

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XVII No. 6

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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

A rich and diverse menu

It is only a subjective assessment, but one can say with confidence that the *PA Update* this time has one of the most richly diverse set of stories that have appeared within the covers of one single issue of this bimonthly. The issue covers a period of about three months prior to its publication and yet one sees the range and diversity of subjects that wildlife conservation in India deals with. Many of these issues have been regularly covered in earlier editions of the *PA Update*, but what is striking this time is so many of them coming together in the way they have.

There are stories from areas that have never been reported on before such as the Tillongchang Wildlife Sanctuary in the Nicobar Islands and the Sudhmahadev Conservation Reserve in J&K. The last few weeks have, for example, also seen the death of one elephant calf each in a train accident (again!) in Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and in a road accident in Bandipur National Park (NP). While the Karnataka Forest Department is planning more speed breakers on roads inside the park to prevent speeding vehicles, the Kerala government and the Centre are seeking to revoke the ban on night traffic in Bandipur imposed to prevent, precisely these kinds of accidents. In Andhra Pradesh, meanwhile, we have a situation where an NGO is opposing road construction inside Kambalakonda WLS for fear that it will increase encroachments inside.

The plight of field staff in protected areas is seen again in Assam and also in the Nagarhole NP. Home Guards who are the frontline of protection have been deserting their posts in Assam in huge numbers because they've not been paid salaries for more than seven months. In Nagarhole they've been forced to threaten a strike because they are being intimidated by police and their kin because they are merely performing their duties. In Gujarat the Maldhari community is protesting moves to evict them from the Gir NP, while in a significant first in the Biligiri Rangan Temple WLS in Karnataka the Soliga tribals have been granted community forest rights under the

provision of the Forest Rights Act. There is what might otherwise be called the quirky kind of news too – the domestic elephant shelter in Mahananda WLS not being safe from raids by wild elephants, villagers in the vicinity of Bornadi WLS in Assam performing Ganesh puja to keep the wild pachyderms at bay and Kaziranga NP being opened to tourists four days before schedule because of pressure from the tourists.

There is good news as well – a reported increase in the population of the hangul in Kashmir and two encouraging results from surveys in Kerala – one on birds, the other on frogs. The most unexpectedly pleasant report however is one from Sikkim – GIS mapping done by the FD including that for PAs and wildlife conservation played a key role in helping helicopters of Army and other missions to locate, reach and then provide relief to remote communities that had been cut off due to the devastating earthquake of September 18, earlier this year.

All of this is evidence, if any is needed indeed, that there is much much more to conservation in India than the obsession with certain charismatic species or certain issues, be it poaching or relocation of communities from protected areas. These too are important but if we are not aware of and don't deal with this complexity and diversity, the solutions will never be found. There are also huge opportunities here for researchers, academics, policy makers, the media, and all the others who care about the fate of India's wild wealth.



NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Navy proposes missile testing on Tillongchang WLS; NBWL to inspect site

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has expressed concern over the proposal of the Indian Navy to use Tillongchang Island Wildlife Sanctuary in the Nicobars as a missile testing site. The Navy has sought permission for the construction of a temporary missile testing to be used as a target for testing the accuracy of missiles fired from submarines. The testing is proposed to happen once every year for seven to ten days.

The island is of cultural importance to the Nicobari community, is part of the Nicobari Tribal Reserve and is also a wildlife sanctuary and an Important Bird Area. It is home to the endangered and endemic Nicobari Megapode and it is feared that the testing will impact the bird whose population has been threatened in the islands for various reasons including the submergence of its habitat in the earthquake and tsunami of 2004.

The Standing Committee of National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) at a recent meeting chaired by environment minister, Ms Jayanthi Natarajan examined the proposal and has ordered a site inspection to be undertaken by a two-member panel.

Source: 'Navy's Andaman & Nicobar missile test plan hits green hurdle', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 08/11/11.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, A&N Islands, Van Sadan, Haddo, Port Blair – 744102. Tel: 03192- 233321. Fax: 230113. Email: dirforest@and.nic.in

ANDHRA PRADESH

Opposition to road inside Kambalakonda

The Forum for Better Visakha (FBV) has asked for the scrapping of a plan to lay a road linking Sambhuvanipalem and Dabbanda villages in the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS).

A statement issued by FBV says that the laying of any road within the sanctuary would be in violation of the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act and it would lead to the opening of the floodgates to encroachments within the sanctuary. Already, it noted, several private real estate agents have acquired lands illegally within the WLS.

Source: 'Road-laying in wildlife sanctuary opposed', *The Hindu*, 07/10/11.

Contact: **DFO**, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 0891-2563784

More than 90 tigers at Nagarjuna Sagar Srisailem TR

Forest officials have estimated a population of at least 70 adults and 20 cubs in the Nagarjuna Sagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR). The new camera traps with motion and infrared sensors have helped arrive at this figure in the 3,568 sq km TR.

This is the first time the animals have been photographed, giving an idea of each individual, number of animals, and the respective areas in which the tigers are moving. 20% of the tigers photographed were cubs with mothers, and there was proof that the animals were also venturing into the Gundla Brahmeswara Wildlife Sanctuary. Recently a female with two cubs was snapped close to a road open for traffic on the sanctuary's periphery, and a male was seen near a village as well.

Source: Sreenivas Janyala, 'Biggest tiger reserve now bigger: 90 cats', *Indian Express*, 22/09/11.

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

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

NBWL sub-committee to study impact of Demwe Lower on Kamlang WLS

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife has put on hold the 1750 MW Demwe Lower project in the Lohit

district of Arunachal Pradesh. The decision was taken in a meeting of the NBWL on October 14.

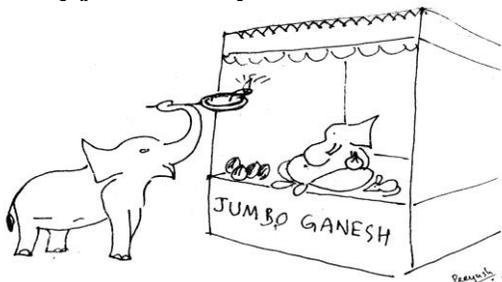
The 1,750 MW project is being executed jointly by Athena Demwe Power Ltd, India-based Athena Energy Ventures Pvt Ltd, and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh. The dam site is about 8.5 kms from the sanctuary while the reservoir is only about 50 metres from the boundary. It is estimated that 43,000 trees are to be chopped near the sanctuary for the project. The project had received environmental clearance in February last year. The forest clearance for the project is, however, pending. The forest advisory committee of the environment ministry had referred the project to NBWL last year.

The project will also impact at least two downstream Important Bird Areas due to drastic flow pattern alterations – *Chapories* of the Lohit river in Arunachal Pradesh and Dibru-Saikhowa National Park in Assam. A two member team comprising Dr. Asad Rahmani, Director of the Bombay Natural History Society and Pratap Singh, CCF (Wildlife) of Arunachal Pradesh, will visit the site before a final decision is taken.

Source: Minutes of the 23rd meeting of the NBWL held on October 14, 2011. MoEF website Kumar Sambhav Shrivastava. 'Demwe hydroelectric project put on hold', Down to Earth, 05/11/11.

ASSAM

Villagers in Khalingduar Reserve Forest, adjoining Barnadi WLS perform Ganesh Puja to keep jumbos at bay



Villagers living in the fringe areas of Khalingduar Reserve Forest in Udalguri adjoining the Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary and borders Bhutan on the Brahmaputra north bank recently organized a puja to appease the elephant god, Ganesha, for relief from the terror unleashed by elephants in the area.

It is believed that that large scale deforestation including for tea estates in this region in the last few years had led to the escalation of human-elephant conflict here. In 2011 alone, five elephants and seven people were killed in the conflict. The worst month was July when four elephants and five villagers were killed. The jumbo deaths were mostly due to electrocution and poisoning.

Source: 'Ganesh puja to keep jumbos at bay', *The Times of India*, 03/10/11.

