

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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## EDITORIAL

### Giving the fruit bat it's due

Wildlife conservation in India, our wildlife conservation laws and policies are certainly not short of anachronisms of various kinds. One that stands out most prominently is the status accorded to fruit bats – that of vermin in the schedules of the Wild Life Protection Act (WLPA) since its inception in 1972.

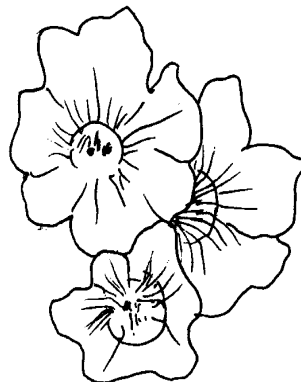
It is indicative not only of our anthropocentric attitude (any thing causing economic or other damage to humans is to be exterminated), it also betrays an unacceptable ignorance of the actual role these creatures play in nature. It has been believed for long that fruit bats cause considerable damage to horticultural crops, but research over the years has shown that they actually do more good than harm. 10 of the 13 species of fruit bats live only in forests and do not visit fruit orchards where they might cause any damage. They play a very important role in pollination and seed dispersal and are a vital cog in the forest regeneration mechanism. A couple of them are, in fact, even endangered and have been included in IUCN's red data list.

That it is not known beyond the small circle of bat enthusiasts that the United Nations has declared this as the 'Year of the Bat' is indicative of how much (or little) concern there is for these creatures. It is also only fitting, then, that this group of bat conservationists has launched an effort to set the record straight and get the situation corrected (see National Stories from India in this issue of the *PA Update*). More than a year ago, prominent bat experts associated with the IUCN had written to the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) pointing out that India is the only country in the world where the fruit bat is considered a vermin and had requested for this to be changed. The editorial of the latest issue of *Small Mammal Mail*, a newsletter dedicated to the 'most useful but most neglected small mammals' ([www.zooreach.org](http://www.zooreach.org)) like bats and rodents has also made an impassioned plea to rid rodents and bats of the vermin tag. It notes that the relevant government agencies have been addressed on numerous

occasions in the matter, but nothing has come of it.

This is, indeed, unfortunate and it's high time that this much maligned but hugely useful and harmless creature is given it's due. The least we can do is desist from blaming it for damage it is not responsible for!

### Seeking Support for the PA Update



The Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust and the Foundation for Ecological Security have agreed to continue their support for the *PA Update* for 2011-12. This is now more than a decade of continued support and we are extremely grateful for their trust and belief in this newsletter.

While a good part of the requirement will get covered we still need to raise substantial funds to keep the newsletter going. Any contribution, however small is welcome and this is an appeal for support.

There are various ways in which you can contribute - 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 on how to contribute, or have some questions or suggestions, please do write to the editor at [psekhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com). Please do consider contributing and all help, big or small, is most welcome.

## IN MEMORY

The last few weeks and months have seen the sad demise of a number of stalwarts in the field of environment and wildlife conservation in India. Their departure is a big loss. We, at the *Protected Area Update* and Kalpavriksh express our deep felt condolences to their family and friends.

**Rinchen Wangchuk:** The founder and director of the Ladakh based Snow Leopard Conservancy-India Trust (SLC-IT), Wangchuk, was known as the 'snow-leopard man'. He played a crucial role in changing local perception of predators like the Snow-leopard and the Tibetan wolf and in helping in the conservation of these endangered species. He passed away in March earlier this year after suffering for the last three years from a deteriorating neurological condition.

**BG Deshmukh:** President of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mr BG Deshmukh passed away in Pune on August 7, at the age of 82. He was an IAS officer from the 1951 Maharashtra Cadre and held many important positions at the state and central level during his illustrious career.

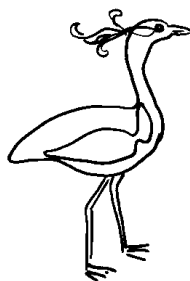
**JC Daniel:** Vice President of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and a doyen of conservation in India, Mr JC Daniel also passed away in August. He was the recipient of a number of national and international awards for his contribution to wildlife conservation and has inspired many generations of wildlife researchers and conservationists in India.

**Shehla Masood:** Right to Information (RTI) and wildlife activist, Shehla Masood was found shot dead in her car outside her home in Bhopal in August. She was 36 years old. She had taken up a number of anti-corruption issues along with those related to the management and protection of the Bandavgarh and Panna Tiger Reserves in Madhya Pradesh

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### GUJARAT

#### Lesser Florican population declines in Gujarat



According to the latest survey by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), the population as well as distribution of the Lesser florican has gone down drastically in Gujarat. While 141 individuals were sighted in Gujarat in 1999, only 54 were sighted in 2010. In 1999, the birds were found in 12 grassland areas in the state. This number has come down to five habitats in 2010.

Of the 54 individuals counted, 26 floricans were found in the Blackbuck National Park (NP) in Velavadar. The second largest population, 22, was found in the Naliya grasslands in Bhuj and the remaining five sightings were in the Rampur area of Dahod district. There was no sighting of the Lesser florican in the districts of Junagadh, Jamnagar and Rajkot, areas from where they had been reported in previous surveys. It has been reported that the grasslands at Naliya are being rapidly encroached upon for cotton cultivation, causing a huge loss of habitat for both bustards and local herdsman.

In the 2010 study, 59 grasslands across India were surveyed, which include those surveyed in 1999. Gujarat leads the nation in terms of Lesser florican population. The state is followed by Rajasthan (18) and Madhya Pradesh (12). In 1999, Gujarat had reported 141 birds while Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan had reported 63 and 34 individuals respectively. The present survey was aimed at updating the 1999 study of the bird and its habitat in North-Western India (Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh), that had been conducted by the late Dr. Ravi Sankaran.

Source: Vijaysinh Parmar, 'Drastic decline in numbers of Lesser Floricans', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 11/08/11.

### FD to clear lantana from Gir



The Forest Department (FD) has taken up a project for clearing the Gir forests of lantana, the invasive plant that is believed to be impeding the growth of local plants here. Of the 1,412 sq km of the sanctuary area, around 20% is said to be covered by lantana, half of which is very dense. The cost of removing this weed from the jungle is around Rs 2,500 per hectare (ha).

Of the nearly 160 sq. kms of sanctuary land covered by lantana, removal will be taken up in about 15 sq. kms of land in west Gir and another 6 sq. kms of land in east Gir in the first phase. Earlier, the FD had cleared up the weeds in small patches, but it is for the first time this year that the work has been taken up on such a massive scale. The work is being taken up between August and October as this is the non-tourist season here.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik, 'Lantana-free habitat for Gir lions', *The Times of India*, 08/08/11.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh - 362001, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 2631678 Fax: 2631211. Email: cfwildlife\_ad1@sancharnet.in

### Gujarat clears 17 proposals allowing commercial activities near protected areas

17 proposals allowing commercial activities in the vicinity of protected areas in Gujarat have been approved recently. The approvals were granted in a meeting of the State Board of Wildlife (Protection), chaired by Chief Minister Mr Narendra Modi following approval from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for the same.

The proposals that have been cleared include one of Essar Power Gujarat Ltd for its 1200-MW coal-based power plant and marine facilities, including a jetty for coal import roughly 8-kms from the Kutch marine sanctuary. Passing

of the Dedicated Freight Corridor (rail line) that will be located only 700 metres from the boundary of the Thol WLS was also cleared.

Three proposals pertained to the Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation for allowing mining near the Nalsarovar WLS, two of Jayprakash Associates for mining near the Narayan Sarovar WLS and five for mining near by Saurashtra Chemicals Ltd near the Barda WLS were also granted permission.

Other proposals approved were for the diversion of 0.816 hectares (ha) and 0.7 ha of land for a drinking water project and for road construction respectively from the Jambughoda WLS, and 1.4449 ha of land from the Balaram-Ambaji WLS for the dedicated freight corridor project.

Two other proposals were related to permission for removal of bamboo from the Shoolpaneshwar WLS and for the rationalization of the boundaries of the Balaram-Ambaji WLS.

Source: 'Govt nod for commercial activities in restricted areas', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 21/07/11.

