

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

The State of Wildlife in North-East India 1996-2011

For over a decade and a half the *Protected Area Update* has religiously presented a consolidated account of India's wildlife and the PA network. Published six times a year, it carries in a tightly edited format, news and information of what is happening in, to and around these national parks and sanctuaries that have been at the core of India's wildlife conservation strategy.

Now, for the first time, a section of this huge body of information has been re-organised to form a completely new publication – what we have called 'The State of Wildlife in North-East India - 1996-2011'. Published by the Foundation for Ecological Security, this is an historical account of developments in the PA network in the eight states of the north-east. While the primary unit still remains the individual protected area, the time line has changed from two months of one issue to 15 years that this publication covers.

In following one news item after another about any particular PA we see what happened month after month, year after year; what developments recurred at what periodicity; what were the issues that were important and what was done about them. It is, we believe, an important glimpse into the contemporary history of wildlife conservation in this very interesting part of the country.

And many insights emerge, none more striking than it's Assam centred-ness. It might be a North East compilation but it might as well be called an Assam compilation. Nearly two-third of the stories are from the state of Assam alone. The others in the region seem to exist only on the margins. Even in Assam, about 50% of the stories are about only one PA, the Kaziranga National Park. This, in turn raises a whole set of questions - What explains this fascination with Kaziranga? Is it really that much more important than anything else in the region? Don't other parks have a lot that Kaziranga does not? Is it about what is actually happening on the ground, about what the world thinks of Kaziranga or some dynamics of editorial

desks and newspaper newsrooms? The answers are not really there, but the ground is laid for a lot more investigation, questioning and for gaining many insights.

The stories in this 300 page compilation have been illustrated with the sometimes quirky, sometimes amusing but always insightful line drawings that have been the hallmark of the *PA Update* since the beginning. It also includes a series of analysis and perspective by individuals with well established expertise in their fields of work, all related to the wildlife and environmental issues of the region.

It's been a hugely instructive experience putting it together and we are confident it will be the same for those who will venture out now to read it. (see pg. 23)

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Zaheerabad to be recognized as biodiversity heritage site

The crop fields of the women of the Deccan Development Society (DDS), an NGO working for the last 25 years in Medak district, are soon to be recognised as a biodiversity heritage site (BHS) by the Government of India. This would be the first such heritage site in India and would cover about 50 villages spread across three mandals in Medak district.

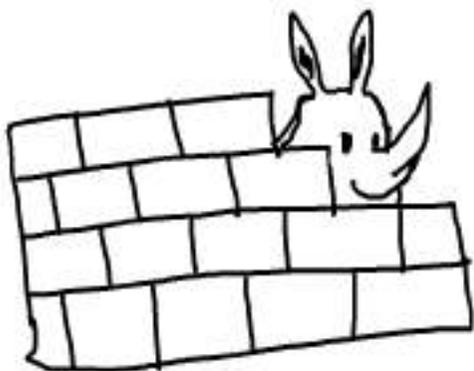
The decision was announced recently by Dr. P. Balakrishna, Chairman, National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), after formally launching the 14th mobile biodiversity festival at Ippapally village in Zaheerabad mandal.

The BHS will be declared under the provisions of the Biological Diversity Act (BDA) – 2002.

Source: 'Zaheerabad to be recognised as biodiversity heritage site soon', *The Hindu*, 16/01/13.

ASSAM

NGT refuses permission to brick kilns near Kaziranga



The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has refused permission to some brick kiln units from operating in the no-development zone (NDZ) around the Kaziranga National Park. The NGT bench noted that there was controversy regarding whether the units are located within the NDZ or outside it as claimed by the brick kilns in their application. It also pointed out that they do not have consent of the authorities and are also one of the “most polluting industries”.

The owners of the brick kilns had moved the NGT seeking a review of its February 15, 2012 order restraining grant of fresh approvals to industries or stone-crushing units and renewal of licences of existing ones operating in the NDZ near the park. The February 15 order had come in a case filed by Assam-based activist Rohit Chaudhary, seeking directions to stop quarrying and stone-crushing units around Kaziranga.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, No. 2; Vol. XII, Nos. 2 & 1 and Vol. XI, Nos. 6, 5, & 4).

Source: ‘National Green Tribunal refuses permission to brick kilns near Kaziranga National Park’, *The Economic Times*, 03/02/13.

Contact: Rohit Choudhary. Tel: 09911387992. Email:

rohitskaziranga@gmail.com

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

GUJARAT

NBWL approves mining near Narayan Sarovar WLS, other PAs

At its 27th meeting in December, the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) decided to endorse the proposal for Jayprakash Associates Ltd’s 400-hectare laterite mine at Baranda, which lies three kms from the Narayan Sarovar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). Referring to court orders and existing laws, the board decided that the mine fell in an area beyond its jurisdiction.

The NBWL, however, refused to immediately allow two larger proposed mines in the vicinity, saying the regional officer of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests must first check if conditions for environment protection were being followed. These proposals include the state-owned Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation’s (GMDC) 2186-hectare bauxite mine in Umarsar, which lies 4.4 kms from the sanctuary and Jayprakash Associates’ 2831-hectare limestone mine in Harudi, which lies 4.8 kms from the sanctuary.

The NBWL also recommended a 187-hectare bauxite mine at Mesava, proposed by the GMDC about three kms from the Marine National Park. It also gave go-aheads to Gujarat Energy Transmission Corporation Ltd’s (GETCO) proposal to lay transmission lines through parts of the Wild Ass Sanctuary. The lines are expected to evacuate power from Mundra in coastal Kutch to Banaskantha in north Gujarat.

Meanwhile, to prevent the mass electrocution of flamingos in the Great Rann of Kutch, the board has approved GETCO’s proposal to bury their overhead transmission wires inside the Desert Wildlife Sanctuary (*PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 6 & 1).

Source: Adam Halliday, ‘National Wildlife Board allows mines near sanctuaries with threatened species’, *The Indian Express*, 05/02/13.

Contact: **Superintendent**, Narayan Sarovar Chinkara Sanctuary C/o Dy. C.F. Fatemahmad Khorada, Kachchh West

Division Division, Bhuj - 370 001, Gujarat.
CWLW - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj
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230007. Fax: 221097.

KARNATAKA

Elephant population in Karnataka is 6072



Karnataka is now home to 6,072 elephants, 5,945 of which were spotted in the Mysore Elephant Reserve (ER) alone. The population seems to be on the rise as in 2010 their number stood at 5,800. The results are the outcome of the elephant census that was conducted by the State Forest Department and the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore in May 2012. It was carried out using two different methods – direct sighting of the elephants and the indirect method of checking the transect dung count. Waterhole observations were taken up to get an approximate idea of the population structure.