Contact: **I/c Barnadi WLS**, Divisional Forest Officer, Mangaldoi, Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Dist. Darrang – 784125, Assam. Tel: 0914-22065 (O), 22349 (R)

Dam projects to impact Dibru-Saikhowa NP; public hearing postponed indefinitely

Public hearings scheduled for the 2700 MW Lower Siang project and 3000 MW Dibang Multipurpose project in Arunachal Pradesh in October 2011 have been postponed until further notice. As part of the environment impact assessment (EIA) studies of the Lower Siang project, project authorities were asked to evaluate the cumulative downstream impacts due to simultaneous operation of hydropower projects proposed in the lower reaches of the Siang, Dibang and Lohit rivers in Arunachal on the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park in downstream Assam which is located at the tri-junction of these three rivers.

It has been estimated that a relatively uniform flow of approximately 1920 cubic metres per second (cumecs) in the month of January, will drastically fluctuate between 663 cumecs and 7610 cumecs on a daily basis depending on power generation patterns. This will cause unnatural three to four metre (10 – 13 feet) high tide-low tide-like impacts in various parts of the park on a daily basis, seriously impacting the winter ecology.

Source: EIA report of the 2700 MW Lower Siang project, http://apspcb.org.in/lower_siang_hydro_electric_project.htm; 'Are Big Dams Leaving India High and Dry?' *Sanctuary Asia*, April 2011.

Home guards, casual workers protecting PAs not paid for seven months; quitting posts

News reports published in the last week of September noted that home guards and casual workers responsible for protection of protected areas in the state were leaving because they had not been paid for nearly seven months. PAs that were affected included the Kaziranga, Rajiv Gandhi (Orang), Dibru Saikhowa, and Nameri National Parks and the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary. There was no clarity on the exact number of those who had left.

The festive season is particularly important because poachers are known to make additional efforts to kill rhinos to make quick money. A number of incidents of exchange of fire between poachers and forest staff were reported in the earlier part of September. Park managers said that they had reported the situation to their seniors but money had still not been released.

In Orang, for instance, at least 25 Home Guards did not join duty after they went on leave during Durga Puja. The total forest security strength here is of about 200 persons. They were engaged in 40 different anti-poaching camps within the forest along with the permanent and casual forest staff. 40 casual staff of the national park had also not been paid their dues. In the case of the 80 permanent staff at the park, staff members alleged that the monthly amount of Rs. 500 against ration had also not been released.

A home guard gets Rs 4,500 per month, while a casual worker get Rs 114 per day.

Source: Pullock Dutta. 'Guards leave Assam parks - Home guards, casual workers quit because of non-payment of 7 months' salary', *The Telegraph*, 29/09/11
'Wildlife in Orang National Park under threat', *The Assam Tribune*, 22/10/11.
'Kaziranga bows to tourist pressure, opens early', *The Telegraph*, 29/10/11.

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

Kaziranga NP opens to tourists four days before schedule

The Kaziranga National Park was opened for tourism on October 28, four days ahead of schedule. The main reason was the pressure from tourists. The Jeep Safari Association had also requested the authorities to open the park early this year, as tourists had begun visiting since Durga Puja itself.

The park was opened by State Forest, Mr Minister Rockybul Hussain. 12 elephants and about 20 jeeps ferried tourists to the park on the first day in the Kohora Range. Elephant rides at the other ranges of the park are to begin shortly. 16 elephants would be introduced at the Bagori range while three elephants would be engaged at Burapahar range to ferry tourists.

The opening of the park was however held amidst protests by home guards who have not received their salary for the past several months (see preceding story). Some of them gathered at Mihimukh in the Kohora range and shouted slogans demanding their salaries. The minister is reported to have assured them that the salaries would be paid within a week.

Source: 'Plea to open park before November 1', *The Telegraph*, 20/10/11

'Kaziranga bows to tourist pressure, opens early', *The Telegraph*, 29/10/11.

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

Two Malinois (Belgian shepherd dogs) for anti-poaching operations at Kaziranga NP



Two dogs of the Malinois breed, also known as the Belgian Shepherd, are being imported from Slovakia for anti-poaching operations in the Kaziranga National Park. Jorba, a male, has been financed by the London-based David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and brought to Assam by Aaranyak, while Czarina, the

female, has been financed by Kaushik Barua, a wildlife lover. The breed is famed for its ability to sniff out explosives and enemy warriors, and have been successfully deployed as military dogs by the US and European forces. This is the first time they will be used in wildlife crime detection in Asia.

A Malinois is said to have been part of the US Navy Seals team that raided Osama Bin Laden's residence in Abbottabad, Pakistan and killed him. There are reports that the breed will also be deployed by the security forces in the Maoist zones of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

Source: Roopak Goswami. 'Osama raid dogs to hunt poachers', *The Telegraph*, 14/10/11.

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

GOA

Centre asks Goa to cancel nod to mines within 10 km radius of PAs

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has asked the Goa government to cancel clearances given to 19 private mining firms to operate within the 10-km eco-sensitive zones around wildlife sanctuaries. The SC had in 2006 ruled that mines need the approval of the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) to operate within a 10 km radius from the boundary of PAs.

The mines that have been awarded clearances would have to re-apply for their permissions and the NBWL would take a fresh decision in the matter.

The Goa government has, in the last four years, granted clearances in the buffer zone even to mines that do not have the board's nod. It has defended its decision by saying the state advocate general's opinion has been that clearance from state forest officials is sufficient. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVII. No. 1 and Vol. XV, No. 3)

Source: 'Centre asks Goa to cancel nod to mines in eco-zones', www.hindustantimes.com, 21/10/11.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Wildlife Wing Junta House, Panaji 403001, Goa. Tel: 0832 – 224747 / 223508 / 278891. Fax: 224747.

GUJARAT

Maldharis threaten agitation against eviction from Gir

The Maldhari community in Sasan Gir has threatened to launch an agitation if the state government tried to evict them forcibly. At a meeting held recently, the community members resolved to stage dharnas and fast-unto-death if officials don't reverse their stand. The members, who met under the banner of the NGO SETU, expressed anguish over forest officials warning them to move out of Gangadiya and Alavani nesses or face action.

Forest officials have said that 30 families of Gangadiya and Alavani nesses had been staying in the forest illegally and would have to move. A directive has also been issued to contractors not to collect milk from the Maldharis from these two particular nesses.

The community members say that they have been living here for many decades and that they also have a legal pass given to them as a permanent permit. They have also alleged that officials were harassing other Maldharis in other areas as well and have stopped them from carrying milk out of the forest area. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVII, No. 3 and Vol. XV, No. 6)

Source: 'Maldharis threaten agitation against eviction', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 26/10/11.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh - 362001, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 2631678 Fax: 2631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in

Forest officer transferred for stopping lion shows in Gir; challenges transfer order

Range Forest Officer (RFO) BR Parmar has approached the Gujarat high court challenging his recent transfer from Sasan Gir, allegedly at the behest of the Congress MLA from Talala. Parmar claimed that he was transferred because his action to stop lion shows was not acceptable to the local community. He filed a petition challenging his transfer from Gir to

Rajkot and contended that he was transferred five times in the last two years.

He has argued that he had stopped the lion shows in and around the sanctuary and that he had also taken stern action in poaching cases, which had displeased local people. They had then approached the Talala MLA, Bhagabhai Barad, who allegedly had him shifted to Rajkot.

The forest officer also told the court that the politician was not happy with his posting in Gir. During his earlier posting there in 2008, he had tried to stop various illegal activities in the sanctuary and his actions had infuriated the MLA, who along with his supporters allegedly attacked Parmar. Criminal proceedings are, reportedly, pending in this regard. The court has now ordered Barad to become a respondent to the petition.

Source: 'Forest officer challenges transfer order', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 30/09/11.

'Forester says shunted for his lion care', www.expressindia.com, 30-09-2011.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Sainj power project threatens Great Himalayan NP



Construction work for the 100 MW Sainj Hydropower Project is having an adverse impact on the habitat and wildlife of the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP). Rock crushing for the project is reportedly going on at a distance of just 2.5 km from the core area of the park. More than 2,300 broad-leaf trees have been cut down to make way for a 700 m long, 100 m wide and 24.5 m high dam, while 100 m downstream of the site, over 300 trees have been uprooted by a one km long landslide at Kili Parli that has squeezed the river into a 1 m wide gorge.