### Eco-sensitive zone around the Kutch Bustard Sanctuary

The Forest Department (FD) has decided to declare a 956 sq km eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) around the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary in Abdasa. The ESZ would cover 47 villages in Abdasa taluka and is expected to result in curbs on mining and agricultural activities in the region as they are considered the biggest threats to the bustards. The proposal had been sent to the state's Chief Wildlife Warden, after which it would be forwarded to the Central Government for final approval.

At present, the sanctuary is spread over 202 hectares (ha) of area. The average density of the bustard in area has been found to be one bird per 24.6 sq km. The bustards are mainly seen in the grasslands of Kanothia, Kalatalav, Bhachunda, Banada, Tera, Naliya, Vinghaber, Parjau, Lala, Jakhau, and Budia. FD Officials said that there was a move to have areas in Kanothia, Kalatalav, Bhachunda, Vinghaber and Parjau - which are revenue areas - acquired under forest land.

The transfer of 3770 ha of land to the agriculture department was stopped by the FD as the area had a sizeable bustard population. The FD has stopped the excavation of ponds and trenches and also initiated a plan for the removal of *Prosopis juliflora*. (Also see *PA Update Vol. XVII, No. 4*).

Source: Himanshu Kaushik, '956 sq km to be declared eco-sensitive', [www.timeofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timeofindia.indiatimes.com), 05/08/11.

## JHARKHAND

### Special protection force for Palamau TR; no arms to be provided

A 24-member special tiger protection force that will be comprised of ex-servicemen has been approved for the Palamau Tiger Reserve. It is in line with the directions of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) to ensure tiger protection and conservation. Non establishment of the force due to various reasons has meant that central grants for Palamau have lapsed twice in the past.

Security concerns related to the presence of Maoists here have, however, led to a decision to not provide arms to the members of this special protection force. It is feared that protecting the weapons from the rebels will be difficult because many parts of the reserve are Maoist strongholds. The force will be provided with vehicles, walkie-talkies, and other usual paraphernalia like protective helmets, sticks and rods.

While some have questioned the use of a force that will be completely unarmed, forest officials have said that it will help by at least adding to the ranks of tiger protectors in the reserve, which presently experiences a shortfall of 70% in staff.

The squad is meant to develop its own intelligence and act as a bridge between the forest department and other central institutions like the wildlife crime bureau to provide continuous updates about ground-level activities and problems in the region. Already 75 applications had been received for the 24 member protection force.

Jharkhand will become the only state with a strike force that won't be armed. Neighbouring Bihar,

Orissa and Naxalite-hit Chhattisgarh do not have such a force at all.

Source: ASRP Mukesh. 'Palamau protectors won't be armed', [The Telegraph](http://TheTelegraph.com), 12/08/11.

Contact: **Field Director**, Palamau Tiger Reserve, P.O. Daltonganj, Dist. Palamau - 822 101, Jharkhand. Tel: 06562-22650(O), 22684(R). Fax: 06562-22427, 22650

## KARNATAKA

### No more private vehicles in PAs in Karnataka

The Karnataka Forest Department (FD) has taken a decision to phase out the operation of private vehicles in all protected areas (PAs) in the state. Only state-owned Jungle Lodges and Resorts (JLRs) will be permitted to operate in PAs. The decision comes following the High Court directives on a writ petition filed by R Ram of Water Woods Resorts. The Court has asked the FD to comply with the Wilderness Tourism Policy-2004 and refrain from resorting to the pick-and-choose method in granting permission to tour operators in the Bandipur Tiger Reserve (*PA Update Vol. XVII, No. 4*).

A meeting chaired by the Principal Secretary, Forest, Ecology and Environment, on July 18, decided that the present method of granting permission to private tour operators should be scrapped as it was discriminatory. A meeting of the State Board for Wildlife held on August 11 further decided that private vehicles should be phased out and that government organisations should be allowed to deploy vehicles within the carrying capacity of the park, which will be decided by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.

It was also decided that JLRs will reserve 50 per cent of its existing vehicles for its own guests and the remaining vehicles for the guests of other resorts whose tour operations have been terminated. JLRs have, however, been directed not to expand the existing facilities to accommodate more tourists in their resorts.

Source: Subhash Chandra N S, 'Pvt tour operators banned in Bandipur', [\*Deccan Herald\*](#), 30/08/11.

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

### **GO passed for Aghanashini Lion-Tailed Macaque Conservation Reserve**

The Karnataka State Government is reported to have passed a Government Order (GO) in June 2011 notifying an area of 299.59 sq kms as the Aghanashini Lion-Tailed Macaque (LTM) Conservation Reserve. The area covers the forests of the Sirsi-Honnavar region that are known to have a good population of the endangered primate.

A detailed survey carried out in the region in 2008 by NGOs and the Karnataka Forest Department (FD) with funding support from the FD, Rufford Small Grants Foundation, Primate Action Fund (Conservation International) and Primate Conservation Inc. confirmed that these forests have the largest LTM population in this region. A plan to declare this area as a conservation reserve for the LTM was then submitted to Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and also presented to the Western Ghats Task Force Committee.

An updated proposal was submitted subsequently and this was also pursued with the State Wildlife Advisory Board, which finally issued the order in June earlier this year.

Source: Honnavalli N Kumara. 'Declaration of Aghanashini Lion-tailed Macaque Conservation Reserve', [\*ZOO's Print\*](#), July 2011

Contact: **Honnavalli N Kumara**, SACON Anaikatty PO, Coimbatore – 641108, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0422-2657101/131. Email: honnavallik@gmail.com

## **KERALA**

### **KFRI studies human-elephant conflict in Kerala**

A study by the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) on 'Human-elephant conflict in Kerala'

has shown that the compensation paid for loss of human life and agricultural crops in the state was inadequate, resulting in farmers' ire against the government for not protecting them from wildlife.

The study that was carried out by E.A. Jayson and Suresh K. Govind revealed that the Forest Department has paid just 8.2 % of the amount claimed by farmers as compensation for crop loss due to wildlife attacks. The main crops destroyed are coconut, plantain, paddy, rubber, and pineapple. Wild elephants involved in crop damage were mainly lone males and most of the raids were carried out at night. Elephant damage is more localised but severe per raid as compared to that caused by smaller species.

While damage by wild boar was recorded throughout the year, attacks by elephants were related to the crops cultivated. The study has found that the cropping pattern and location of the agricultural fields have great influence on crop damage incidence. Crops like betel leaf, cashew, clove, cotton, curry leaf, and turmeric are not prone to damage. Proximity to forests, water scarcity, lack of food in the forests, and attraction to nutritious food items like plantains and jackfruit are the main reasons for elephants raiding agricultural crops near forest areas. Another reason is the blockage of wildlife corridors that restricts animal movement.

The study suggests implementation of eco-development packages in order to ensure corridor-connectivity as a long-term measure for the conservation of elephant populations. Short term measures suggested include the consolidation of reserve boundaries, and construction and maintenance of trenches, stone walls, barriers, or electric fences in the problem areas. The study has also suggested that local communities living in and around forest areas should be advised to avoid planting crops, which may lure wild animals. Steps should also be taken to maintain the availability of, rinking water in forest areas during summer.

While recommending reduction of the problem-population of animals by relocating them, the study has also suggested 13 other methods to control the problem. These include guarding from a watch tower; fences using

iron wire; noise-making using metallic objects; use of kerosene, fire crackers etc. and, the use of chilli paste-coated rope that can be tied across the pathways of elephants.

Source: Compensation meagre for wildlife menace: study, *The Hindu*, 18/08/11.

Contact: **KFRI**, Peechi – 680653. Tel: 0487 – 282365 / 884 /037/ 061-4. Fax: 282249.

Email: [libkfri@md2.vsnl.net.in](mailto:libkfri@md2.vsnl.net.in)

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## MADHYA PRADESH

### Adani's power plant near Pench TR opposed

Adani Pench Power Limited's (APPL) proposed 1320 megawatt power plant in Chausara, Chhindwara district is being opposed by a number of people including Dr Sunilam, former MLA from Multai and founder chief of Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, and Advocate Aradhna Bhargava of the Mahila Sangharsh Samiti. They have said that the project not only threatens the Pench Tiger Reserve (TR) and its corridors to Kanha TR but also will snatch away drinking and irrigation water meant for the Nagpur region.

