Kaziranga	Assam	625.58	548
33	Achanakmar	Chattisgarh	626.195	287.822
34	Dandeli-Anshi	Karnataka	814.884	NA
35	Sanjay-Dubri	Madhya Pradesh	831.25*	NA
36	Mudumalai	Tamil Nadu	321	NA
37	Nagarahole	Karnataka	643.3 5	NA
38	Parambikulam	Kerala	390.89	252.772
39	Sahyadri	Maharashtra	741.22	NA
	TOTAL		32878.36	9921.307

NA – Notification Awaited * - Not yet notified

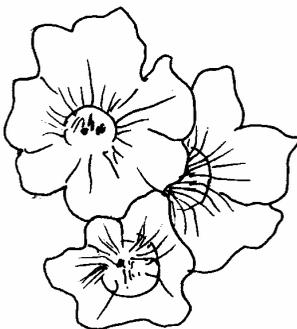
Source: Press note issued by the MoEF, 18/08/10

Designated Biosphere Reserves in India

No	Biosphere Reserve	State	Bio Geographic Region	Date of De-signation	Area (sq.kms)	Status/Remarks
1	Nanda Devi	Uttarakhand	Himalayan	16.01.88	5860.69	Parts of Chamoli, Pithoragarh & Almora Districts. Recognized on world network in November, 2004.
2	Kanchanjunga	Sikkim	Himalayan	07.02.2000	2619.92	Parts of North and West Sikkim. Proposal forwarded for World network recognition
3	Dehang Debang	Arunachal Pradesh	Himalayan	02.09.98	5111.5	Parts of Siang and Debang valley
4	Kachchh	Gujarat	Semi-Arid Desert	29/01/08	12,454	Parts of Kachchh, Rajkot, Surendranagar and Patan districts
5	Nilgiri	Tamil Nadu, Kerala & Karnataka	Western Ghats	01.09.89	5520	Parts of Wynad, Nagarhole, Bandipur and Madumalai, Nilambur, Silent Valley and Siruvani hills. Recognized on World Network on 10th November, 2000.
6	Agasthyamalai	Tamil Nadu & Kerala	Western Ghats	12.11.01	3500.36	Parts of Thirunelveli and Kanyakumari Districts in Tamil Nadu; Thiruvanthapuram, Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts in Kerala
7	Similipal	Orissa	Deccan Peninsula	21.06.94	4374	Parts of Mayurbhanj district (Orissa). Proposal forwarded for World network recognition.
8	Achanakmar Amarkantak	Madhya Pradesh & Chattisgarh	Deccan Peninsula	30.03.05	3835. 51	Parts of Anuppur and Dindori District of M.P. and Bilaspur District of Chattisgarh
9	Pachmarhi	Madhya Pradesh	Deccan Peninsula	03.03.99	4926.28	Parts of Betul, Hoshangabad and Chhindwara Districts of Madhya Pradesh. Proposal forwarded for recognition on World network.
10	Manas	Assam	North East India	14.3.89	2837	Parts of Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup and Darang Districts. Proposal forwarded for recognition on World network

11	Dibru Saikhowa	Assam	North East India	28.07.97	765	Parts of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia Districts
12	Nokrek	Meghalaya	North East India	01.09.88	820	Parts of Garo Hills. Proposal forwarded for recognition on World network
13	Great Nicobar	A&N Islands	Islands	06.01.89	885	(Part of) the Southern most island of Andaman and Nicobar Islands
14	Gulf of Mannar	Tamil Nadu	Coasts	18.02.89	10500	Indian parts of Gulf of Mannar between India and Sri Lanka. Recognized on world Network in November, 2001.
15	Sunderbans	West Bengal	Coasts	29.03.89	9630	Parts of delta of Ganges & Brahmaputra river system. Recognized on World Network on 10th November, 2001.

Source: 'Status of Designated Biosphere Reserves in Different Bio-Geographic Regions of India', Press Release by the MoEF, 23/08/10



Seeking Support for the PA Update

The *PA Update* continues to need the good wishes and financial support from its readers. Any contribution, however small is welcome. There are various ways in which you can support the *PA Update* - donations, individual subscriptions, gift subscriptions and bulk subscriptions for organisations that want to help reach out the *PA Update* to others as well.

If you want more information of how to contribute or have some questions or suggestions, please do write to me at psekhsaria@gmail.com
Please do consider contributing and all help, big or small, is most welcome.

PERSPECTIVE
Tourism in and around PAs – A Paradigm shift needed
EQUATIONS

Protected Areas (PAs) have seen increasing intensive tourism development under the guise of “ecotourism”. While the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972 does allow tourists into PAs, it clearly disallows commercial establishments. The Indian Board for Wildlife, the apex advisory body, had in its XXI meeting in January 2002 resolved “lands falling within 10 km. of the boundaries of National Parks and Sanctuaries should be notified as eco-fragile zones under section 3(v) of the Environment (Protection) Act and Rule 5 Sub-rule 5(viii) & (x) of the Environment (Protection) Rules”. Despite this, a rash of tourism establishments have been established cheek by jowl in the immediate periphery of many PAs like Corbett, Ranthambore, Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Nagarhole, Bandipur, Mudumalai, and Periyar.

While PAs are promoted as places of irresistible natural beauty, it is often forgotten that these are also home to indigenous and forest dependent communities. Ecotourism claims to be hand-in-hand with conservation, but its contribution to conservation efforts has been questionable and empirically unproven yet. Ecotourism today is largely industry driven, with supporting government policies tailored to meet the needs of private enterprise and developed through non-consultative processes.

Most often, the zones where tourism has spread belong to indigenous communities and are lands that have been designated as Schedule V areas like in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. Governments have also shown very little or no political will towards implementing the Panchayat Extension to Schedule Areas Act, 1996 (PESA) and Forest Rights Act, 2006, which are meant to establish and reaffirm the rights of the local communities.

Community-based tourism projects like the Himalayan Homestays in Ladakh and Lahaul & Spiti, the Mountain Shepherds Initiative in Uttarakhand and the Manas Maozigendri Eco-tourism Society in Assam (*PA Updates* 54, 50, 46 & 45), have benefited the PAs where they function as also the local communities that are involved. These projects have educated the tourists not only about the flora & fauna of the region, but also the unique culture of the local communities.

The need to impart environmental and cultural education, as part of an experience in a protected area is very important. This is particularly so in light of the growing obsession of a significant number of tourists to visit PAs just to see large mammals like tiger. This has led to unscrupulous tourism practices causing increased pressure on wildlife and the environment. A recent study commissioned by the Ministry of Tourism, “Report on impact of tourism on tigers and other wildlife in Corbett Tiger Reserve” states that “It can be safely concluded that in its current form tourism is a serious threat to Corbett” (*PA Update* Vol. XVI. No.3). The time has come for a paradigm shift in the manner tourism is managed and its role in protected areas in our country.

'EQUATIONS is a research, advocacy and campaigning organisation working on the impacts of tourism on local communities in India
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PERSPECTIVE is a new column that features invited opinion, comment and critique.

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