According to the census, the average elephant population has been between 4,000 and 6,000 for the past 15 years in the state. The state is home to about 20% of the elephant population in the country. While the Mysore ER alone is home for 97% of the state's elephant population, the other districts account for only 127 elephants.

Source: Saswati Mukherjee B, 'K'taka is now home to 6,072 elephants', *The Times of India*, 06/02/13.

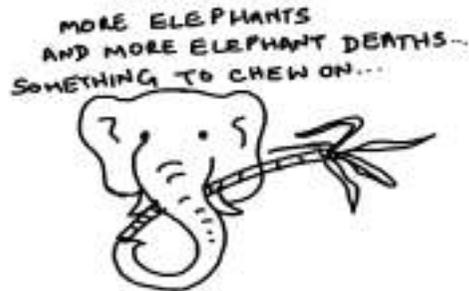
Increase in elephant deaths in Karnataka

Karnataka has witnessed the highest number of elephant deaths in this season as compared to those in the last six years.

Between April and December 2012, a total of 158 elephants were reported to have died. The figure is the highest ever since 2007-08. A majority

of these deaths, numbering 141, were from natural causes which include sickness, infighting and infections. Of the rest, three were killed by gun shots, 13 died of electrocution and the rest died on account of a shortage of water.

Human deaths too have increased this season with 18 people being killed from April to December 2012. In the previous season, the number of human deaths stood at 14.



Source: Lawrence Milton, 'Karnataka witnesses highest elephant deaths', *The Times of India*, 07/02/13.

FD to supply water by tankers to Bandipur and Nagarhole TRs

The Forest Department (FD) is preparing to tackle the water crisis in the Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserves (TRs) by filling up lakes in the forests with water supplied through tankers. A pilot project has already begun at the Nagarhole TR, while it will be taken up soon in the Bandipur TR. In the first phase, waterholes in the safari area will be filled up, followed by the water bodies beyond the tourist zone.

The FD has also formed an expert committee to visit Bandipur, Nagarhole and the other reserves to take stock of the situation. A team of experts headed by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden will study the situation in all the protected areas and then decide how to tackle it.

Source: Subhash Chandra, 'Forest dept banks on tankers to quench thirst in tiger reserves', *Deccan Herald*, 02/02/13.

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

Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993 / 3345846. Email: pccfw1@vsnl.com

KERALA

Kerala set to declare 22 eco-sensitive zones

Kerala is all set to formally declare 22 selected areas around its national parks and wildlife sanctuaries as Eco-sensitive Zones (ESZs). The State Forest Department submitted a proposal in this regard to the state government on February 8, earlier this year. It is now for the state government to proceed on the same.

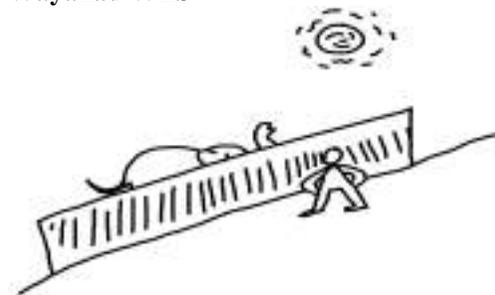
The Union Ministry for Environment and Forests (MoEF) has extended the deadline for the declaration of the ESZs, which had come as a major relief for Kerala, as the state has been lagging behind its counterparts in notifying the zones. The MoEF had extended the deadline from February 15 to May 15 based on requests from various state governments.

The Union Ministry had issued guidelines for constituting ESZs around national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in October 2011. Later, in an official communication on December 31, 2012, the MoEF had directed all states to declare ESZs within the deadline. The communication had warned that ‘the activities that have been prohibited as per the guidelines, would stand prohibited within 10 km of the boundary of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, if the declaration is not carried out.’

Source: Anil S. ‘Kerala set to declare 22 eco-sensitive zones’, *The New Indian Express*, 25/02/13.

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

Solar fence to curb man-animal conflict in Wayanad WLS



Villages bordering the Wayanad forests in the Thirunelly gram-panchayat limits have been ringed with a 34-km solar fence to stave off raids by wild animals. The Kerala Forest Development Corporation (KFDC) has installed the fence with finance from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). Minister for Forests Mr. K.B. Ganesh Kumar recently inaugurated the first phase of the project at Kattikulam, near Mananthavady.

The fence will be extended to a distance of 300 km to cover the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary and the North and South Wayanad forest divisions at a cost of Rs. 6 crore. The KFDC has identified 100 locations, each covering 1.5 km to 3.5 km, under the 10 forest ranges of the three forest divisions in the district to erect the fence.

As per the MoU signed between the KFDC and the Forest Department (FD), the KFDC has to maintain the fence for five years. A four-member team will be stationed in a base camp on the KFDC’s tea estate at Kambamala, near Mananthavady, to carry out the maintenance. The FD plans to engage local people for day-to-day maintenance in each locality.

The FD has submitted proposals to NABARD to execute such projects in Kannur, Kozhikode and Palakkad as well. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 6)

Source: ‘Solar fence to keep wild animals at bay in Wayanad’, *The Hindu*, 31/01/13.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Wayanad Wildlife Division, P.O. Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad-673 592, Kerala. Tel: 0493-2620454

MADHYA PRADESH

Madhya Pradesh identifies 17 eco-sensitive zones

The Madhya Pradesh Government has identified 17 eco-sensitive zones (ESZs) around its PAs. A site specific proposal identifying eco-sensitive zones around Kanha NP (Mandla), Pench NP (Seoni), Bandhavgarh NP (Umaria), Panna NP and the Kuno Palpur WLS (Sheopur) among others has been approved by the State Forest Department.

The move came after the State Government was given a “last chance” to send a site specific proposal to identify ESZs by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) before February 15 this year.

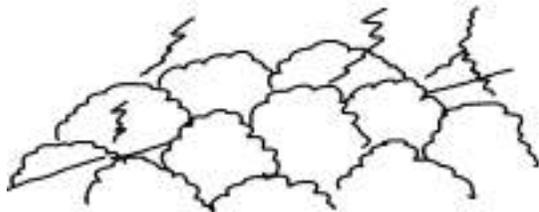
The proposal has been vetted by the Housing and Environment departments and would soon be put before the state cabinet. After the cabinet’s nod, it would be sent to the Central Ministry of Environment and Forests which would declare the ESZs. As per the norms, setting up of industries and commercial projects like hotels and resorts and mining activities among others are prohibited in these areas.