The power plant is to be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 7,390 crore and will require 33.2 million cubic metres water per annum. The water will be sourced from the Pench project through a pipeline at a distance of 4 km from the project site. The plant will use imported coal which has high ash and sulphur contents of about 26-29% and 0.3-0.4% respectively.

In 1987, the Madhya Pradesh State Electricity Board (MPSEB) had acquired farmers' land of five villages - Chausara, Hiverkhedi, Dhanora, Tekathawadi and Dagabani Piparia - to establish a power plant. Land acquisition was done at the rate of Rs 1,500-10,000 per acre for a total of 750 acres of land. However, the MPSEB failed to start the plant even after 23 years. As the government never took possession of the land, farmers continued to till it. In 2010, however, the government sold the land to the Adani group for Rs 13.75 lakh per acre. Since then the struggle for

control over the land has begun between the farmers and the Adani group.

It has also been alleged that APPL has encroached upon five acres of crematorium land in Tekathawadi and two acres of land in Chausara, and has started construction work without getting environment clearance. A public hearing held on December 6, 2010, faced strong protests by farmers. Activists have claimed that those opposing the project are being harassed, intimidated, and threatened. Both Dr Sunilam and Bhargava have been slapped with more than 50 cases by the police. In May, earlier this year, both were attacked while returning to Chhindwara after a meeting with farmers at Bhulamohgaun. Police have allegedly failed to act against the culprits.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Oppn to Adani power plant in Chhindwara grows', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 17/07/11.

Contact: **Field Director**, Pench Tiger Reserve, P.O. Barapathar, Dist. Seoni - 480 661. Tel: 07692-250794/250594. Fax: 250794/221180. Email: [root@trpench.ren.nic.in](mailto:root@trpench.ren.nic.in)

## MAHARASHTRA

### Rules for Tiger Conservation Foundations approved in Maharashtra

Rules for the operation of the Tiger Conservation Foundations (TCF) for the Tadoba-Andhari, Pench and Melghat Tiger Reserves in the state were recently approved by State Forest Minister.

The TCF rules include a number of provisions that are hoped will ensure tiger conservation. They include delegation of the power to the respective Field Directors to levy gate entry fees; involvement of local youth in conservation and fire protection initiatives; provision to increase gate fees by 10% per year; use of income for eco-development of surrounding villages and for activities that create biomass alternatives for village dwellers — like cooking gas connection and subsidy for gas cylinders to reduce fuel wood consumption; creation of fodder plots in



villages and to reduce free grazing by cattle in open forests.

The TCFs for Tadoba-Andhari and Pench were set up in November and December, 2008 respectively, while that for Melghat was set up in February 2009. They could not start functioning because no rules for governing them had been framed.

A three-member committee of Field Directors was set up to frame the rules, which have now been finalized and accepted.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Nod to tiger conservation foundation rules', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 18/08/11.

### **NTCA seeks minor changes in TCP for Tadoba-Andhari TR**

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has suggested some minor changes in the tiger conservation plan (TCP) of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). A meeting of the expert committee was held in Delhi in the last week of August where the plan was presented by the Chief Conservator of Forests and Field Director of TATR.

As per the provision for preparing a TCP under the amended Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, TCPs for Pench and TATR were prepared and sent to the state government in 2009. The government approved the TCP for TATR and sent it to the NTCA while the TCP for Pench is still lying with the government. The preparation of the TCP for Melghat TR is reportedly under process.

Source: 'NTCA suggests minor changes in Tadoba plan', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 27/08/11.

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

### **Large scale promotion of IFS officers in Maharashtra**

In what might be one of the biggest one time upgradation and promotion exercise of its kind, 39 officers of the Indian Forest Service (IFS) have been promoted in Maharashtra at one go.

Those promoted to upgraded posts include 12 chief conservators of forests (CCFs), who are now additional principal chief conservators of forests (APCCFs), and 27 conservators (CFS), who are now CCFs. There will now be 19 APCCFs in the state while earlier there were only three.

The 12 CCFs who have been promoted to APCCF include Ramanuj Choudhary for Monitoring & Evaluation (Tendu); Ashok Sharma (Medicinal plants, FDCM); Sarjan Bhagat (Resource Utilization); Anil Mohan (Ecotourism & Wildlife Administration); AK Jha (CAMP); SD Sontakke (Wildlife, Nashik); ASK Sinha (Working Plan, East), and RR Sahay (Information Technology & Policy).

Similarly, SA Thorat will be Additional Director General for Social Forestry Directorate, Pune. NB Majumdar was posted on upgraded post APCCF (Conservation) and Anmol Kumar as APCCF (Personnel). Shree Bhagwan, who was tipped to head NTCA's regional office at Nagpur, will be the new APCCF (Budget, Planning & Development). The post was lying vacant for nearly a year.

Meanwhile, CCFs Shailendra Bahadur and Shirish Asthana, both facing departmental enquiry, in the recruitment scam at Yavatmal and Pune land scam respectively, have been dropped from the promotion list.

The CFs shifted after upgradation include FS Jafri (Evaluation); Jarnail Singh as CCF (Territorial, Dhule); Anup Wadhwa (NTFP); Anurag Choudhary (Silva, Pune); VS Bardekar (Working Plan); and Mohan Jha (Territorial, Amravati). The 37 CFs promoted as CCFs include Maheep Gupta as general manager, FDCM, Nagpur; PR Yeole, World Food Programme, FDCM; SG Tembhurnikar as Human Resource and Management (HRM); BS Hooda as CCF (Working Plan, Aurangabad); RK Pole as CCF (Thane); Nitin Kakodkar as the new CCF (Territorial, Pune).

Similarly, N Rambabu, CF with Nagpur division, has been posted as General Manager (Planning) at the FDCM. TK Choubey as been posted as CCF (Working Plan, Nagpur); while A Ashraf has been promoted as CCF Pench. Virendra Tiwari has been promoted as CCF (JFM, Nagpur); RS

Yadav has been promoted as CCF (Forest Regulation) while MN Gawli will be new CCF (Vigilance & Welfare).

Source: 'IFS officers promoted at one go',  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),  
15/07/11.

### **SC clears denotification of Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary**

The Supreme Court recently cleared the long-pending denotification of Great Indian Bustard (GIB) Sanctuary at Nannaj in Solapur district. From 8,496 sq km earlier, the sanctuary will now be restricted to 1,222 sq km. The reduction in the area of the sanctuary is based on the recommendations of the Committee on Rationalization of Boundaries of National Parks and Sanctuaries that had been set up by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) (*PA Updates* Vol XVI, [Nos. 5, 3 & 2](#); Vol XV, No. [6](#); Vol XIV, No. [4](#); Vol XII, No. [3](#); Vol XI, No. [5](#) and No. [29](#)).

The matter had been pending in the court since 2006. On October 20, 2008, the SC had directed the committee to recommend the area of the GIB sanctuary. Accordingly, a committee headed by VB Sawarkar, former Director of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, recommended denotification of two sanctuaries in Maharashtra on the precondition of declaring some new sanctuaries.

The new sanctuaries that were to be declared included Mansinghdeo (Nagpur) - 183 sq km, Rajmachi (Thane, Pune, Alibaug) - 122.96 sq km, Sudhagarh-Tamni - 220.18 sq km, Tipagarh (Gadchiroli) - 52.4 sq km, Kopela-Koramarka (Gadchiroli) - 90.93 sq km, and Isapur Bird Sanctuary (Yavatmal) - 121.55 sq km. Of these, only Mansinghdeo has been declared as a sanctuary (*PA Updates* Vol XVII, No. [1](#); Vol. XVI, [No. 5](#) and No. [50](#)).

The decrease in GIB sanctuary area from 8,496 sq km to 1,222 sq km will bring the protected area (PA) network in the state from 4.97% to 2.6% of the total area of the state i.e. from 15,332 sq km to 8,059 sq km - a sharp drop of 60.55%.

Conservationists working in the region have welcomed the decision. They have pointed out that such a large sanctuary was a mistake and

the strict enforcement of wildlife laws had turned public opinion against the birds and had harmed the cause of conservation in the process.

Source: 'SC clears denotification of GIB sanctuary'  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),  
24/07/11.