The protection walls are also said to have collapsed at the powerhouse site at Matla, the tunnel site at Shamshar and along the two roads leading to the dam site and the surge shaft. Villagers have pointed out that the water table of

this zone and drinking water sources have already been showing signs of deterioration. Over a dozen houses have developed cracks at Shamshar and the Raila road (the NHPC's surge shaft road). Contractors have also been dumping debris into the Sainj river and in its feeder streams which is threatening the trout in the river.

The GHNP Director said that a penalty of Rs 10 lakh had been imposed on the Sainj project and it had been asked to raise proper protection walls. The HPCL DGM has, however, claimed that debris was being dumped on the designated sites and the walls damaged by rain would be repaired soon.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) had approved the Sainj project two years ago. NHPC's 520 MW Parbati project, located 15 km downstream of Sainj, had been approved a few years earlier. The Parbati project and three other micro projects are located in the buffer zone of the national park.

Source: Kuldeep Chauhan, 'Power projects spell doom for national park', *The Tribune*, 16/09/11.

Contact: **Director**, Great Himalayan National Park, At Shamshi, Dist. Kullu – 175125, Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 01902-265320. Fax: 265320. Email: dirghnp@vsnl.com

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Hangul population on the rise

A recently conducted census has revealed that the population of the endangered Hangul has gone up to 218 from 172 in the last count. The population of the Hangul in the Dachigam National Park has been monitored by the Jammu & Kashmir Wildlife Protection Department in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India since 2004.

The population of Hangul was 197 in 2004, 127 in 2008, and 172 in 2009. The latest census that was conducted in areas of Dachigam NP spanning Braine, Khanmoh, Chesmashahi, Wangath, Khrew, the Deer Conservation Reserves, Surfrao, Akhal,

Mammar and Najwan shows that the number has now gone up to 218.

The J&K government is also planning to start a captive breeding program, and conservation breeding centers for the Hangul are being set up at Shikargah-Tral and Darwudri-Mamar.

In another development, the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI), an infantry regiment of the Indian Army mostly consisting of volunteers from the state of Jammu & Kashmir, has decided to collaborate with the forest department and has started a 'Save Hangul Campaign'.

Source: Kavita Suri, 'Army to save Hangul, the Kashmir stags',
<http://www.kashmirnewslive.com>

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

Wildlife awareness camp conducted near Sudhmahadev Conservation Reserve

The Department of Wildlife Protection, Jammu, organized an education and awareness camp at village Basht near the Sudhmahadev Conservation Reserve on September 19. Prominent citizens, teachers and students of government and private schools participated in the programme.

Wildlife officials and the school headmaster addressed the participants. Issues discussed included causes of human-wild animal conflicts occurring near forests and protected areas, unplanned development, biotic interference and change in land use pattern. The speakers also suggested ways to avert conflict situations and save human life as well as protect wildlife.

A two minutes' silence was observed in the memory of Aman Dubey, a class 4 student who was killed by a leopard last year at Basht.

A similar camp was also held at the Government Higher Secondary School, Sudhmahadev.

Source: 'Man-animal conflict camps held at Basht, Sudhmahadev', *Daily Excelsior*, 22/09/11.

JHARKHAND

Elephant bridges to be built over canals in Dalma WLS



The Jharkhand Water Resources Department has proposed the construction of elephant bridges in 12 places over canals in the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary. The points where these passages are to be constructed include Patachainpur, Kanderbera, Ramgarh, Patipani, Lylum I and II. The canals are part of the Subernarekha Multipurpose Project (SMP) and the bridge construction project is estimated to cost Rs 40 crore. The central government will bear 90 per cent of the total expenditure while the remaining 10 per cent will be provided by the state.

The project has been undertaken to deal with the problem of human-elephant conflict on account of the migration of the Dalma elephants into Bengal and back (PA Updates Vol. XVI, No. 3; Vol. XVI, No. 1; Vol. XIV, Nos. 4 & 2; Vol. XI, No. 6 and Nos. 55, 52, 47 & 39). It has been noted that the Subernarekha canals were not allowing for the elephants to follow their regular migration routes. Consequently, they were venturing into densely inhabited areas in neighbouring West Bengal leading to an escalation in conflict.

Work has already begun at Patachainpur and Kedarbera and all the construction is expected to be over in the current fiscal year.

Source: Sudhir Kumar Mishra. 'Rs 40 cr way to check elephant migration', *The Telegraph*, 01/10/11.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Dalma WLS Wildlife Division, Ranchi, Jharkhand. Tel: 0651-2301861

Mushroom cultivation project initiated near Hazaribagh WLS

In an effort to provide alternative livelihoods and reduce poaching and deforestation, a mushroom cultivation scheme has been initiated near the Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary. The first-of-its-kind project in the state has been sanctioned by the Jharkhand Biodiversity Board. It has been devised by the India-UNDP biodiversity project and a local NGO, Neo Human Foundation, has selected 20 villagers from Lotwa, Sijhuwa and Kaile villages for training in cultivation and marketing of mushrooms.

The total cost of the training project is Rs. 70,000. It is hoped that those who are trained as part of the project would enthruse others to also take up mushroom cultivation. It has been indicated to the participants in the training program that they will be able to earn 4000-5000 rupees per month from growing mushrooms.

Source: Vishvendu Jaipuria. 'Mission mushroom to combat poaching', *The Telegraph*, 10/10/11.

Contact: **DFO**, Hazaribagh, West Division, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand. Tel: 06546-223340/222296
PCCF, Jharkhand, At- Doranda, P.O. Doranda, Ranchi. – 834002. Tel: 0651-2481744. Fax.-2481744.

KARNATAKA

Greater Talacauvery NP opposed as it may displace more than two lakh people

The Mangalore Centre of the Malenadu Joint Action Committee has opposed the proposed Greater Talacauvery National Park as it would displace more than two lakh people. The project proposal is to combine the Brahmagiri (181.5 sq km), Talacauvery (105 sq km), Pushpagiri (102 sq km) Wildlife Sanctuaries, and other protected forests (800 sq km) to create the national park.

It has been estimated that 2.20 lakh people in 120 villages in Karnataka and northern Kerala would be displaced if the proposal comes through. It is feared that over 50,000 people would be displaced in Dakshina Kannada, while the number to be displaced in Kodagu would be about 68,000. Several villages in Chikmagalur,

Hassan, Shimoga, Uttara Kannada, and Udupi districts would also be affected.

A statement issued by the committee said that the promises of rehabilitation cannot be trusted as the people did not enjoy land rights on their present holdings. Also, the tribals who were displaced from the Kudremukh forests had never been rehabilitated properly. It also pointed out that the proposal to have an elephant corridor was ill-conceived. There were dams built in the forest area which were in the elephant corridor and obstructing the movement of pachyderms.

Source: 'Greater Talacauvery project may displace 2.20 lakh people', *The Hindu*, 12/10/11.

Nagarhole guards allege intimidation by kin of senior police official; threaten strike

Forest guards and other staff at the Nagarhole National Park (NP) threatened to go on strike against the growing intimidation and pressure being mounted on them while discharging their duties. The agitation was triggered by an FIR filed against a Range Forest Officer (RFO) at the Beechanahalli police station in H D Kote, allegedly, at the 'behest' of senior police officers. The RFO and a forest guard were booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, which included theft, assault and extortion.

Forest staff, however, claim that they were only doing their duty in warning the son of an Additional Director-General of Police from Kerala, who misbehaved with them at the Balle gate of the park in the last week of September. Despite flashing his father's visiting card he was allowed to proceed only after the completion of all formalities. He was also warned against misbehaving with staff that was discharging their duty. The forest staff had forgotten about the issue until they were summoned to the local police station near Balle and an FIR was filed against them.