Source: ‘MP identifies 17 eco-sensitive zones around sanctuaries’, *The Hindu*, 07/01/13.

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

MAHARASHTRA

High-voltage line through Sanjay Gandhi NP, Tungareshwar WLS approved



The Ministry of Environment and Forests and the State forest and wildlife authorities have approved a proposal for a high-voltage wire network through certain portions of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) and Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. The network is expected to add 1,200

MW power for Mumbai from within and outside the state by 2016-17.

More details are not available presently.

Source: Chittaranjan Tembhekar, ‘Power network through Sanjay Gandhi National Park gets sanction’, *The Times of India*, 05/02/13.

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

Workshop held on ‘Conservation and Management of Rocky Plateau Biodiversity’

The Pune based Biome Conservation Foundation (BCF), conducted a workshop on ‘Policy for Conservation and Management of Rocky Plateau Biodiversity’ in Pune on 2nd February 2013. About 60 Scientists, NGOs, experts and students from states of the Konkan Sahyadri belt of the Western Ghats participated in the event.

BCF has prioritized conservation and management work on 15 plateaus in the Konkan Sahyadri Corridor. All of these are outside the protected area network and the effort is at encouraging collaboration, innovation and inclusiveness in pooling in data and ensuring protection.

The workshop resulted in suggestions to identify all the plateaus by gathering baseline data and then compiling an overview, prepare a photo documentation of the species and sites, maintain a community biodiversity register, develop a zoning plan to mark sites that are still in natural condition with those that already have projects like windmills setup, create a map database to mark rocky plateaus with relation to protected areas, declare community reserves and a create a master tourism plan to be submitted with local groups involved in controlling specific areas.

Contact: **Aparna Watve**, BCF.
Email: aparnawatve1@gmail.com

ODISHA

Foresters and forest guards in Simlipal TR on indefinite strike

Foresters and forest guards under the banner of the Odisha Non-Gazetted Forest Service Association (ONGFSA) went on an indefinite strike in the last week of February demanding enhancement of pay scale for the forest guards as per the Sixth Pay Commission, regularisation of contractual foresters and forest guards and post upgradation of forest guards, foresters and deputy rangers. The strike immediately impacted protection activities in the Simlipal Tiger Reserve and in the Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary.



The authorities said that daily wage protection assistants had been engaged to guard the forest areas while the range officers would patrol the forest routes to deal with the situation. In Balasore district, Vana Suraksha Samiti (VSS) members and plantation workers along with the daily-wage protection assistants were deployed to guard the Kuldiha WLS and other forest areas.

The strike came a day after over 150 people made an unsuccessful attempt to enter the core area of Simlipal Tiger Reserve (STR) for hunting wild animals. The entry bid was foiled as the forest staff nabbed one with a loaded country-made gun and chased away the others. This is also the period when tribal people in the region enter the forests for their ritual mass hunts of wild animals.

Source: STR in danger: Forest staff on indefinite hunger strike', *The New Indian Express*, 23/02/13.

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

ESZs around Chandaka and Nandankanan WLSs to be modified



The Odisha State Government has ordered reconstitution of the committee for the reformulation of the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) around the Chandaka–Dampara and Nandankanan Wildlife Sanctuaries. The reason is that these two PAs abut the capital city of Bhubaneswar and the ESZ would run through the city.

The boundary of the proposed ESZ for Chandaka-Dampara had been defined in a range of 2 km to 10 km from the protected area depending on the land availability. In the north, the boundary touched Athagarh, while towards the east, it ran right through the city. It touched Kalinga Studio, Khandagiri, Acharya Vihar, Sainik School and Nandankanan. If accepted, it would have spelt doom for the urban development plans of the city which has witnessed a real estate boom with scores of housing projects currently underway (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6). This ESZ boundary had been suggested by a committee comprising ecologists, the block development officer, and representatives of Collectors of the districts where the sanctuaries are located.

The new committee will now be headed by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and comprise representatives from IDCO, the Housing and Urban Development Department, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation, and the Bhubaneswar Development Authority among others.

The issues with Nandankanan are similar too. In fact, the Zoo management had in the past sought restriction on construction within 1 km radius of its boundary, but it had not materialized.

Source: Siba Mohanty. 'Chandaka, Nandankanan eco-zones to be modified', *The New Indian Express*, 26/02/13.

Contact: **DFO**, Chandaka WLS, SFTRI Campus, Ghatikia, P.O. Barmunda Colony, Bhubaneswar – 751003. Tel: 0674-2440168
®
CWLW– Odisha, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Odisha. Tel: 0674-2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840. Fax: 512502

RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan to get Panther Conservation Committee

The Rajasthan Forest Department plans to constitute a panther conservation committee and develop a separate territory for panthers in the Sariska Tiger Reserve (TR). The committee would comprise of wildlife experts and officials and will chalk out a plan for the panthers' safety in the reserve. The conservation panel will ensure that panthers are provided the same kind of protection as is given to tigers.

The move comes after the recovery of an eight-year-old panther's mutilated carcass in the Malala forest range near the Sariska TR recently. A probe has been launched into the matter and an autopsy found that the animal died of head injuries. In March 2012 too, the body of an eight-year-old panther was found with its neck entangled in a trap set up by poachers.

The census conducted in 2010 has put the number of panthers in Sariska at 45.

Source: 'Rajasthan to constitute panther conservation panel', www.zeenews.com, 30/01/13.

Contact: **Director**, Sariska Tiger Reserve, Sariska, Alwar – 301022, Rajasthan. Tel: 0144-241333 (O)
CWLW Government of Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, JAIPUR - 302 005.
Tel: 0141-2380832 / 2540531. Fax: 2380496/ 2380832

TAMIL NADU

Solar powered gadget to monitor elephants' movement in Coimbatore Forest Division

To reduce human-elephant conflict and to alert people in advance, the Forest Department (FD) is considering a proposal for setting up solar powered warning systems in conflict-prone areas of Coimbatore Forest Division. There are about 75 villages in the division and the conflict occurs due to straying of elephants into human habitations either because of fragmentation of forests or when they move out in search of food and water. A similar mechanism was used by the Anamalai Tiger Reserve in Valparai and the gadget was brought in by Nature Conservation Foundation.