Contact: **CF Wildlife**, Pune Division, Forest Colony, Near Salunke Vihar Bus Stop, Vanawdi Pune. Tel: 020-25124182 / 26855124

### **Maharashtra to set up task force for bustard conservation**

The Maharashtra government has decided to set up a task force under the chairmanship of State Forest Minister, Patangrao Kadam for the conservation of the Great Indian Bustard.

The task force will be a multi-disciplinary team that will include NGOs and experts from Vidarbha, Pune and Nashik, and academicians and officers from the forest department.

There are believed to be 30-35 GIBs in the state and can be found in Warora (Chandrapur district), Solapur, Ahmednagar and Nashik districts.

Source: 'Maharashtra to set up taskforce for Indian Bustard',  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),  
18/08/11

### **200 acres from Sanjay Gandhi NP for zoo**

200 acres from the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) are to be used for a new zoo being proposed in Mumbai. The remaining 200 acres of land needed for the zoo will be acquired from Aarey Dairy in Goregaon. An announcement to this effect was made recently in the state assembly by the state Forest Minister, Mr Patangrao Kadam.

It was also pointed out that since the National Zoo Authority does not allow commercial activities on forest land, commercial exploitation would be on the land acquired from Aarey dairy. The project is to be implemented by the Forest Development

Corporation of Maharashtra on a build- operate - transfer (BOT) basis.

Source: Surendra Gangan. '200 acre Aarey land for international zoo in Mumbai', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 06/08/11.

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

### Leopard movement to be studied at SGNP to help deal with human-animal conflict

Officials at the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) at Borivili will use technology to track the movement of leopards within the park to handle the rising incidence of the wild cats straying into human habitats. The year-long project, named 'Mumbaikars for Sanjay Gandhi

National Park and Leopards' will start on September 1. The state's forest department (FD) has allocated Rs Four lakh for the project that will be conducted by a 25-member team of wildlife scientists, experts and forest staff.

It is hoped that this study will help in mitigating man-animal conflict around the national park. This year alone there have been seven cases of leopards being sighted in colonies around the periphery of the park in Malad, Goregaon, Mulund and Bhandup.

Six camera traps, connected to a global positioning system, are being installed at various locations of the 103 sq km park and near Aarey colony, Goregaon, as part of the project.

Source: SGNP to study leopards to handle man-animal conflict, [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 16/08/11.

### A number of proposed dams in Thane district to impact Tansa WLS

Following are the details of dams proposed in the Thane and Raigad district mainly to ensure continued and regular water supply to the city of Mumbai. A number of these dams are expected to have serious impacts on the local people, many of whom are tribal. They will also impact the forests here, including parts of the Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary.

Dam	Dist.	Storage Capacity MCM	Submergence area (ha)	Forest area affected (ha)	Population affected	EC* required?
Kalu	Thane	407.99	2100	999	3196	No
Shai	Thane	348 (planned utilization PU)	Not available	43000 trees to be cut	5124	No
Middle Vaitarna	Thane	172 (PU)	3473	760; over 100000 trees cut	8villages (min. 1600 people)	Cleared. Submerging part of Tansa WLS.
Balganga	Raigad	127.76 (PU)	1240	265	8000	No
Gargai	Thane	180 (PU)	NA	-NA	NA	Yes, affecting part of Tansa WLS
Pinjal	Thane	425 (PU)	NA	NA	NA	Yes, affecting part of Tansa WLS
Barvi	Thane	250 (PU)	NA	1214	3375	No

\*EC- Environmental Clearances

Source: Parineeta Dandekar. 'No EIA, no public hearings, no clearances, no monitoring: They are benign dams!', *Dams, Rivers and People*, Jun-Jul-Aug 2011.

Contact: Parineeta Dandekar. Email: [parineeta.dandekar@gmail.com](mailto:parineeta.dandekar@gmail.com)

## MEGHALAYA

### Survey on Western Hoolock Gibbon in Garo Hills

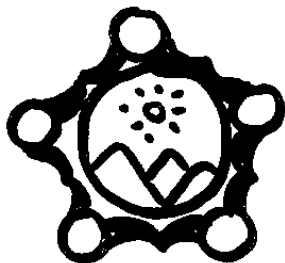
Samrakshan Trust has initiated a study on the Hoolock Gibbon in the Balpakram Baghmara Landscape through research, community based conservation action and increased involvement, participation and awareness of the Forest Department and the Government. The landscape includes among others the Balpakram National Park, the Siju Wildlife Sanctuary and the Baghmara Reserve Forest.

Two sets of data one for the monsoon and the other for winter will be collected from Baghmara RF and detailed information on presence of the Hoolock Gibbon will be collected from across the landscape during winter i.e. between October and February.

Source: 'Survey on Western Hoolock Gibbon presence in Garo Hills', Green Footprint Newsletter, June-July 2011

Contact: Samrakshan Trust, Bolsalgre, Baghmara, South Garo Hills District, Meghalaya – 794102. Tel: 03639-234187 Email: [balpakram@gmail.com](mailto:balpakram@gmail.com) Visit: [www.samrakshan.org](http://www.samrakshan.org)

### Garo Hills Conservation Award 2011



The Garo Hills Conservation Award 2011 was presented to the Baghmara Range Forest Office (RFO) of Balpakram National Park (BNP) Division and the Garo Students' Union - Ruga Unit for their commitment and contribution towards curbing wildlife hunting and combating the issue of wildlife pet keeping in South Garo Hills.

CG Momin, the Baghmara RFO, and his staff have been carrying out field trips to combat

illegal wildlife trade in the Garo hills resulting in the rescue of several mammals, reptiles, primates and birds, and in their subsequent rehabilitation in the forests. They have also booked a number of culprits under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972. The Garo Students Union, Ruga unit, led by Matgrik Marak, got the award for their role in numerous conservation activities and also for raising their voice against haphazard coal mining in the region.

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year that the awards are being given. They were initiated in 2010 by the Samrakshan Trust on the tenth anniversary of their foundation day (*PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 6).

Source: 'Garo Hills Conservation Award 2011', *The Shillong Times*, 07/09/11.

'Foresters, students bag Garo hill prize', *The Telegraph*, 08/09/11.

Contact: **Samrakshan Trust**, see above.

## ORISSA

### Gahirmatha fisherfolk need to be involved in turtle conservation: Study

Greenpeace India and United Artists' Association recently conducted a joint study on the measures needed to improve the economic conditions of traditional fishing communities around the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary.

The study that covered 20,000 persons from 3,800 families in 15 villages around the sanctuary in Rajnagar and Mahakalpada blocks shows that most of the fisherfolk support the sanctuary in spite of its adverse impact on their livelihood.

The report has suggested that the fisherfolk should be involved in, and not merely informed about the management of the sanctuary. Fisherfolk with traditional fishing nets should be allowed to fish in the area from 5 to 10 km from the coast while the area up to 5 km can continue to be a no fishing zone. The report has also highlighted the fact that more flexibility is needed in implementation of the government schemes which promote alternative livelihood activities for the fisherfolk.

The National Fishworkers Federation (NFF) and Kerala Swathantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF) have, however, flayed the report terming it as a misrepresentation of facts and an attempt to justify the infringement on traditional fishing rights. They have termed the study as an effort to legitimize a draconian conservation regime and have argued that the fishing community had not been consulted before declaration of the sanctuary and had suffered significantly on account of the restrictions that had been imposed on them.

Source: 'Gahiramatha fishermen's livelihood can coexist with turtle conservation', [www.pragativadi.com](http://www.pragativadi.com), 08/08/11.  
'NFF flays report on marine sanctuary', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 11/08/11

Contact: **Areeba Hamid**, Greenpeace India, #60, Wellington Street, Richmond Town P/O, Bangalore 560025, Karnataka. Tel: 080-41154861. Email: [areeba.hamid@greenpeace.org](mailto:areeba.hamid@greenpeace.org)  
**Mangaraj Panda**, General Secretary United Artists Association Ganjam Orissa. Tel: 09437064314. Email: [uaaorissa@gmail.com](mailto:uaaorissa@gmail.com)  
**Pradip Chatterjee**, Secretary, NFF. Tel: 09874432773, Email: [pradipdish@gmail.com](mailto:pradipdish@gmail.com)

## PUNJAB

### Punjab to compensate snake-bite victims

Punjab has become the first state in the country to compensate victims of snake-bite and bring them at par with others who die in attacks by elephants, tigers and leopards. In the case of snake-bites, Punjab will now handout a compensation of Rs One lakh for death, Rs 20,000 for major injury and Rs 5,000 for medical expenses on account of the expensive anti-snake venine injections. The proposal was cleared at a meeting of the state wildlife advisory board held in July.