Wildlife conservationists too have expressed concerns about the regular assault on forest staff. The pressure on forest guards posted at Nagarhole along the Karnataka-Kerala border was immense because of the tremendous traffic movement and motorists

frequently tending to violate the law. An elephant calf was mowed down by a truck inside the park. About three weeks ago, forest guards came across a group of timber smugglers and the exchange of fire left one of the guards injured. In another incident, an alleged timber smuggler was injured, but this led to an allegation that forest guards were 'trigger-happy' and the local politicians threatening *dharnas* if the guards were not suspended.

Source: 'Nagarhole guards threaten to go on strike', *The Hindu*, 14/10/11.

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

Extension of Bisile Reserve Forest range for creation of elephant corridor meets opposition

The information that the government is taking steps to relocate villagers to set up elephant corridor at Igur and Hongadahalli gram panchayat limits of Sakleshpur taluk of Hassan district has met with the opposition. It has been suggested that the plans to extend the Bisile Reserve Forest range may result in shifting of a few villages that are on the fringes.

Around 23,000 acres of land adjoining Bisile range has been identified for the expansion. A proposal has been mooted for the transfer of the lands from the Revenue Department (RD) to the Forest Department (FD). The villages that will be affected include Arani, Ethalla, Bisile, Hudunuru, Myagadahalli, Honnatlu, Hulugadde, Mavinuru, Nettigallu, Hanchatte, Mankanahalli, Boremane, Kurkmane, Jagata, Kaginahare, Balehalla, Battejumari, and Anegundi. More than 400 families reside in these villages. Though the 23,000 acres of land belongs to the RD, 40 per cent of it is used for agricultural purposes.

Farmers are opposed to the move due to the fear that they may have to relocate. The Deputy Conservator of Forests has, however, said that about 380 farmers possessing agricultural lands are willing to give their lands if given suitable compensation.

Source: 'Ryots oppose elephant corridor', *Deccan Herald*, 11/10/11.

More speed barriers on highways inside Bandipur NP

The Forest Department (FD) has decided to put up additional speed barriers and road bumps on the highways running through the Bandipur National Park (NP). The move comes after an elephant calf was mowed down by a speeding truck inside the park recently. The truck, which was on its way from Wayanad in Kerala to Mysore, hit the elephant calf, aged about one, on NH 212 near Moolehole inside the NP. The driver and the vehicle were traced near Maddur, outside the park, and apprehended by police and forest staff.

Though the speed limit for vehicles within the NP limits is 40 km an hour, it has been found that this is violated by most motorists. The number of cases booked by the mobile patrol teams had increased in the last couple of months and most of them pertain to either speeding or illegally parking vehicles inside the NP.

The Wildlife Conservation Foundation which monitored the traffic movement on the two highways passing through the Bandipur NP (17.5-km stretch of NH 212 connecting Gundlupet with Wayanad and 12.5-km stretch of NH 67 linking Gundlupet with Ooty) has observed that a vehicle passes every 41 seconds and during the peak tourism season the number of vehicles passing through exceeds 4,000 a day. Hence, there is a need to introduce speed barriers or speed breakers at every 100-200 m. Meanwhile, the FD has acquired new vehicles in addition to the four motorcycles to keep tabs on speeding vehicles. (Also see story below on the move to allow night traffic on highways inside Bandipur NP)

Source: 'More road humps on highways bisecting Bandipur park', *The Hindu*, 08/10/11.

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

Move to restore night traffic through Bandipur Tiger Reserve

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is reported to be considering moving court to vacate the ban on night time traffic (*PA Updates* Vol. XVI, Nos. 3 & 2; Vol XV, Nos. 5 & 4; and Vol XIV, No. 6) on the two national highways passing through the Bandipur Tiger Reserve.

About 13 km of national highway (NH) 212 and 20 km of NH 67 that connect Karnataka with neighbouring Kerala pass through the core of the reserve. The Karnataka High Court had banned traffic between 9 pm and 6 am on these stretches in March last year following reports of wild animals being run over by vehicles. According to a study conducted by the Wildlife Conservation Society, at least 220 birds and animals died in road accidents in the reserve between 2004 and 2008. Of these 65% occurred at night.

The court, on the basis of evidence produced by the Karnataka Forest Department (FD), observed that wild animals, including tigers and elephants, are getting regularly killed in road accidents and that sound and light disturbance was driving the animals out of the forests, leading to human-animal conflict. Kerala has been opposing the ban from the time it was implemented.

The MoEF has now asked the Chief Wildlife Warden of Karnataka, to prove that the ban on night traffic on the two roads is 'in public interest as well as wildlife conservation'. It said it might take up the matter with the Supreme Court to restore the night-time traffic.

Source: Kumar Sambhav Shrivastava. 'Centre pitches for Kerala', *Down to Earth*, 01/11/11.

Community forest rights for Soligas in the BRT Wildlife Sanctuary

Community Forest Rights (CFRs) under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers Forest Rights Act (FRA) – 2006 were distributed to 25 Gram sabhas of Soliga tribals in the Biligiri Rangaswamy



Temple Wildlife Sanctuary (BRTWLS). The rights were given on October 2, 2011, by the District Commissioner, Mr. Amar Narayan and the MLA, Mr. C. Puttarangashetty. This is the first case in the country where CFRs have been accepted in a protected area under the provisions of the FRA.

The sanctuary had been declared a tiger reserve in January earlier this year, a move that had been strongly opposed by the Soligas and a section of rights activists and wildlife conservationists. Following the acceptance of the CFRs now, as much as 60% of the reserve, which includes parts of the core area, will be under the management of the Soligas. CFRs in three of the five ranges of the reserve have been accorded and the community is now applying for its extension to the remaining two ranges as well.

The Soligas are also working on a proposal to jointly manage the tiger reserve with the state using their traditional knowledge. They have proposed a three-tier management structure: a hamlet-level forest management committee (deriving its legal backing from FRA), three taluka-level committees and one at the sanctuary level (*PA Updates* Vol. XVII, Nos. 4 & 2).

While the village-level committee will have representation of all adult members of the hamlet, the taluka-and sanctuary-level committees will have representations of village committees, the forest department and civil society groups. The Soligas in consultation with civil society have also proposed that village-level committees should have the power to penalise members who breach the committee-designed rules, but offences of criminal nature would be reported to the forest department or to the police.

Source: Kumar Sambhav S. 'Finally, community forest rights', *Down to Earth*, 31/10/11
Contact: **DCF – Wildlife**, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka. Tel: 08226-22059(O), 22156(R)
Nitin Rai, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Royal Enclave, Srirampura, Jakkur Post, Bengaluru 560064, Karnataka. Tel: 080-23635555. Email: nitinrai@atree.org

KERALA

45 frog species sighted in Shendurney WLS

45 frog species, including one that has been newly discovered, were sighted in the Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) during a survey that began in 2008 and ended recently in October. Four of the species have been reported here for the first time. Anil Zacharia, a veterinary surgeon and frog expert led the survey. The areas surveyed included Kattilapara, Rosemala and Kallar and their surrounding areas, Pandimotta, and Rockwood Estate.

The newly discovered specie belongs to the genus *Polypedates*. 38 of the species are endemic to the Western Ghats and 15 regionally endemic to the Agasthyamala biosphere area.

Conservationists have suggested that tourism initiatives, construction of roads, and rearing of livestock in private holdings within the WLS should be controlled in light of the rich frog diversity found here. Forest officials too have said that tourism activity in private holdings and the introduction of exotic fish species into the reservoir in the WLS should be curbed.

Source: Ignatius Pereira, 'Shendurney rich in diversity of frogs', *The Hindu*, 12/10/11.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Shendurney Wildlife Division, P.O. Thenmala, Kerala. Tel: 0475-2344600.

Ornithological survey of Malabar records 341 species

The Forest Department of Kerala recently completed an ornithological survey of the Malabar region recording 341 species of birds. The survey was conducted by a team of five ornithologists led by C. Sasikumar, the Chief Investigator, and his four research associates, C.K. Vishnudas, S. Raju, P.A. Vinayan and V.A. Shebin. The survey was conducted over a period of one year starting November 2010.