For Coimbatore, another NGO has come forward with a prototype of a similar warning system and improvements in the same have been suggested. The system would be mounted in prominent places on highrise buildings along the conflict-prone pocket. It would have a pre-recorded audio message cautioning people about the movement of elephants and it could be activated by sending an SMS to the SIM card fixed in the machine. The access to trigger the system will be with the mobile numbers of forest officials and village heads.

Anti-depredation and anti-poaching watchers and forest personnel will keep monitoring the movement of elephants and would send an SMS to the system. The SMS sent by forest officials or village heads could be circulated to the rest of the villagers by way of a group SMS. The system is likely to be in place within the next three to four months.

Additionally, the FD is creating water holes and fodder banks and also plans to procure lands and remove the obstructions in order to restore the elephant corridor. In the short term, two tamed and trained elephants have been deployed at Chadivayal and are brought to the conflict pocket for chasing back the wild herd. A 24-hour centralised control room with a toll-free

number to receive phone calls from the public on elephant movement is also on the cards.

Source: 'Plans on to install gadgets to warn of elephants' movement', *The Hindu*, 04/02/13.

UTTARKHAND

Rs. 63.28 lakh annual working plan approved for Nanda Devi BR

An annual work plan of Rs 63.28 lakh for the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve was approved at a meeting at the state secretariat recently. Of this amount, Rs.9.79 lakh will be used for natural resource management, Rs 17.24 lakh for value addition activities, Rs eight lakh for social welfare work, Rs 13.25 lakh for eco tourism support, Rs two lakh for capacity building and Rs one lakh for repairing residential quarters.

The Chief Secretary of the state expressed concern on the occasion that the Government of India was not providing adequate funding for the 5860 sq km BR that had been included in the Man and the Biosphere programme of the United Nations.

Source: 'CS concerned over 'inadequate' Central funds for Nanda Devi Reserve management', *The Pioneer*', 23/02/2013.

Contact: **DFO**, Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve Joshimath, Dist. Chamoli, Uttarakhand. Tel: 01389-22179

34 leopard deaths in Uttarakhand in 1st two months of 2013



34 leopards have been killed in the state of Uttarakhand in the first two months of 2013. While some of them died of natural causes, a majority of these leopards were reportedly killed by poachers.

The Uttarakhand Police have recovered a huge cache of leopard skin and body parts since the

beginning of this year and 14 people have also been arrested in this connection so far.

Last year, the number of leopards killed in the state was 134.

Source: '34 leopards reported in Uttarakhand this year', *www.ndtv.com*, 25/02/13.

Contact: **CWLW**, 5, Chandrabani, Mohobewala, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0135- 2644691

30 kg of pangolin scales seized, three arrested near Rajaji NP



Rajaji National Park officials arrested three persons from the Kansrao forest area and recovered about 30 kg of pangolin scales in last week of February. The officials described it as one of the biggest catch of pangolin scales in the country.

The officials said they launched a combing operation after recovering several SIM cards and mobile phones from the Kansrao forests. This paid off with the arrest of three locals with gunny bags containing the pangolin scales. The three revealed that a goldsmith of Doiwala area had offered to buy any amount of pangolin scales they could get.

The use of pangolin parts for medical or other purposes is banned internationally. They are, however, said to be widely used to treat arthritis and stomach ailments in countries like China and Thailand.

Source: '30 kg of pangolin scales seized, three arrested', *The Hindu*, 23/02/13.

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

UTTAR PRADESH

Frequent tiger attacks on rhinos in Dudhwa TR

Three rhinos have reportedly been killed by tigers in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (TR) in the last 14 months. The first such attack was

reported in November 2011 followed by the killing of an young adult in December 2011. The latest case occurred recently when the half-eaten carcass of a 34-year-old female rhinoceros named Pavitri was recovered from the Rhino Rehabilitation Area here.

While the exact causes of the frequent attacks are yet to be ascertained, the experts believe that a declining prey base is not the reason for tigers to attack rhinos as these are present in large numbers in the park. Forest officials have also pointed out that tiger attacks on rhinos are not rare. In most of the incidents, however, it is the cub which is killed. Assam's Kaziranga National Park sees about 15 to 20 rhino cubs getting killed in tiger attacks every year.

Another speculation is that since the tiger attacks have taken place in the months of November and December when the entire Terai region of Uttar Pradesh where Dudhwa is located is enveloped by dense fog, the big cats might have mistaken the rhinos for some other animal.

Source: Atiq Khan, 'Killing of rhino by tiger worries Dudhwa wildlife officials', *The Hindu*, 31/01/13.

'Rhinoceros new prey for Dudhwa park tigers?', *The Times of India*, 01/02/13.

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

Rs. 2.10 cr tourism proposal for Katarniaghat WLS

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department has sent the state government a Rs. 2.10 cr proposal for tourism development for the Katarniaghat WLS. The proposal has been included in the state budget and if it gets approved, the two ranges around Katarniaghat would be developed for tourism.

The proposal is for the development of the Kakraha and Motipur ranges in the buffer zone by constructing Tharu huts, a canteen, library, visitor welcome room, footpath, generator stand, vehicle stand and a water tank.

Source: Bipin Chand Agarwal. 'Budget sanction to make Katarniaghat tourism hub', *The Times of India*, 26/02/13.

Contact: **DFO**, Katarniaghat Wildlife Division, Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 05252-232498

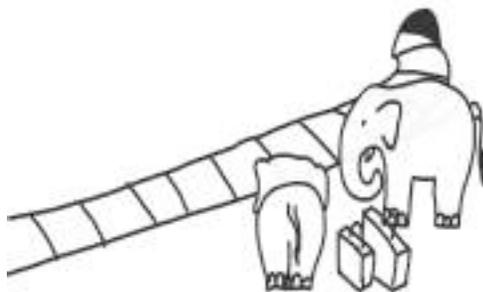
Solar fencing, thorny wire proposal for 50 kms of forest boundaries in Sohelwa WLS

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department has expressed hope that its proposal for solar fencing and use of thorny wire for nearly 50 kms of the forest boundaries of Sohelwa Wildlife Sanctuary will finally be approved by the state government. The proposal had been sent four years ago but there had been no response from the authorities. It is now believed that the state Chief Minister, Akhilesh Yadav, has shown an interest in these and other forest related projects in the state.

Source: Bipin Chand Agarwal, 'Solar fencing along Indo-Nepal border', *The Times of India*, 05/02/13.