According to figures from the Union Ministry for Health and Family Welfare, 1331, 1508 and 1,162 snakebite deaths occurred across the country in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively. The latest all-India study, 'Snakebite Mortality in India: A Nationally Representative Mortality Survey', conducted by researchers from the

universities of Toronto, Oxford, Melbourne, Indian academic institutions and Rom Whitaker, India's leading herpetologist has however suggested that there were 45900 deaths in India annually because of snakebite.

Source: Vikram Jit Singh. 'Snakebite victims: Punjab to compensate', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 21/07/11.

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

## RAJASTHAN

### Officials reluctant to take charge at Sariska Tiger Reserve

Forest officials seem to be reluctant to take charge at the Sariska Tiger Reserve on account of the huge responsibility the job comes with and a constant threat of more tiger deaths here. Since November 2010, when the relocated tigress ST1 was found dead, no DFO has stayed here for more than three months. The last, Sharda Pratap Singh, was shifted to the Chief Minister's office in just a month after joining.

Three of the six posts of Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) are also lying vacant; so are five of the seven posts for Rangers. At least four posts of Foresters are vacant, while the posts of forest guards have also not been all filled up. There are 103 forest guard vacancies and 97 have been appointed. Till recently, the number of forests guard was just 57.

Source: Rakhee Roy Talukdar, 'After tigers, officials missing in Sariska', [The Telegraph](http://TheTelegraph), 22/08/11.

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

**CWLW** Government of Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, Jaipur – 302005, Rajasthan. Tel: 0141-2380832 / 2540531. Fax: 2380496/ 2380832.

## SIKKIM

### Hydro-power projects approved close to the Kanchenjunga National Park; local communities object

The Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) has written to the Union Minister of Environment and Forests Ms Jayanthi Natarajan, objecting to the Environment Clearance (EC) granted to the 99 MW Ting Ting hydel power project on the Rathung Chu river. The SIBLAC has noted that the EC was given despite the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) stating earlier that it had not received any proposal on the project.

Three power projects — Lethang (96 MW), Ting Ting (99 MW) and Tashiding (97 MW) — had been planned over the Rathung Chu, a tributary of the Rangeet river. The Lethang project had been rejected by the standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife in October 2010 following objections from SIBLAC. It had pointed out that the proposed project would hurt the 'religious sentiments' of Bhutias and Lepchas as the dam projects are proposed in a landscape that is sacred to these communities.

According to the documents collected by SIBLAC, the MoEF had on July 4, 2011 communicated its EC to a private company that is developing the Ting Ting project. This EC was given within two-and-a-half months of the then Minister of Environment and Forests Mr Jairam Ramesh saying that the MoEF was not aware of the Ting Ting project nor the other one proposed over the Rathung Chu. On March 16, Mr Ramesh had written to the National Commission for Minorities member from the Northeast, saying that of the three power projects initially proposed over the Rathung Chu, the Lethang project had been rejected, while proposals for the other two projects had not been received by the MoEF.

While granting the EC to the Ting Ting project, the MoEF has now stated that there is no national park, sanctuary, biosphere reserve or historical monument in the vicinity of the project area. The SIBLAC has however noted, based on information gained in response to a Right to Information (RTI) application, that all the three projects are located within 10 km of the boundary of the Kanchenjunga National Park (NP). (Also see *PA Update* Vol XIV, No. 5).

Source: Bijoy Gurung, 'Probe cry on green nod', [The Telegraph](#), 22/07/11.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Government of Sikkim, Forest Secretariat, Deorali, Gangtok, - 737 102, Sikkim. Tel: 03592-281240 Fax: 281778.

## TAMIL NADU

### Construction work threatens Annamalaicheri flamingo habitat in Pulicat

Annamalaicheri, the only flamingo habitat in Pulicat Lake is facing a threat due to construction work. As part of a series of fish landing centres along the east coast for the benefit of fishermen, the Fisheries Department recently began work at the Annamalaicheri village. Taking note of the threat, the State Forest Department has written to the Fisheries Department and the Tiruvallur Collector to stop the work immediately as no construction work could be taken up inside the sanctuary limits.

Fisheries officials claim that they have permission from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and that they began work only after getting CRZ clearance from MoEF. However, the status of the approval from the National Board of Wildlife is not known.

The shallow waters to the north of the Annamalaicheri village are the only known and recorded habitat of the flamingos in the Tamil Nadu part of the Pulicat Bird Sanctuary. Every year, thousands of flamingos congregate in these shallow waters between December and May.

Source: P. Oppili, B. Aravind Kumar, 'Construction of fish landing centre threatens flamingo habitat', [The Hindu](#), 08/08/11.

### Proposal to declare Pallikaranai marsh a Ramsar site



The Tamil Nadu State Forest Department (FD) has submitted a compliance report to the Ramsar Convention on October 2011 (No. 93)

Wetlands to get the Pallikaranai marsh declared as a Ramsar site. The report argues that the marsh contains rare or endangered and threatened species and that it acts as a forage and breeding ground for thousands of migratory birds from various places within and outside the country. It notes that the topography of the marsh was such that it always retained some storage, thus forming an aquatic ecosystem.

A study in 2007 had shown that there are 60 species of plants, more than 45 species of fishes, more than 100 species of birds, 20 species of reptiles, nine species of amphibians and seven species of butterflies, besides molluscs and crustaceans that can be found in the marsh.

The Pallikaranai marshland is among the few and last remaining natural wetlands of south India. It is located about 20 km south of the city of Chennai.

Source: P. Oppili, 'Forest Department makes first move to get Pallikaranai marsh declared Ramsar site', [The Hindu](#), 12/08/11.

## UTTARAKHAND

### Uttarakhand opposes eco-sensitive zone along Bhagirathi river

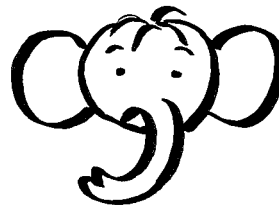
The Uttarakhand state government has opposed the proposal to create an eco-sensitive zone along the 135 kms stretch of the River Bhagirathi from Gangotri to Uttarakashi (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, Nos. 5 & 2). The Chief Minister (CM) of the state, Mr Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank had urged the Centre to scrap the proposal in the interest of the local people.

In a letter to the Union Minister of Environment and Forests Ms Jayanthi Natarajan, the CM has argued that the move will affect nearly 200 hotels and inns and four lakh people who earn their livelihood from tourism. He said that 67% of the state was covered in forests and tough forest laws were preventing development in the state. He urged the Central Government to help the state with additional grants as well.

Source: Shishir Prashant, 'Uttarakhand urges Centre to scrap Garhwal eco-sensitive zone plan', [www.business-standard.com](#), 10/08/11.

## UTTAR PRADESH

### First elephant reserve in Uttar Pradesh



The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has started working on the state's first Elephant Reserve (ER), which is proposed to come up in Saharanpur and Bijnore districts. It will extend over the Shivalik forest division in Saharanpur and Bijnore and Najibabad forest divisions in Bijnore. Of the 744 sq kms of the reserve, about 309 sq km of the area of the ER will be under the Shivalik division. The rest is under the Bijnore division. Mohand, Shakumbari and Barkala ranges in Shivalik and Amangarh, Kauria, Sahanpur, Rajgarh, Barahapur and Sahuwala ranges in Bijnore and Najibabad have been declared as the area for the reserve.

It is hoped that the ER, through habitat management and corridor revival will provide bigger areas for elephants and also allow for the easy movement of the elephants between the UP and Uttarakhand. The Centre is reported to have already released some funds for the reserve while the FD has started the 'habitat management' for elephants in the identified areas.

Source: 'Work begins on state's first elephant reserve', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](#), 28/08/11.