The locations covered in North Kerala, which included Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasargode districts. The forest areas studied were the Silent Valley National Park, Mannarkad Forest Division, Nilambur North and South divisions, the Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), the Wayanad WLS,

Aralam WLS and their neighbouring areas as well as the reserve forests of Kasargode district and the wetlands of North Malabar. This included six habitat types – tropical evergreen forests, tropical moist deciduous forests, tropical dry deciduous forests, Shola grassland, low elevation evergreen grassland and wetland areas.

The 341 species of birds surveyed comes to 73.27 per cent of all bird species recorded in Kerala. The survey could successfully estimate the density of 48 species of birds. The Yellow-browed Bulbul showed with the highest density (122.4 birds/sq km) followed by the Small Sunbird with a density of 109.7.

22 of the 341 species recorded belong to the globally-threatened category as notified by IUCN. Of these 17 are residents and nine are endemic to the Western Ghats. 15 species of birds were found to be abundant in the region, of which two are migrants, and one endemic. 15 species were found to be rare with only one sighting for each. Syke's Warbler, Indian Grey Hornbill, Jerdon's Bush Lark and Sirkeer Malkoha were some of the rare birds recorded.

Source: E. M. Manoj, 'Malabar ornithological survey: Kerala sets new benchmark', *The Hindu*, 31/10/11.

10 year, Rs. 58.8 crore tiger conservation plan for Parambikulam TR

The Kerala Forest Department has submitted a 10-year Tiger Conservation Plan (2011-12 to 2020-21) for the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve (TR). to the National Tiger Conservation Authority. The budget for the conservation plan is estimated at Rs. 58.8 crore. It has been prepared by the Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Mr Om Prakash Kaler. Under the plan, the core area of the TR will be strictly protected from all kinds of threats such as poaching, fire, biotic pressures, and tourism. The major threats the TR faces are poaching, illegal entry points, ganja cultivation, and sandalwood smuggling.

The TR has an area of 4,705 sq km (3,225.73 sq km in Kerala and 1,479.29 sq km in Tamil Nadu). The core area in Kerala

covers an area of 390.89 sq km, the buffer zone is 252.77 sq km. The adjacent areas cover an area of 2,582 sq km.

A recent survey by the Kerala Forest Research Institute has found that the area supports an estimated 1,400 species of angiosperms. So far, 1,320 species of flowering plants belonging to 680 genera and 133 families have been identified. These include about 70 species of orchid. The Parambikulam TR supports one of the highest densities of gaur in South India and the Nilgiri tahr is also found here in the high altitude rocky hills and grasslands. A healthy population of 250-300 endangered lion-tailed macaques among other primates and arboreal animals is also found here as is the freshwater fish, the mahseer.

Source: G. Prabhakaran, '10-year conservation plan for Parambikulam tiger reserve', *The Hindu*, 29/09/11.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Parambikulam Division, P.O. Thunacadavu (Via) Pollachi Dist. Palakkad-678661. Tel: 04253-267233
Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471 2321610. Fax - 0471 2320554. Email: cww@forest.kerala.gov.in

MADHYA PRADESH

25 tribal women to be trained as wildlife guides in Kanha TR

The Madhya Pradesh Government has decided to recruit 25 tribal women as professional guides after training them to guide tourists visiting the Kanha Tiger Reserve. The state's Eco-tourism Development Board will train the women who have passed class XII. In the first phase of the training a total of 13 eligible candidates would be selected. Experts will guide these candidates on topics like wildlife science, wildlife management, communication skills, hospitality, and on several aspects of guiding tourists. If successful, the plan may be extended to other protected areas in the state.

The board regularly holds training sessions for tourist guides across the state and a total of 342 guides have been trained so far. A Guide Training Manual, *Jungle ki Kahani Guide ki Zubani* has also been prepared by the board, elaborating essentials of communication skills

needed in guide services. The board is identifying local people near parks who are able to communicate with the tourists and who can be trained as skilled guides or naturalists. It has provided uniforms, caps, shoes, bags and other such items for guides in Panna, Kanha, Satpura, Bandhavgarh and Pench Tiger Reserves.

Source: 'Eco-tourism: 25 tribal women to be recruited as guides in Kanha', *The Pioneer*, 16/09/11.

MAHARASHTRA

Farmers, villagers oppose Sahyadri TR

Thousands of farmers have been opposing the Sahyadri Tiger Project as they fear it would hamper developmental activities. A protest meeting was recently held at Taldeo village, about 15 kms from Mahabaleshwar.

Villagers raised a number of questions related to the reserve. It was noted that the people of Patan, Javali and Mahabaleshwar would be most affected as their primary sources of income are farming and tourism and that these activities would be stopped due to the notification of the tiger reserve. The Mahabaleshwar Taluka Sarpanch Sanghatana pointed out that several restrictions have already been imposed and villagers were having trouble getting permissions to even construct a house. It also pointed out that the government has still not relocated villagers displaced by the Koyna dam and that people were afraid that they would face a similar future.

The Sahyadri Tiger Project was initiated in 2010 by combining the Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary and the Chandoli Wildlife Sanctuaries. The reserve is spread over four districts and 83 villages are said to be within its boundaries. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVII, No. 1 and Vol. XIV, No. 2)

Source: 'Protests In Mahabaleshwar', *The Times of India*, 03/10/11.

MANIPUR

Climate change threatens Keibul Lamjao National Park



Keibul Lamjao National Park (NP) in Loktak Lake is said to be extremely vulnerable on account of rising temperature due to climate change. The concerns were raised at a recent workshop - 'Impact of climate change on biodiversity management in Northeastern India with particular reference to Manipur'.

Dr NC Talukdar, Director of Institute of Bio-resources and Sustainable Development (IBSD), Imphal, pointed out that the rise in temperature might increase decomposition rate of the Phumdi materials of the lake and it will result in reducing their thickness and subsequent dying of the lake.

Phumdis are a heterogeneous mass of soil, vegetation and organic matter in different grades of decay which plays a significant role in the ecological processes of the 286 sq km Loktak Lake. These floating masses of matter make the ecosystem unique and they are the only habitat of the Sangai, the Brow Antlered Deer. The KLNP is home to about 180 Sangai deer as per the 2003 census.

Source: Sobhapati Samom, 'Sangai deer vulnerable to extinction', *The Assam Tribune*, 10/10/11.

Contact: **DCF**, Keibul Lamjao NP, Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795 001

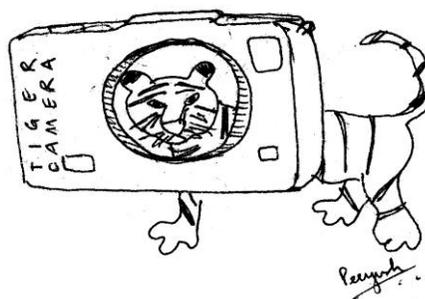
MEGHALAYA

Meghalaya claims 47 tigers in state: seeks detailed tiger survey

The Meghalaya Forest Department (FD) has requested the Central Government to direct the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, to conduct a detailed survey to ascertain the current tiger population in the state. According to the

Meghalaya Additional PCCF and Chief Wildlife Warden, the State has 47 tigers. The number is based on the surveys conducted employing the conventional method in the past three years.

The number of tigers in Meghalaya was 33 in 1993 while in 1998 it went up to 69. In 2002 the number was down to 47. The FD has asked that the census should now be conducted via the modern camera trapping method. The most recent tiger count by the WII put the total population in the country at 1411. Only the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram from the North-East were included in it.



Source: 'Govt seeks detailed tiger survey in State', *The Shillong Times*, 10/10/11. '47 tigers in M'laya', *The Sentinel*, 29/10/11.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Government of Meghalaya, Lower Laichumiere, Risa Colony, Shillong - 793 001.

ORISSA

Crocodile attack leads to ban on collection of *nalia* grass from Bhitarkanika NP

Authorities of the Bhitarkanika National Park have reinforced the prohibition on *nalia* grass collection within the national park in view of an increase in crocodiles attacks on grass collectors. *Nalia* grass *Myriostachya wightiana*, is found in abundance in the NP and is used for making baskets, toys, mattresses and ropes. It provides employment to hundreds of local people.