WEST BENGAL

State clears railway line to Sikkim through Mahananda WLS



The West Bengal State Government has given its nod to the proposed extension of the broad gauge line from Sevoke to Sikkim's Rangpo that will pass through the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and some other important elephant-inhabited stretches. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 1340 crore. The final clearance from the Centre is awaited and it will depend on the National Board of Wildlife's site inspection report. Site inspection was to take place in February but more details are not presently available.

A section of the state's Wildlife Advisory Board members, who had sought an environmental impact assessment (EIA) for the project at the last meeting in February 2012, have however, alleged they were kept in the dark as the state forwarded the clearance to the Ministry of Environment and Forests. They also claimed that they have not received the minutes either of the last meeting or the one that cleared the proposal.

These members have pointed out that the existing rail link, from New Jalpaiguri to Sevoke, has already caused several animal deaths. This link passes through a part of the Mahananda WLS and five elephant deaths have occurred in this stretch this year, while almost 40 elephant deaths have occurred between 2004 and 2012 (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6)).

The Railways, have on the other hand proposed to install sensors to track the presence of elephants on or near rail tracks. The sensors would detect the presence of elephants along the tracks that pass through the protected forest area and alert the train driver of the impending risk to the herd.

They have also proposed an alternative solution as part of which the trains will run only at a speed of 20 km per hour in the forest area and stop when an animal is sighted close to the track.

Under the proposed project, the 51-km Sevoke-Rangpo line has been provided with 14 tunnels winding through the protected forests of Darjeeling and East Sikkim.

Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee, 'Nod to Sikkim rail link poses jumbo threat', *The Times of India*, 05/02/13.

K. Balchand, 'Elephant sensors may come up on railway line to Sikkim', *The Hindu*, 07/02/13.

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

Important Bird Areas Update

GUJARAT

NBWL refuses a road through the Great and Little Rann of Kutch

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has told the Border Security Force (BSF) that it will not discuss further a proposed road through the Great and the Little Rann of Kutch (GRK & LRK) unless the paramilitary force promised in writing it would follow all conditions imposed by scientists who inspected the site in 2011 (*PA Updates* Vol. XIV, No. 1 and Vol XVIII, No. 3). The NBWL's stand effectively means the road has to bypass both the Ranns and not go through them as originally planned.

The 225 km proposed road is to start from Gaduli in western Kutch, run through the Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary, the Wild Ass Sanctuary, Khadir island, through the

"chicken's neck", where GRK and LRK meet, and on to Santalpur on the northern periphery of the LRK.

The road project is being undertaken by the State Road and Buildings Department and supported by the Tourism and Home Departments as well as the BSF. The State Wildlife Board had cleared the proposal with certain conditions in 2009, but the NBWL had refused to give its nod. It had sent a team of three scientists to investigate the road's potential environmental impacts in September

2011. The team unanimously recommended against constructing about 50 kms of the road aligned through the GRK and LRK, fearing it would destroy Flamingo City, Tangdi Bet - the main refuge of the endangered wild ass during monsoon months - and the inland mangrove grove at Shraavan Kavadia.

Source: Adam Halliday, 'Apex wildlife body shoots down BSF plan for a road in Rann of Kutch', *The Indian Express*, 03/02/13.

Contact: **DCF**, Kutch Desert Sanctuary, Kutch (East) Division, Old Remand Home, Building No.39/1, Bhuj - 370 001, Gujarat. Tel: 02832-250227; Fax: 02832-250236

21 wetlands to be proposed as Ramsar sites

The Gujarat Government has decided that 21 wetlands in the state will be proposed for inclusion as Ramsar sites. The decision was taken during a seminar 'Nalsarovar: Steps Ahead after Ramsar Recognition' that was organized to mark World Wetlands day on February 2.

The full list of the wetlands to be considered is, however, not available at the present.

Source: 'World wetlands day observed: 21 state wetlands to apply for Ramsar tag', *The Times of India*, 03/02/13.

MAHARASHTRA

Shirapur Lift Irrigation Scheme to affect 92 hectares of The Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary

The proposed Shirapur Lift Irrigation Scheme, if implemented, is likely to affect nearly 92 hectares of land in the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary. The proposal had been listed for discussion in the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) meeting of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) in the 1st week of February.

In a letter to the EAC written in the month of January, River Basin Friends, Mumbai; the Manthan Adhyayan Kendra; the

South Asia Network for Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP) and the National Alliance for People's Movements pointed out that the said scheme was unworthy of being considered by the EAC as it was hydrologically, economically and ecologically unviable.

The reasons highlighted include the general shortage of water in the region which would not allow for the scheme to become operational; the fact that the scheme will directly impact the Bustard sanctuary and also



that the reservoir of the Ujani dam from where water would be lifted for the scheme was itself to be proposed by the state government as a Ramsar site. The latest in the matter is not known.

Contact: **Parineeta Dandekar**, SANDRP, Tel: 09860030742. Email: parineeta.dandekar@gmail.com. Web: www.sandrp.in

MANIPUR

Delegation urges repeal of the Loktak Lake (Protection) Act; forced evictions continue

A joint delegation of the All Loktak Lake Areas Fishermen's Union (ALLAFU) and Centre for Organisation Research and Education (CORE), has urged for the immediate repeal of the Loktak Lake (Protection) Act 2006, in particular Article 19 and 20 of the Act, which they claim violate the fundamental rights of the citizens (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 6).

The delegation met Justice KG Balkrishnan, Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission and former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India in this regard in January, earlier this year.

Justice Balkrishnan informed the delegation that the state Director General of Police has been asked to investigate how the management of Loktak Lake has been taken over by K-PRO Infra Works Pvt. Ltd from the

Loktak Development Authority and also that the same should be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation. He also said that there is a case pending before the Gauhati Bench High Court and therefore he could not issue any directions in the matter.

The delegation also submitted a memorandum to the Union Minister of Agriculture Mr. Sharad Pawar for immediate repeal of the Act to protect the basic rights of fishermen.

In subsequent developments, the Loktak Development Authority (LDA) of the Government of Manipur and Manipur Police were reported to have forcibly evicted floating hut dwellers and destroyed their floating huts on 23 February 2013. The action was taken in defiance of the Gauhati High Court order of 25 January 2012 prohibiting clearance of phumdi-huts from Loktak Lake and a subsequent contempt notice on 16 February 2013 ordering the government to desist from causing further eviction in Loktak Lake.