### 95% UP's Sarus cranes outside PAs

A recently conducted census of the Sarus crane in Uttar Pradesh (UP) has revealed that only five percent of bird's population is to be found inside protected areas (PAs) of the state. According to the figures of the first ever 'total count' of the Sarus crane in UP compiled by the state Forest Department (FD) in 2010, the state had 12,246 birds. Seven divisions of UP

forests were been found sheltering more than 500 birds.

Among the districts Mainpuri reported maximum sightings (2,120) followed by Etawah (1,217) and Auraiya (895). They were followed by Kanshiram Nagar (807), Etah (599), Ramabai Nagar (580) and the Sohagibarwa Wild Life Sanctuary (503). UP is the state with the largest Sarus crane population in the country followed by Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Experts and the UP FD have stressed the need to concentrate on the conservation of the 95% of the population that is to be found outside PAs and there is also an attempt at creating Eco-sensitive zones around PAs for the purpose.

Source: 'UP home to nearly 12,500 sarus cranes', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 13/07/11.

Contact: **Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden**, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, LUCKNOW - 226 001. Tel: 0522-206584(O), 237715 & 223015(R) Fax 0522-222061/ 206188

## WEST BENGAL

### Jaldapara WLS has at least three tigers

A scat analysis by the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) has confirmed the presence of at least three tigers in Jaldapara Wild Life Sanctuary (WLS). The Forest Department (FD) had suggested the presence of seven tigers in the sanctuary in the 2007 census that was based on the pugmarks method.

The confirmation has prompted the FD to take further initiatives for tiger conservation here and efforts are also to be made to get a better idea of the tiger population in the sanctuary. Staff will be given cameras to get pictures of the big cats and more scats are to be collected for further analysis.

Source: 'Tiger hint in rhino hub', [The Telegraph](http://TheTelegraph.com), 01/08/11.

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

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### WCCB bags award for excellence in environmental crime enforcement



India's Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) has been selected for the Chief Dave Cameron Award 2010 for excellence in Environmental Crimes

Enforcement and Education by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). The award is presented to full-service law enforcement agencies that work to enforce environmental laws and educate the public.

The WCCB is a statutory body of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, for combating organized wildlife crime and trans-boundary illegal trade was recently selected for the prestigious.

This is the second international award won by the WCCB in the last two years. Earlier the Bureau was awarded the Clark R. Bavin Award for excellence in Environmental Law Enforcement 2010.

Source: Press Release, Press Information Bureau Government of India, MoEF, 07/07/11

### New Tiger Reserves

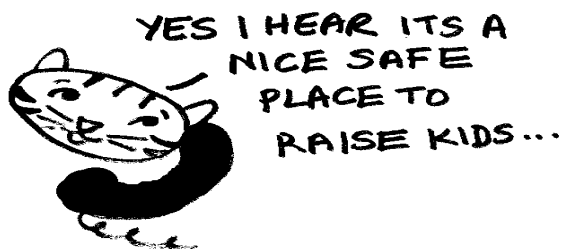
'In-principle' approval has been accorded by the National Tiger Conservation Authority for creation of six new tiger reserves: (i) Pilibhit (Uttar Pradesh), (ii) Ratapani (Madhya Pradesh), (iii) Sunabeda (Odisha), (iv) Mukandara Hills (including Darrah, Jawahar Sagar and Chambal Wildlife Sanctuaries) (Rajasthan), (v) Kudremukh (Karnataka) and (vi) Kawal Sanctuary (Andhra Pradesh).

States have additionally been advised to send proposals for declaring the following areas as Tiger Reserves as well: (i) Bor (Maharashtra), (ii) Suhelwa (Uttar Pradesh), (iii) Nagzira-Navegaon (Maharashtra) (iv) Satyamangalam (Tamil Nadu), (v) Guru Ghasidas National Park (Chhattisgarh), and



(vi) Mhadei Sanctuary (Goa). Under section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 state governments are authorised to notify an area as a tiger reserve on recommendation of the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

This information was given by the Minister of State for Environment and Forests Ms Jayanthi Natarajan in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha in August.



Source: 'New Tiger Reserves', MoEF Release, 09/08/11.

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

### **Ganges River Dolphin conservation education programme**

The Centre for Environment Education (CEE) North, as part of its Ganges River Dolphin Conservation Education programme, organized a three day national-level workshop for partner NGOs from four states viz. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Assam. The residential training-cum- orientation workshop was organized in collaboration with Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development (IESD), and the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, in the month of July.

The workshop was designed to develop strategies and build capacities of the partner NGOs to implement the conservation programme in their respective school clusters. NGOs will be forming clusters of 25 schools along the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers and their tributaries, thus reaching out to around 500 schools.

Source: 'Ganges River Dolphin Conservation Education Programme' *Ceenario* 43.  
Contact: CEE. Email: ceenario@ceeindia.org

### **Cabinet committee approves reintroduction of cheetahs, more funds for Project Tiger**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) recently approved the Rs. 50 crore project for the re-introduction of cheetahs in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. A hike has also been approved in the Project Tiger budget from Rs.650 crore to Rs.1,216.86 crore due to rise in the cost of relocation of villages from tribal habitats. It has also approved increased compensation in case of loss of human life in man-animal conflict. An amount of Rs. Two lakh will now be given in the case of loss of human life in attack by wildlife.

A change is also to be made in the funding pattern in respect of northeastern states. The central share for recurring expenditure will be raised from the existing 50 percent to 90 percent.

Source: Cabinet gives nod to cheetahs, more funds for Project Tiger, [www.daijiworld.com](http://www.daijiworld.com), 11/08/11.

### **Plea to remove vermin status for fruit bats**

The Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has been petitioned with a request to remove the designation of vermin from fruit bats in the country. The plea was made in a letter sent to the MoEF in July last year by Prof G Marimuthu of the Madurai Kamaraj University and Prof RA Racey of the IUCN Bats Specialist Group.

The letter notes that all but one of the 13 fruit bat species in India are listed as vermin under the Wildlife Protection Act. It notes further that 10 fruit bat species are forest dwelling, play an important role in forest regeneration and cause very little, if any, harm at all to fruit orchards.

The request comes in the context of the fact that the year 2011-12 has been designated at the Year of the Bats by the United Nations.

Source: *Small Mammal Mail*, July 2011.  
Contact: Prof G Marimuthu, School of Biological Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University Madurai – 625021, Tamil Nadu. Email: mailbox\_gm@rediffmail.com

## Decline in the vulture population in the Nilgiri BR

A recent survey conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (BR) and adjacent sanctuaries, has found a considerable decline in the numbers of vultures found here. A five-member team of the BNHS recently surveyed the region covering the Wayanad Wild Life Sanctuary (WLS) in Kerala, the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (TR) and the Sathyamangalam WLS in Tamil Nadu, and the Bandipur TR and the Rajiv Gandhi National Park at Nagarhole in Karnataka.

The outcome of the survey suggests that the population of Oriental white-backed vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*) in the whole area could be 100 to 150 as against the 300 sighted in the Mudumalai alone during a survey conducted by the BNHS in 1992. The region was a good habitat of the Oriental white-backed vulture, Red-headed vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*), and the Indian long-billed vulture (*Gyps indicus*). As many as 22 Red-headed vultures and one Indian long-billed vulture had been recorded during that survey in the Mudumalai alone. However, according to the recent survey there are nearly 20 Red-headed vultures and the Indian long-billed vulture is extremely rare in the entire region now.

Red-headed and the White-backed vultures were common in Kerala during the 1930s, as recorded in the Travancore Bird Survey by Salim Ali. However, a survey team could not sight a single bird of the species in the state, except in the Wayanad WLS, during a bird survey organised by the Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department a few months ago.

Though the Union government has banned the use and production of veterinary diclofenac in May 2006, its availability in drug stores in the townships adjacent to the sanctuaries such as Masinagudi in Tamil Nadu and Gundlupet in Karnataka poses a great threat to the existing vulture population. A study organised by voluntary organisations in the region a few months ago had found that most of the stakeholders, including villagers, cattle owners, veterinary experts, and drug store owners, were unaware of the ban on diclofenac or of its effect on vultures.

Source: E M Manoj, 'Survey finds an alarming decline in population of vultures', [The Hindu](#), 18/07/11.