A ban on grass collection has been imposed here in 1988 when Bhitarkanika was declared a national park but the authorities have often relaxed the rules to help local people who earn their livelihood by using the

grass. A decision to impose the ban strictly was taken after an incident in the last week of October when a crocodile attacked two girls who had entered the park for grass collection.

A poster-and-leaflets campaign was initiated to inform the surrounding villages of the ban. Active help and cooperation of panchayati raj institutions (PRI) has also been sought for the same. PRI members have also been requested to inform the forest officials when straying crocodiles are spotted in water bodies.



Source: Manoj Kar. 'Park prohibits grass collectors', *The Telegraph*, 25/10/11.

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

Housing projects coming up adjacent to Chandaka WLS

Big housing projects, numbering more than 15, are proposed or coming up adjacent to forests of the Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary located close to Bhubaneswar. With two big multi-storied apartment blocks and many housing complexes coming up in Gothapatana, Gangapada, Andharua, Sundarpur, Kantabada and Katini, an estimated 6,000-7,000 apartments are being constructed around the sanctuary.

Concern has been expressed by wildlifers and environmentalists over the impact this development will have on the forests and wildlife of the sanctuary as also the groundwater in the area. This area has also seen extensive human-elephant conflict on account of the proximity to inhabited areas besides the degradation of the forest. It has also been noted that a Supreme Court order creating an eco-sensitive zone within a 10 km radius of a protected area was being violated.

Wildlife officials have however said that they had taken steps to create a green zone around the PA by carrying out extensive tree plantation.

Other officials noted that the construction activity was on private land and the pressure of increased urbanization meant that these developments could not be restricted.

Source: Bibhuti Barik. 'Brick-by-brick blow to Chandaka sanctuary', *The Telegraph*, 08/10/11.

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

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

RAJASTHAN

FD to train Sariska TR villagers in wildlife protection

The Rajasthan Forest Department (FD), in a move to safeguard wildlife, will form protection groups comprising villagers living in and around the forests of the Sariska Tiger Reserve.

The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Delhi, will train villagers about various legal, theoretical and practical aspects of protecting the wild animals. The WCCB had given out a call for the villagers interested in being a part of this scheme and those interested were asked to fill up the relevant forms in the FD before September 20.

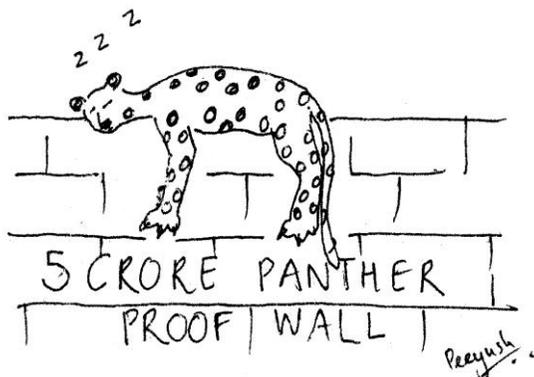
The need for such a force was felt after the relocation of tigers in Sariska. When tigers were first wiped out of the forests in 2005, the locals were allegedly involved in poaching. At the time of death of the relocated male tiger ST-1, too, people living within the sanctuary were supposedly responsible.

The FD has now decided to educate and train the locals to oppose such illegal activities rather than becoming catalysts. A forest official is reported to have said that intelligence was at fault both the times, and that the training of local villagers could help minimize intelligence lapses.

Source: 'First-ever training at Sariska for wildlife protection force', *The Times of India*, 14/09/11.

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

Rs 5 crore, five year 'Project Panther' adjoining Kumbhalgarh WLS



The Rajasthan State Forest Department has proposed a 'Project Panther', in an area covering about 600 hectares on the periphery of the Kumbhalgarh Sanctuary in Pali district. The Rs. 5 crore, five-year plan is being proposed in the context of a good population of about 40-45 leopards here and the fact that the animals often enter villages in search of food, leading to conflict.

Work on the project would begin after the sanction of the first installment of Rs 50 lakh. The FD plans to build walls in the area so that people do not come in to graze their cattle. The FD also wants to ensure that water bodies and wells have high embankments built around them, so that animals do not fall into them.

Source: 'Project panther in state soon', *The Times of India*, 09/09/11.

Contact: **I/c Kumbhalgarh WLS**, Dist. Pali, Rajasthan. Tel: 0294-2421361(O), 2421361(R). Fax: 2523076

Water from Ajan Bund released for Keoladeo National Park

Some 15 million cubic feet of water from the Ajan Bund was released for the Keoladeo National Park in the month of September. This resulted in frenzied nest building activities by nearly 550 Painted stork pairs on the acacia trees standing in *Protected Area Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6 17

the shallow waters in D-Block of the park. The availability of water and food that it provided also resulted in increased activity for a number of other nesting birds that includes the Openbilled stork, Large egret, Grey heron, Night heron, Indian shag, ibis, cormorant and darter.

The release of water from Ajan Bund was partly in response to a sit-in agitation by the park's bird guides and rickshaw-pullers demanding release of water to the park. The agitation was also supported by the scion of the former ruling family of Bharatpur, Vishvendra Singh.

It has been noted however that this water will not be enough, particularly for the ensuing winter season when large numbers of migratory waterfowl visit the park's wetlands. There are at least a couple of different ongoing projects that are being proposed/executed to ensure that the national park receives water regularly in a bid to restore it to its former glory (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVII. No. 4; Vol XV, No. 2; Vol XIV, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol XIII, Nos. 6 & 1; and Nos. 54, 53, 50, 43, 40 & 39)

Source: 'Birds make merry as water reaches Bharatpur Park' *The Hindu*, 03/10/11.

Contact: **Director, Keoladeo Ghana NP**, Forest Department, Bharatpur- 321 001 Rajasthan. Tel: 05644-22777(O), 22824(R). Fax: 05644-22864
CWLW Government of Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, Jaipur – 302005, Rajasthan. Tel: 0141-2380832 / 2540531. Fax: 2380496/ 2380832.

SIKKIM

FD's GPS mappings helped pilots in earthquake relief in Dzongu

GPS technology used by the Sikkim Forest Department (FD) to map wildlife areas is said to have helped pilots with the much-needed coordinates to carry out relief operations in the almost inaccessible Dzongu in the aftermath of the September 18 earthquake that hit Sikkim.

More than a dozen villages scattered and hidden amidst dense forests of Dzongu in

North Sikkim, the worst hit in the quake, had been cut off from the rest of the state because of the innumerable landslides that followed. A remote destination, the protected Lepcha reserve of Dzongu had few landmarks to identify each village. Most of the hamlets in Dzongu consist of only a dozen houses.

Small hamlets like those of Bey in Upper Dzongu; Sakyong and Pentong which are adjacent to the Khanchenjunga Biosphere Reserve and Tholung monastery could be reached only with the help of co-ordinates provided by the FD. The co-ordinates were provided to both the Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation and the Army that was involved in the relief efforts.

The forest department had procured GPS equipment and technology through the centrally sponsored Integrated Forest Protection Scheme. Forest staff were sent for training to the Forest Survey of India, Dehradun, and a select lot were also sent on an exposure trip to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu. The technology has been used, over the years, to map out the reserve forests and protected areas of the state. Villages on the fringes of reserve forests were also marked during the process.

Co-ordinates provided by the forest department also enabled the central teams of experts who had come to assess the damage to land in Nampridkhang, the major gateway to Dzongu. From there, the central team made its way to Lingzya by road. Another central assessment team was dropped at Sakyong with the help of a chopper.

Source: Bijoy Gurung. 'How they tracked Dzongu after quake – Forest dept's GPS mappings came to rescue of pilots without coordinates' *The Telegraph*, 15/10/11.

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

TAMIL NADU

Sathyamangalam WLS expanded to 1410 sq kms

The Tamil Nadu Government recently expanded the Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) to

an area of about 1410 sq kms. This was done by adding 887 sq kms in seven reserve forests of the Sathyamangalam forest division to the existing WLS.

The largest chunks of the additional area are from Guthiyalathur (487 sq kms) and Talamalai reserve forests (320 sq kms). According to the notification, these seven reserve forests, including the Nilgiri Eastern Slopes in Sathyamangalam and Gobichettipalayam taluks in Erode district were being declared a sanctuary due to their ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphologic, natural and zoological significance and for the purpose of protecting, propagating and developing wildlife and its environment.