The Gauhati High Court, in the contempt notice, had made it clear that necessary legal action would be initiated against the Chairman of Loktak Development Authority, the Project Director of LDA, Deputy Commissioner of Bishnupur district and the Superintendent of Police if they indulged in any further eviction in Loktak Lake targeting the fishing communities. Defying the order, a Manipur police team accompanied by officials of the LDA arrived with heavy machineries used for clearing floating vegetation mass in Loktak Lake and began destroying the floating phumdi huts.

Source: 'Loktak fishermen take their case to NHRC', *Hueiyen News Service*, 25/01/2013.

'INDIA: Immediately stop evicting and threatening the floating huts-dwellers of Loktak Lake' – An Urgent Appeal by the Asian Human Rights Organisation, 28/02/13.

Contact: **DCF**, Keibul Lamjao NP, Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795 001
Chief Wildlife Warden - Manipur, Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795001, Manipur. Tel: 03852 - 220854 / 285385

ODISHA

Concern over Avian influenza in Chilka

The report of avian influenza in a migratory pintail duck in January from Chilka has given rise to concern in the region. The pintail was one from among a collection of birds from which samples had been taken on January 21. The birds included two Ruddy shelducks, Eurasian wigeons, gadwals as well as a shoveller and the pintail. Three different samples - oro-pharyngeal, cloacal and blood serum - were collected from the eight birds. It was not known which samples threw up the avian influenza.

No further bird casualties were reported and authorities have said that there was no cause for panic. The Chilika Wildlife Division, however, issued an advisory appealing to people not to eat dead birds and return the carcass either to the local police or to forest offices. The Directorate of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services too asked the Khurda Chief veterinary Officer to take precautionary measures in view of the situation. In wake of the development in Chilka, the Kendrapada district administration has also sounded an alert in Bhitarkanika National Park, which also attracts migratory birds.

A six-member expert team from Bombay Natural History Society also visited the Nalabana area of the lake and collected samples. No sick birds were found but the team still collected samples from different birds and sent these to Bhopal for testing.

The recent strike by forest staff (see earlier story from Simlipal TR) has raised further concerns about surveillance.

Source: 'Chief wildlife warden allays fears', *The New Indian Express*, 24/02/13.

'Forest staff stir hits flu surveillance', *The Times of India*, 25/02/13.

Contact: **DFO (WL)**, Chilka Wildlife Division, At/PO Balugaon, Dist. Khordha – 752030, Odisha. Tel: 06756 – 211012 / 9437109889

RAJASTHAN

Keoladeo NP may get Captive Exhibit Centre for Siberian cranes

The Rajasthan Forest Department has proposed a 'Semi-Captive Siberian Crane Exhibit Centre' at Keoladeo National Park (NP) in Bharatpur. This is a follow up to the discussion at the 7th meeting of the signatories of the Convention on Migratory Species in 2010 wherein it was agreed that the possibility of creating a semi-captive Siberian crane exhibit at the Keoladeo needs to be explored

To facilitate the same, Walsrode Bird Park, Germany, the Cracid breeding group of Belgium and the International Crane Foundation, US have been willing to provide the required number of cranes as well as training to biologists, managers and field staff. However, a suitable area for the exhibit space is yet to be decided for the same in the park.

Source: Rachna Singh, 'Siberian cranes to be back in Keoladeo as 'zoo birds'', *The Times of India*, 04/02/13.

Contact: **Director, Keoladeo Ghana NP**, Forest Department, Bharatpur- 321 001 Rajasthan. Tel: 05644-22777(O), 22824(R), Fax: 05644-22864

TAMIL NADU

Garbage dumping in Pallikaranai marshland on the rise

Despite a ban by the Madras High Court, the garbage dumping area in the Pallikaranai marsh has been extended to 78 hectares from the original 58 hectares. Burning of garbage here has also been causing serious health problems for those living nearby as well as motorists and other road users. Apart from garbage in the Chennai Corporation limits, waste generated in nearby panchayats is also being collected and dumped here.

Researchers have pointed out that increasing the garbage dumping area would have an adverse effect on ground water. The release of untreated raw sewage from the Perungudi and Alandur sewage treatment plants has also been posing a threat to the life forms in the marsh. Experts fear that an increase in the dumping area would directly affect the natural draining of excess rainwater from the nearby residential localities into the sea. They have been demanding a proper study to ascertain the impact of the dumping of hazardous waste in the marshland.

Another official informed that the Forest Department had proposed a study involving Zoological Survey of India, Indian Institute of Technology and the Anna University that would look at various aspects of the marshland. However, the work could not commence due to non-release of funds by the department.

Source: P. Oppili, 'Garbage still plagues marshland', *The Hindu*, 03/02/13.



The Forest Rights Act, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation

CHATTISGARH

State level FRA consultation in Raipur

A day long State Level Convention on the status of Forest Rights Act was organized in Raipur on March 3 by the Oxfam West India Office along with the Chhattisgarh Tribal Development Department.

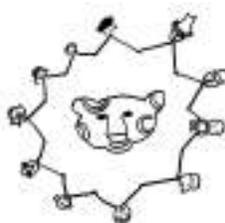
Those who participated in the convention included NGO representatives and government officials that included among others the Adivasi Development Commissioner, the Additional Director of Adivasi Development, Chief Conservators of Forests (CCF), Collectors of 5 districts, Sub Divisional Magistrates, Tehsildars and DFOs. Community members shared their testimonies with respect to violations in the FRA, multiple displacements and of experiences of being ousted from protected areas.

It was reported that the road to claiming CFRs has been particularly slow in Chhattisgarh with only 1413 titles (mostly under Section 3.2 and 3.1b) being granted by the administration as of 03rd December 2012. This in state with a 32% adivasi population and 44% forest cover. Keeping this in mind, a handbook on claiming Community Forest Rights (in Hindi) was also released. Good examples of allowing tribal communities the right to access, sell and manage minor forest produce like bamboo and tendu were shared by the Principal Secretary-Forests, Maharashtra.

Contact: **Rebecca S. David** Programme Officer - Economic Justice Oxfam India 301 Samruddhi Plaza, 3rd Floor, Opp. Old Petrol Pump Mira-Bhayander Road, Bhayander (East) Dist. Thane - 401105, Maharashtra. Phone: 022-33074800. Email: rebecca@oxfamindia.org

MAHARASHTRA

State level workshop on CFRs under the FRA



A workshop on Community Forest Rights (CFRs) under the FRA in Maharashtra was organised by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in

Mumbai with support from Kalpavriksh, the Vidarbha Livelihoods Forum and Vrikshamitra. The workshop that was held in Mumbai was attended by about 60 participants representing gram sabhas where CFR titles have been given, gram sabhas where the claims have been filed but titles have not been received, civil society groups and individuals working with such gram sabha and/or issues, academics interested in the issue and government officials directly concerned with the implementation of the act.