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



A DECADE AGO  
From the Archives  
Protected Area Update 33,  
October 2001

### Insurance cover for forest guards

An NGO, the Wildlife Trust of India along with the United India Insurance (UII) is attempting to put into place an insurance scheme for the nearly 50,000 forest guards across the entire country. The plan covers only those guards who are on wildlife duty and insures every person against loss of life and disability with a cover of Rs. 1 lakh. Even temporary workers are sought to be ensured. The WTI will contribute the entire premium, with funds from a United Kingdom based foundation and there is no financial obligation on governments.

The first cheque of Rs. 1 lakh that was issued as part of the scheme was given recently to the widow of Ram Singh, a guard in Corbett Tiger Reserve who died on May 20, earlier this year.

Since it was difficult to get the consent of each guard for the scheme, one prerequisite for it was the consent of the employer, in this case the State. So far only eight states have responded. These are Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Karnataka, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Meghalaya. Tamil Nadu already has a scheme and it is likely they may not go in for this scheme. The other states have yet to respond.

Source: Chandrika Mago. 'Forest guards to get insurance cover', [The Times of India](#), 24/08/2001.

## SOUTH ASIA

### BANGLADESH

#### **Over 10000 deer consumed in Sundarbans in Bangladesh every year**

A recent study carried out by the Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) has revealed that over 10,000 deer are poached and consumed every year by local people living in the eight upazilas adjacent to the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans. According to the study, 91.5% of the people knew that consumption of deer meat was illegal.

The study, carried out among a selected 800 of the nearly 3.5 lakh households in the region last year, showed that each household consumes 1.1 kg of meat per year. 48.5% households of Shyamnagar, Koyra, Dacope, Mongla, Morelganj, Sarankhola, Mathbaria and Patharghata upazilas consume deer meat. Of them, 75.8 per cent consume deer meat for taste. The highest consumption was revealed in Koyra upazila in Khulna district while the lowest in Mathbaria upazila in Pirojpur district. 27.5% of deer meat and parts are collected from relatives while 25.5% from opportunistic traders, 23.5% from direct catch and 21.5% from friends.

The hunters utilize different techniques of poaching including snares, walking trap, spring snare, fishing net, banana-hook trap, sleeping pill, guns, clubbing and poison.

Source: Rafiqul Islam Azad, 10,000 deer poached in Sundarbans every year, [The New Nation](#), 19/08/11.

#### **Bangladesh to implement Taka 276 crore plan for tiger conservation**

The Bangladesh Government has undertaken a Taka 276 crore action plan for tiger conservation in the forests of the Sunderbans. The funding is being provided by the World Bank (WB) (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 3) and the plan is to be executed in collaboration with neighboring countries like India, Nepal and Bhutan. The project will be executed over a six-year period from 2011 to 2017.

The initiatives that will be part of the plan include capacity-building of forest department (FD) officials, conducting regular tiger monitoring, assessment of threats, raising mass awareness locally and nationally, and facilitating research to bring social changes among the people.

The Bangladeshi Minister for Forests and Environment, Dr Hasan Mahmud, said that the government would attempt to double the number of tigers here by the year 2022. The anti-poaching law has already been strengthened. Those convicted of tiger or deer poaching can be sent to 12 years of rigorous imprisonment and repeated offenders can now be imprisoned for life (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 6).

It has been reported that that on an average the big cats kill 25 to 40 people annually in Bangladesh while two to three tigers are killed by humans. At least 60 tigers have been killed in the last three decades in Bangladesh.

Source: 'Action plan to protect Royal Bengal Tiger', [www.thenewnationbd.com](http://www.thenewnationbd.com)

### BHUTAN

#### **Bhutan gets US \$ 2.25 million from the World Bank for wildlife conservation**

The World Bank has given Bhutan US\$ 2.25 million to help in its efforts to conserve wildlife and control wildlife trade. The Bhutanese Wildlife Conservation Division will, over a period of five years, beginning September 2011, implement the regional wildlife project with the help of the money. The money coming from International Development Assistance (IDA) credit will be paid over a period of 20 years, the first 10 years being the grace period. The actual repayment of the loan will begin from the 11th year at an interest of 0.75 per annum.

The money will be used in building and enhancing capacity, institutions, knowledge and incentives to tackle illegal wildlife trade and other selected regional conservation threats to habitats in border areas. Additionally, it will also be used for strengthening the legislative and regulatory

framework and providing relevant training and awareness programs for staff across the agencies. Some of it will be used for strengthening the information and intelligence network.

A part of money will also be used for supporting pilot projects that would contribute to more effective conservation at the national and regional levels. It includes identification and development of ecotourism opportunities, camping sites, nature trails and canopy walks.

Source: Tanden Zangmo, 'USD 2.25M towards Wildlife Conservation', [www.kuenselonline.com](http://www.kuenselonline.com), 22/07/11.

## NEPAL

### Proposal to allow hunting in the Kanchanjunga Conservation Reserve

The Kanchanjunga Conservation Area (KCA) in Taplejung district is likely to become Nepal's second trophy hunting destination. The KCA management council recently submitted a proposal for the same to the Nepalese Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), along with the necessary guidelines, in the month of July. It seeks government permission to issue game licenses to hunt around 13 Himalayan Blue Sheep in this protected area for the 2012 session.

Of the four valleys studied as habitats of the Himalayan Blue Sheep in the region during the 2010 census, two valleys – Yangma and Lelep had recorded a good population and are likely to be the potential sites for hunting. A 2010 report by the World Wildlife Fund had put the population of the Blue Sheep within the KCA at about 1500 animals. This was based on a census carried out in the four major habitat sites of Yangma, Lelep, Khambachhen and Ramjel.

The DNPWC was said to be positive towards the proposal though the final decision was to be taken after considering the carrying capacity of the proposed habitats. The hunting proposal is aimed at sharing economic benefits of the resources among the communities who are part of the conservation effort.

If the KCA proposal is accepted it will become only the 2<sup>nd</sup> such initiative in Nepal. The Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve (DHR) in Baglung district is the only destination that allows hunting

of Blue Sheep and Himalayan Thar with strict monitoring by officials and licensed guides who accompany the hunters. Hunting licenses are provided here during February to April and August to October, every year, through a bidding process. The ministry has issued hunting licenses to six companies inside DHR this year. Each animal is priced between Rs 60,000 to Rs 90,000 excluding other expenses including travel, accommodation and entry fees. Mostly game hunters hunt these animals as recreation and for the highly-prized trophies.

Source: 'Kanchanjunga Conservation Area: Protected area bracing to become hunting spot', [www.ekantipur.com](http://www.ekantipur.com), 12/07/11.

### Gharial number rises in Nepal



A recent study on the population and distribution of gharials in Nepal, conducted by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Nepal has found an increase in the number of gharials in the major rivers of the country. The count in the Koshi, Narayani, Rapti, Karnali and Babai rivers put the total number of animals at 102. This is substantially higher than the 81 that were counted in 2008.

A major threat for the gharial in Nepal is excessive and uncontrolled fishing, habitat disturbance along the riverside, particularly due to sand mining and gravelling and damming of the rivers. Since 1981, a total of 761 gharials have been released into the wild in different river systems from breeding centres in Nepal where their captive breeding started in 1978.

Source: Pragati Shahi, 'Gharial census 2011: Endangered croc species growing in number', [www.ekantipur.com](http://www.ekantipur.com), 20/07/11.

## SRI LANKA

### Government denies reports of elephant translocation from Hambantota to host Commonwealth Games



Media reports have suggested that the Sri Lankan authorities plan to relocate 200 wild elephants from their habitat in Hambantota to build an international airport and a game city in anticipation of a successful bid to host the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Minister of Agrarian Services and Wildlife, Mr S M Chandrasena is reported to have said that some 200 elephants will be relocated from parts of Hambantota where the massive development is expected to take place. The animals will be shifted to Weheragala in Monaragala situated 60 km from Hambantota.

The Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) evaluation commission visited Sri Lanka in June to inspect the southern port city as the venue for the 2018 games. Though the decision on the bid will only be taken in November 2011, the government has already begun constructing the new airport in the area and the runway of the airport reportedly cuts an elephant corridor.