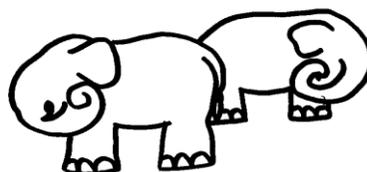
Source: B. Aravind Kumar, 'Sathyamangalam wildlife sanctuary expanded to 1.41 lakh hectares', *The Hindu*, 27/09/11.

WEST BENGAL

Elephant calf killed by a train inside Mahananda WLS

A sub-adult female elephant was knocked down and killed, in early October, by a train between Gulma and Sevoke in the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The elephant, which belonged to a herd of about 35, was dragged for nearly 100 metres by the engine and died on the spot. Wildlife officials rushed to the spot and set off crackers to drive away the herd, after which they removed the carcass and the track cleared. (See Edit *PA Update* Vol XVII, No. 1; Vol. XVI, Nos. 6 & 4. Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVII, No. 4; Vol. XVI Nos. 6, 5, 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: 'Elephant killed by train', *The Hindu*, 05/10/11.



A DECADE AGO
From the Archives
Protected Area Update 34,
December 2001

Train injures another elephant in North Bengal

Another elephant, this time, a calf was badly injured by a speeding train on the Siliguri – Alipurduar meter gauge track in North Bengal. The accident occurred at Mong Pong some 25 kms from Siliguri. The calf was badly injured with a pelvic fracture and there was little chance of its survival. At least five elephants have been killed by speeding trains on this track in the last two years.

The track is presently being converted to broad gauge, a development that is expected to increase the possibilities of such accidents in the future. This is a Rs. 380 crores project that was approved in the railway budget of 1997 and cleared by the Union Cabinet in 1999. This track passes through a number of protected areas in the region including Buxa Tiger Reserve, Gorumara National Park, Mahananda WLS, Mahananda WLS, and the Jaldapara WLS.

The WWF – West Bengal State Office has filed a writ petition in the Kolkota High Court against this gauge conversion (see *PA Updates* 32 & 29). After a recent order of the court, a joint inspection team comprising of Forest, Railway and Project Elephant authorities had visited the entire track a few months ago and formulated some recommendations for the railways to follow. However, according to forest officials none of these recommendations are being followed.

State Forest Minister, Jogesh Burman too has voiced a strong opinion against the gauge conversion project.

Source: Debasis Sarkar. 'Calf elephant hit by train', *The Times of India*, 06/10/2001.

State to get Rs 400 crore loan from JICA for wildlife conservation

The West Bengal Government is set to sign an agreement with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for a Rs 400 crore

long-term soft loan for the conservation of wildlife and biodiversity. The final agreement for the same is expected to be signed by the end of 2011. The eight year project will start in 2012-13. More details of the project are however, not available.

The state forest department has noted that the allocations from the Central Government for wildlife conservation were not sufficient. Only Rs 3.5 crore had been received last year and Rs 2.5 crore were given this year for the development of protected areas. In 2010-11, the state spent Rs 8.61 crore for wildlife conservation while the figure for this year is expected to be Rs 8.1 crore.

Source: 'Japanese loan for wildlife conservation in Bengal', *The Hindu*, 31/10/11.

Honey bees, chilli crackers to scare away elephants in North Bengal



Following an order by the West Bengal Forest Minister, Mr Hiten Barman, top forest officials are proposing different ideas, like beekeeping and setting off chilli crackers, to deal with human-elephant conflict.

A beekeeping pilot project would be initiated in villages close to wildlife sanctuaries in North Bengal to see if it prevents elephant herds from entering those villages. This method is being used in Sri Lanka. The forest officials have written to the concerned authorities in Sri Lanka's forest department, seeking permission to visit areas where they are applying these methods. After a reply from the Sri Lankan government a team of forest officials will visit those areas to learn about its impact on wildlife.

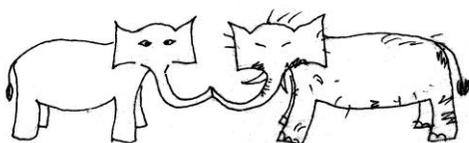
Another method - the chilli crackers - have been experimented with in Raipur in Chattisgarh and forest officials there claimed that this has been successful in keeping elephants away. These crackers contain dry chilli dust and tobacco dust. After the crackers

explode, the dust spreads out through the air and elephants feel uneasy and stay away from the villages.

Source: 'Chilli crackers to scare away elephants', *The Statesman*, 07/10/11.

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

Domestic elephant shelter in Jaldapara not safe from wild elephants



Domestic elephants in the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary are being regularly attacked by wild elephants as the electric fence that protects the animal shelter has been lying defunct for the past six months. The energized fences surrounding the shelter give a mild electric shock and had been constructed 10 years ago.

A part of it was damaged six months ago and as a result the entire system is now dysfunctional. Wild elephants are thereby able to enter. They often try to mate with the females and have also attacked the adult captive males. A number of domestic animals have been injured in wild elephant attacks and one was also killed a couple of years ago in another such incident.

There are 59 kunkis here in 22 sheds in Holong and Jaldapara east and west ranges.

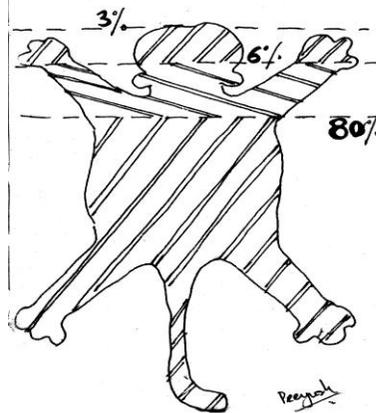
Source: 'Wild threat to pet shelter', *The Telegraph*, 28/10/11.

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Genetics helping to trace tiger poaching

A recent study on tiger genetics by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has provided important information and insights into tiger poaching in the

country. The report — 'Panthera Tigris Genome: Implications on Wildlife Forensics' — discussed at the WII annual seminar recently, used the big cats' gene pattern from the skins and body parts received from various enforcement agencies for the purposes. From the 48 cases studied it was found that 80% of the poached tigers came from the forests of Central India, 16.7% from North India and the remaining 3% from the Sunderbans in West Bengal.



Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee. 'No poaching? Gene study doesn't agree', www.timesofindia.com, 17/10/11.

RBS Awards for wildlife conservation

The RBS Awards for wildlife conservation awarded jointly by the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and the Ranthambhore Foundation were given recently in a ceremony in New Delhi.

The RBS 'Earth Guardian' Award was given to Aaranyak, the NGO that works in the North East; the RBS 'Protect the Tiger' Award was given to Dr. K. Thulsi Rao for his work in the Nagarjunsagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve (TR) in Andhra Pradesh and Daulat Singh of the Ranthambhore TR in Rajasthan; the RBS Inspire Award went to New Delhi Television and the RBS Green Warrior Award was awarded to Nanda Kishore Bhujbal.

Source: Email from Bibhab Talukdar, 01/11/11.

SOUTH ASIA

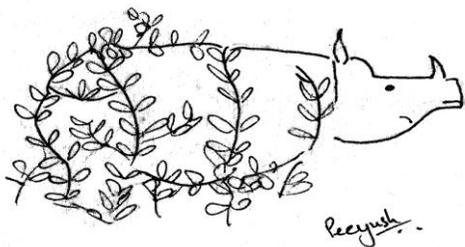
Simultaneous tiger estimation in Manas across Indian, Bhutanese border

A simultaneous tiger estimation exercise in the forests of Manas Tiger Reserve in India and the Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan will be conducted for the first time. The main idea behind the exercise, which will be done through camera-trapping, is to study the movement of tigers in contiguous areas. The exercise will be carried out in collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India, Aaranyak, the Bodoland Territorial Council and the respective forest departments.

Source: 'India Bhutan join hands for tiger project', *The Telegraph*, 25/10/11.