The discussions and recommendations were made around three broad issues: areas where CFR implementation progress is slow; issues and recommendations from protected areas, particularly vulnerable tribal communities (PTGs) and nomadic & pastoralist communities (such as the Dhangar community); areas where CFR titles have already been granted and recommendations for some institutional changes.

For more details on the workshop and the detailed outcomes write to **Neema Pathak Broome**, Kalpavriksh, Editorial address. Email: neema.pb@gmail.com

Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary and the FRA – An update

2009: Kalpavriksh initiates a program related to the FRA in and with the village of Yelavali located along the southern boundary of the sanctuary. The area was experiencing a number of unregulated resource harvesting activities, including hunting. As a part of the initiative

Yelavali villagers have taken up several activities which include restricting hunters, cultivation of medicinal plants, controlling goat numbers in the village and taking steps towards

achieving long term management and sustainable use of resources. In turn, a more aware and confident community was able to resist continuous harassment from the field based forest staff.

February 2011: Yelavali becomes the first village in Khed taluka of Pune district to file for community forest rights (CFRs) in the sanctuary. Apart from Kalpavriksh, Shashwat and Maharashtra Arogya Mandal are the organisations which have been facilitating the process of filing CFR claims in and around the sanctuary. Claims for CFRs have now been filed by Yelavali, Ahupe, Pimpri, Patan, Pimplegane and Sakhari villages. No responses regarding these claims have been received from the concerned government departments till date.

January 2012: Maharashtra government brought out a revised GR on Joint Forest Management (JFM) and Eco-development. Yelavali villagers decided, after discussions, that they would implement the scheme in their village for generating livelihoods through ecologically sensitive activities, even as they wait for their community rights claims to be granted. The village gram sabha prepared a detailed plan of action for utilizing Rs. 10,00,000 that they would receive under the scheme. Apart from providing

each household with an energy saving chullah, a low bio mass water boiler and solar street lamps, the village also decided to utilize the funds for construction of an eco-lodge and camping site within their village to support their income through low impact eco-tourism. The village is now running the initiative through a locally devised system.

February 2013: Civil society groups and village level activists organised a meeting to push for implementation of CFRs. They demanded taluka level meetings for filing CFRs in a campaign mode, adding that this should be organised by the tribal welfare department. They also demanded that the CFR claims already filed by the villagers in and around the sanctuary area be urgently cleared.

A proposal was also mooted in February by the state government for the declaration of an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) comprising an area within a 2 km radius around the sanctuary. A few gram sabhas recently submitted resolutions to the forest department rejecting the ESA, citing lack of information and their participation as reasons for the same.

Contact: Neema Pathak Broome and Pradeep Chavan, Kalpavriksh. Emails: neema.pb@gmail.com and prdprn@gmail.com

‘The Forest Rights Act, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation’ special section is being revived with support from Action Aid India. We invite readers to send us news and information about developments that link the FRA and various aspects of wildlife conservation in general and the protected area network in particular.

The PA Update is now on facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/protectedareaupdate/>

THE CENTRAL GONDWANA PAGE
in collaboration with www.CGnetswara.org

Bhoramdev: Forest dept again trying to remove Baiga adivasis from the area

Mar 6: Indu Netam is reporting from an area near the Bhoramdev reserve forest in Kawardha district of Chhattisgarh. After destroying 30 huts of Baigas on 18th Feb, the Forest Department, yesterday once again tried to evict the adivasis from the area. When officials were told about various laws they replied that the laws should be taught to the Baigas. The National Human Rights Commission has also issued a notice to the government after the matter was first reported on Swara. Indu Netam can be reached at 09479017963. Hear the report at <http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=18530>

Kanha displaced yet to get land deeds under Forest Rights act

Feb 21: Panchhu Marawi from Mandla district in Madhya Pradesh, reports that his village was displaced from the Kanha National Park in 1977. Some families got land at that time as displacement package but others captured forest land and have been working on them from the 1990s. They have filled an application form under Forest Rights act and have paid bribe as advised by local forest officials but they are yet to get their land deeds. Panchhu Marawi can be reached at 09907283363. Hear his report at <http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=17852>

Govt declares buffer zone in Seoni in violation of PESA, Adivasis protesting...

Feb 20: Makhanlal Soni from Korai block of Seoni district in Madhya Pradesh reports about a meeting of adivasis in Erma village under the banner of the Adivasi Swasashan Sangh (Adivasi Self Rule Organisation). Going against the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) act, the government has declared part of the area as buffer zone [of the Pench Tiger Reserve]. The

adivasis are protesting against this. He says as per PESA, the government cannot declare any area a buffer zone unless the panchayats have given their consent. Contact Makhanlal Soni at 08120890529. For his report visit <http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=17801>

Forest dept breaks houses of Baiga adivasis living on forestland for 15 yrs

Feb 19: Naresh Bunkar from Kawardha district in Chhattisgarh reports that in Bijadhap near the Bhoramdev Sanctuary, Forest Department officials destroyed around 15 houses of Baiga adivasis. The adivasis have been living and farming land here for over 15 years. They have also threatened to have the adivasis arrested if they did not leave. People are frightened. The action is in violation of the Forest Rights Act. Contact Naresh Bunkar at 09893169563. Hear his report at <http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=17758>

Govt not giving any community rights under Forest Rights Act in Chhattisgarh

Feb 19: My name is Chandra Pratap Singh. Today I am visiting village Pandripani in Gourela block of Bilaspur district in Chhattisgarh where the head of village forest protection committee tells me that the government is giving individual forest rights but not to the community. He says if we can save our forest, only then can our future generations will survive. Contact Chandra Pratap Singh at 08823051477. Hear is report at <http://cgnetswara.org/index.php?id=17657>



Quick NEWS

<http://www.paddtracker.org/>

a new **crowdsourcing** tool designed to monitor

PADD (protected area downgrading, downsizing, and degazettement)

High Level Working Group on

WGEEP report once

again gets extension of tenure till 31st March

<http://envfor.nic.in/assets/hlwg-150213.pdf>

MoEF new guidelines -

Projects with linear forest diversion exempted from Gram Sabha resolution requirement
<http://envfor.nic.in/assets/Diver%20of%20forest%20land%205022013.pdf>