Sri Lankan environmental groups are reportedly preparing to go to court in the matter. The Wildlife Conservation Department Director General, Dr Chandrawansa Pathiraja has, while refuting a certain set of media reports, stressed that no elephants in the south will be relocated either for the construction of the Mattala airport or for the proposed Games City. Denying the report that a runway of the Mattala airport was built across an elephant corridor, he said that electric fences have been erected round the airport leaving out the elephant corridor. A complete environment impact assessment (EIA), he said, had also been carried out for this project.

Commenting on the proposed Games City, he said that necessary precautions will be taken to ensure wildlife conservation of the area and discussions are already underway to control environmental harm. He also reaffirmed that none of the national parks including Yala, Kumana and Lahugala will be affected by these projects.

Source: 'Sri Lanka to relocate 200 wild elephants to build game city for Commonwealth Games', [www.colombopage.com](http://www.colombopage.com), 07/07/11, Disna Mudalige, 'No relocation of elephants in South', *Daily News*, 11/07/11.

## UPCOMING

### Small mammals field techniques training

The Small Mammal Network will be organizing a five day training program on small mammal field techniques in Kerala from November 10-14, 2011. It will be held at the College of Forestry, Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur.

The training has been organized by ZOO and WILD in collaboration with the College of Forestry, Kerala Agricultural University on behalf of CCINSA and RISCINSA. The workshop will be conducted by senior experts from around the world.

The workshop topics will include practical field techniques for use in ecological studies, mammal pollinators, animal handling and welfare, field and lab techniques for scientific studies, techniques for surveying in degraded environments and tips for creating public awareness.

Contact: **Sanjay Molur**.

Email: [herpinvert@gmail.com](mailto:herpinvert@gmail.com)

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Call for proposals: Herpetological Conservation Research Fund

The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust and the Centre for Herpetology MCBT/CFH has initiated an annual Herpetological Conservation Research Fund of Rs. 25,00,000. The primary aim of this fund is to support and encourage new research on herpetofauna in India as well as innovative conservation

actions. The Fund will also support long-term research initiatives at MCBT/CFH and at the Andaman and Nicobar Environmental Team (ANET).

Individuals, organizations and students may apply for grants for short-term research and conservation projects as well as Masters and Ph.D. dissertation projects. Grant amounts will vary from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 2,00,000 for a period of up to one year. Grant applications and instructions are available on the Madras Crocodile Bank website ([www.madrascrocodilebank.org](http://www.madrascrocodilebank.org)). The last date for sending proposals is October 31, 2011.

Contact: **Dr. Ravi Chellam**, Director (Research and Conservation), MCBT. Email: [Ravi@madrascrocodilebank.org](mailto:Ravi@madrascrocodilebank.org)

### Openings in the WWF Andhra Pradesh State Office

The Andhra Pradesh State Office (APSO) of the World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-I) is looking for suitable candidates for two positions: a) Education Officer and B) Field Research and Education Officer.

Contact: **Farida Tampal**, State Director, WWF-India APSO.  
Email: [ftampal@wwfindia.net](mailto:ftampal@wwfindia.net)

### Call for applications: Whitley Awards 2012

The United Kingdom based Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN) has invited applications for the Whitley Awards 2012. The awards are both an international profile prize and a form of project grant (currently £30,000 over one year). Whitley Awards 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.

A number of Indians have in recent years won the award. These include, among others, noted herpetologist, Rom Whitaker, Dr. MD Madhusudan of the Nature Conservation Foundation; Dr. R Sukumar, Indian Institute of Science and Dr. Ramana Athreya of the Kaati Trust.

The deadline for applications is October 31, 2011. For more details visit [www.whitleyaward.org](http://www.whitleyaward.org)

## IN THE SUPREME COURT

### PA related matters in the Supreme Court (SC) and the Central Empowered Committee in July 2011

- Road widening in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar
- Diversion of 4.17 hectares of forest land from Jamwa Ramgarh Wildlife Sanctuary for construction of missing link of National Highway-11 (Dausa-Manoharpur), Rajasthan
- Permission for use of 1.241 hectares of forest land for laying of an underground water pipeline in the Madhav National Park, Madhya Pradesh
- Permission for transportation and the use of the *Mapia foetida* (a medicinal plant) planted on non-forest land falling within the boundary of the Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary, Maharashtra

'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](mailto:forestcase@yahoo.com) Web: [www.forestcaseindia.org](http://www.forestcaseindia.org)

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



## Protected Area Network in India

Total Area in the country under the PA network is 1,58,508 sq. kms which covers 4.83% of the total area of the country

### State wise details

No.	State/UT	National Park	Wildlife Sanctuary	Conservation Reserve	Community Reserve
1	Andhra Pradesh	5	22	0	0
2	Arunachal Pradesh	2	11	0	0
3	Assam	5	18	0	0
4	Bihar	1	13	0	0
5	Chhatisgarh	3	11	0	0
6	Goa	1	6	0	0
7	Gujarat	4	22	0	0
8	Haryana	2	8	2	0
9	Himachal Pradesh	2	32	0	0
10	Jammu & Kashmir	4	16	34	0
11	Jharkhand	1	11	0	0
12	Karnataka	5	21	2	1
13	Kerala	6	15	0	1
14	Madhya Pradesh	9	25	0	0
15	Maharashtra	6	35	1	0
16	Manipur	2	5	0	0
17	Meghalaya	2	3	0	0
18	Mizoram	2	7	0	0
19	Nagaland	1	3	0	0
20	Orissa	2	18	0	0
21	Punjab	0	11	0	2
22	Rajasthan	5	23	0	0
23	Sikkim	1	7	0	0
24	Tamil Nadu	5	21	1	0
25	Tripura	2	5	0	0
26	Uttar Pradesh	1	23	0	0
27	Uttarakhand	6	6	2	0
28	West Bengal	5	15	0	0
29	Andaman and Nicobar	9	96	0	0
30	Chandigarh	0	2	0	0
31	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0	1	0	0
32	Lakshadweep	0	1	0	0
33	Daman & Diu	0	1	0	0
34	Delhi	0	2	0	0
35	Pondicherry	0	0	0	0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>7</b>

Source: <http://moef.nic.in>, 15/09/11

## PERSPECTIVE

Environment in the Marathi Press  
Notes from a young freelance journalist

Working with a regional newspaper or news channel in Maharashtra reminds one constantly of the general indifference of the Marathi media to environmental issues. Unless there has been a violent incident or, worse, casualties, environmental issues are ignored. Even when there is some coverage it is generally about incidents; issues hardly ever get discussed, debated or analysed. The Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant issue became a headline only after the Fukushima disaster, and the focus has stayed on nuclear safety. Little, if any, coverage has been given to the fact that people of Madban have been actively opposing the project in order to safeguard the biodiversity of their region and their traditional livelihoods that depend on it!

The Marathi media does not treat the environment as a separate beat. Of the five to six big newspapers in Maharashtra, not one has a special correspondent to cover environmental issues. Often, some general reporter or sub-editor with a personal interest in the environment tries to write about these, but can do so only after fulfilling the routine duties. On the other hand, when an environment-related press-conference is announced, the story is usually assigned to any general reporter available after all the routine stories have been assigned. Unless that reporter happens to be interested in or aware of the gravity of the issue, the coverage turns out to be a single-column news item, much of it 'copy-pasted' from the press-release!

It is a popular notion that Marathi publications lack the resources to hire a full-

time environment-reporter. In my opinion, however, it is the indifference towards environmental issues that is the reason, not resources. After all, most of these publications have at least four to five political reporters, a few more to cover municipal affairs, and health, entertainment and general reporters, besides.

For the Marathi dailies, priorities are regional political issues and those that the common masses relate to or feel entertained by. It is necessary, therefore, that the relation between environmental issues and politics, on the one hand, and the everyday lives of the common masses, on the other, are pointed out and explained. We need environmentally-sensitive political reporters who can make the connections and media-friendly politicians, like Mr. Jairam Ramesh, who can draw media, and therefore, public attention to the environment.

There is a diametrically opposite side to the story as well. The Marathi press does have a lot of space for environmental stories, but only if the contributor is patient and willing to wait and, importantly, doesn't insist on getting paid for the same!

- **Reshma Jathar** is a Mumbai based freelancer who writes about the environment for the Marathi press. She also assists in the editing of the Protected Area Update.  
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