NEPAL

Invasive climber poses threat to Chitwan NP



Invasion of a wild climber *Mikania micrantha*, is posing a serious threat to the rhino habitat in Chitwan National Park (NP). A recent survey by the Zoological Society of London is reported to have found that 50% of the park has already been affected by the invader.

Another NGO, the Save Environment Foundation (SEF) has said that it plans to organise a national workshop and also arrange a visit of Prime Minister of Nepal Baburam Bhattarai to some areas of the national park to see the impact of the weed.

Source: 'Invasion of wild climber poses threat to rhino habitat in CNP', www.nepalnews.com, 19/09/11.

SRI LANKA

UNESCO seeks report on the alleged road through Sinharaja forests

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has called for a report from the Sri Lankan Environment Ministry on allegations that a road is being built through the renowned Sinharaja forests. The Sinharaja forests are a national park. The area was designated a Biosphere Reserve in 1978 and a World Heritage Site in 1988. The Environment Minister Mr Anura Priyadarshana Yapa is reported to have promptly suspended the road construction amid protests by environmentalists and Forest Conservation Department officials who threatened to take legal action if the road construction went ahead.

Others, however, are of the view that the road was being built in an area which does not belong to the Forest Conservation Department. They say there is an old footpath from Suriyakanda via Bambumale and Baragala and that this part of the land belongs to the Land Reforms Commission.

Source: Sandun A. Jayasekera, 'Sinharaja road: UNESCO calls for report', *Daily Mirror*, 17/09/11.

Kodigahakanda forest to be declared a wildlife sanctuary

The Kodigahakanda forest in the Olabouwa North Grama Niladhari division in Horana would be declared a wildlife sanctuary, making it the first in the Kalutara district of Sri Lanka.

Kodigahakanda is an 18 acre secondary scrub jungle on top of a granite based hill rock. It is located in a 600 acre coconut plantation and belongs to philanthropist Rohan De Souza who has kept the forest without exploiting it for economic gains. According to studies, the forest has 133 varieties of flora, 18 types of reptiles, four types of amphibians, 16 types of fish, 45 types of butterflies, 72 types of birds and 17 types of mammals.

The villagers of the region had established the Kodigahakanda Conservation Community Foundation and Mihithala Mithuro Environmental Development Foundation (MMEDF). The Kodigahakanda Conservation Society and MMEDF with the financial support of Global Environmental Fund through the United Nation's Development Programme, have built the Kodigahakanda bio-diversity centre at Gonapola to conserve the biodiversity of the forest with the participation of the local community. The centre was recently opened by Kalutara district Parliamentarian, Vidura Wickramanayake.

Source: Suraj A Bandara, 'Kalutara to have first wildlife sanctuary', *Daily News*, 29/09/11.

UPCOMING

National Conference on Biodiversity Assessment, Conservation and Utilisation

A 'National Conference on Biodiversity Assessment, Conservation and Utilisation' is being organized by the Department of Biodiversity, MES Garware College, in Pune on 10 and 11 February, 2011.

The themes for the conference are Biodiversity Assessment, Ecosystem Functions, Bio-prospecting and Utilisation, Landscape Ecology, In-situ and Ex-situ conservation models and Community Participation in Conservation.

Contact: Dr. Ankur Patwardhan, Organising Secretary. Tel: 020-41038236/7. Email: biodiversityconference2012@gmail.com. Web: www.mesbiodiversity.in

OPPORTUNITIES

Openings with FERAL for work in the Western Ghats

The Foundation for Ecological Research, Advocacy and Learning (FERAL) is looking for young, motivated people to join its research and conservation projects in the southern Western

Ghats. There are options for one-year research assistant positions, as well as shorter paid internships. These positions are ideal for graduates looking to gain practical experience in wildlife conservation, as well as for student projects. For more information, please visit <http://feralindia.org/?q=node/389>

Contact: **Srinivas V.** Email: srinivasvuk@yahoo.co.uk

IN THE SUPREME COURT

PA related matters in the Supreme Court (SC) and the Central Empowered Committee in August and September 2011

- Diversion of 12.892 hectares of forest land in Chennur and Yenchapally Reserve Forests, Pranahitha Black Buck Sanctuary, Andhra Pradesh for road construction on NH-16
- Diversion of forest land from the Eturunagaram Wild Life Sanctuary, Andhra Pradesh for widening of existing road
- The construction and widening of roads inside the Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bihar
- The protection and preservation of the Wild Buffalo in the state of Chattisgarh
- For removal of kendu leaf from the Satkosia, Badrama and Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuaries, Orissa
- The finalization of the zonal master plan for the Eco-sensitive Zone of Mount Abu, Rajasthan

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

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

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

READERS WRITE

A comprehensive publication

Your publication gives a wonderful over-view of the conservation situation in India.

- Zafar Futehally

Enjoyable reading

As a new reader of the *PA update*, I wanted to say I particularly enjoy reading your editorial, the special section on the Forests Rights Act and perspective at the end!

- Vandana Mohindra

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

Please do consider contributing and all help, big or small, is most welcome.

ADVERTISE IN THE PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

In an effort to raise resources for the continued publication of the Protected Area Update, we are inviting readers and others to advertise in the pages of the PA Update.

This is the 15 continuous year of publication of the newsletter that provides a comprehensive overview of developments in wildlife conservation from across the country every two months. The Update goes out to more than 3000 individuals and organizations either in a combination of print and soft copy form. Additionally, it is circulated on a number electronic discussion fora and also hosted on multiple websites including that of Kalpavriksh.

It is therefore an ideal platform to reach out to a readership that is interested and committed to issues of conservation and those related to our protected area network. This is therefore the best place to carry announcements related to wildlife and conservation conferences, seminars and workshops; position openings and related events. The Protected Area Update does, however, retain the right to refuse any announcement/advertisement as per its policies.

For further information and details contact the Editor, Protected Area Update; Email: psekhsaria@gmail.com



PERSPECTIVE

When Students discuss Conservation Science

Tackling conservation problems requires a thorough understanding of the problem, of possible solutions, and of the probable outcomes of interventions. This understanding must come from careful research and analysis that recognises that the issues are complex and multi-dimensional and it is evident that future conservation researchers must be well equipped to deal with this diversity and complexity. One attempt at building this capacity among young researchers is the family of Student Conferences on Conservation Science (SCCS), with current branches in Cambridge, New York and Bangalore.

SCCS-Bangalore (www.sccs-bng.org) was first held in June 2010 and again in September 2011. It is run primarily by a consortium of institutions in the Bangalore region, but is actively supported by a number of other institutions and individuals from across the country, with funding from the ADM Capital Foundation, Hong Kong.

The core of the conference consists of presentations (talks and posters) by young researchers. Supporting events include lectures by eminent conservation scientists; capacity-building workshops for students; panel discussions on controversial or topical issues; “Who's Who in Conservation” sessions where students interact with representatives of conservation organisations; and “Birds of a feather” sessions, in which participants self-organise into discussion groups. In each year of the conference there have been over 300 student participants, drawn mostly from India, but also from other countries across South and South-east Asia.

An informal survey of the work presented by young researchers in the first two years of SCCS-Bangalore suggests many reasons for

optimism. First, it is clear that good research work is not limited to the older, established institutions, or those in metros, but is now also being done by young researchers from colleges, universities and NGOs located all over the country. Second, we see considerably more communication between those studying conservation biology/ecology on the one hand, and the human dimension of conservation (coming from the social science perspective) on the other. Even though SCCS-Bangalore has largely been dominated by ecology, feedback from participating social science students indicates that the conference brings value to everyone. Continued efforts are needed to build upon this and ensure that the communication continues. Finally, one of the most heartening trends is the visible willingness of today's students to engage with different perspectives on issues they hold dear and to work across disciplines and institutions to achieve common goals.

If the interest in and success of SCCS and YETI (Young Ecologists Talk and Interact; www.meetyeti.in, being held in Guwahati this December) is anything to go by, the future will see a large and long-overdue increase in the willingness to respect differences and work in collaboration towards common conservation goals.

- **Suhel Quader** is a scientist at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bangalore. He was coordinator of SCCS-Bangalore in 2010 and 2011.
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