The MoEF's Expert Appraisal Committee on River Valley Projects **has zero rejection in the last six years.** Press from the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People
www.sandrp.in

Durrell Academy

newsletters now going online at
<http://www.durrell.org/solitaire>

Research Article

<http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0049457>

Living with Lions: The Economics of Coexistence in the Gir Forests, India

Call for Entries: 7th CMS VATAVARAN 2013

<http://www.cmsvatavaran.org/> the International environment and wildlife film festival. Last date for submission is May 31

IUCN/TRAFFIC

release

<http://www.cites.org/eng/cop/16/doc/E-CoP16-54-02.pdf>

Rhinos in crisis – poaching and illegal trade reach highest levels in over 20 years

Bomb Fishing Threatens Palk Bay Artificial Reefs! AND for much more on developments in the Palk Bay (also in Tamil)
<http://palkbay.blogspot.in/>

WHAT CAN SCIENCE TELL US ABOUT THE URBAN LEOPARDS OF the **Sanjay Gandhi National Park**? HOW CAN **Mumbaikars** HELP MANAGE THIS UNIQUE PARK? To find out more check/join
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/MSGNP/>
<http://www.mumbaikarsforsgnp.com>

To receive the Weekly News Alerts on fisherfolk related issues put out by the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) write to icsfdcnews@gmail.com

RESOURCES HIMALAYAS
<http://www.resourcehimalaya.org> – ground realities, good science, knowledge based decisions, for the Himalayas –

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report **Thirty Years of Fisheries**

Development in

Lakshadweep write to

Hisham Jafer.

Email: jaferhisham@gmail.com

2012 REPORT ON RESPONSIBLE WHALE AND DOLPHIN WATCHING.

<http://www.planetwhale.com/2012-report-on-responsible-whale-and-dolphin-watching>

NEW PUBLICATIONS

on (Access and Benefit Sharing) in India - **A Research Study and Four Sectoral Briefing Papers:** Agrobiodiversity; Livestock & Poultry; Marine & Coastal Sector AND THE Forestry Sector. **Available in both English and Hindi.** Authored by **Kanchi Kohli & Shalini Bhutani** of the Campaign for Conservation and Community Control over Biodiversity.

Contact: biodcampaign@gmail.com

ECOLOGICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING IN INDIA- The Handbook for Media, NGOs & People. By **Santosh Shintre:**
shintresanthosh@gmail.com
Sakal Publications, Pune.

‘Include rivers in India’s definition of Wetlands, follow the Ramsar Convention’

Press Release, Feb 2, 2013

South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People (SANDRP) <http://www.sandrp.in/>

As the world and India celebrate the Wetlands Day on the 2nd of Feb this year, we are leaving out a very significant wetland type from protection and conservation under the Ramsar Convention. Our rivers today are endangered by dams, diversions, hydropower projects, pollution, encroachment, mining, over exploitation, deforestation, and climate change and they need urgent protection. Currently rivers have no legal or institutional protection. India had 45041 km of perennial rivers as per Central Pollution Control Board assessment made in the early 1980s.

As per the Ramsar Definition, wetlands are defined as “areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters”. Significantly, it also includes: permanent rivers, seasonal and intermittent rivers and permanent deltas. Many countries across the world have nominated riverine stretches and deltas as Ramsar Sites. These include deltas like Danube in Romania and Orange in South Africa, rivers like Maduganga in Srilanka, Murray Darling in Australia, Maruyama in Japan, and Krabi in Thailand, to name a very few.

India’s rivers are some of the most scenic, biodiversity-rich, culturally significant and truly iconic ecosystems in the world. Despite this, Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2010 (the only legal instrument explicitly for wetlands protection), shockingly EXCLUDE rivers from the definition of wetlands, thus ensuring that no riverine stretches will be nominated by states as proposed Ramsar Sites for protection. Section 2 (g) of the Rules says wetlands do not include “Main River Channels”.

The only riverine Ramsar Site in India is the Upper Ganga Stretch protecting the last remaining populations of Gangetic Dolphins. We do not have any explicit

protection for rivers through our protected area network, or through frameworks like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). More and more biodiversity rich riverine stretches are falling prey to short-sighted profit driven projects like dams, hydropower projects and barrages. Important rivers like Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Chenab, Alaknanda, Bhagirathi, Teesta, Tawang chu, Nyamjangchu, Lohit, Siang, Dibang, Narmada, Krishna, Cauvery, Godavari, Chalakudy and the rivers of the Western Ghats are being destroyed by cascades of dams being sanctioned by authorities like the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, its Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) on River Valley Projects, Forest Advisory Committee without credible appraisal, or transparent and accountable regulation. As SANDRP’s analysis released on Feb 1, 2013 shows, EAC of the MoEF has not rejected environmental clearance for a single hydropower or irrigation project it received, in all of its 63 meetings since April 2007. At the same time, even designated Ramsar wetlands are in peril in India due to the dams and unregulated water abstractions.

Looking at the rapid pace of river degradation & urgent need for protection, this World Wetland Day we urge:

- The MoEF to amend Wetlands Rules (2010) to include main river channels in its definition of wetlands, in line with Ramsar Conventions definition of wetlands.
- All states to nominate important rivers, riverine stretches and deltas, in a participatory manner, for protection and conservation under the Ramsar Convention.
- Legal protection to rivers, also mandating that no more than 50% of the water from a river can be taken out by any project at any given point of time, as directed by the Allahabad High Court.
- Communities be given a key role in protection of rivers and wetlands, currently lacking in the Wetlands Rules (2010).

A Ranthambhore Diary: Jan-Feb 2013
From the facebook page of Dharmendra Khandal, Tiger Watch
<http://www.facebook.com/dharm.khandal?ref=ts&fref=ts>



17 Jan

Kesra Mogya who was responsible for poaching of a number of tigers in and around Ranthambhore dies in a road accident.

19 Jan

An example of efficient working of the Forest Department's cattle compensation scheme: compensation of nearly Rs. 20000 paid within six hours of two oxen being killed by a tiger.

27 Jan

A tiger is reported to have moved from the Ranthambhore National Park towards the Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary in last 2 nights. Following him with some forest guards and ranger RS Kala reveals that he has instinctively used the shortest and safest route to get there. (A detailed account of this can be read at <http://tehelka.com/when-the-tiger-shows-us-the-passageways/>)

31 Jan

Government proposes the shifting of one more tiger from Ranthambhore to Sariska.

4 Feb

A team of village watchers (supported by facebook friends of Tiger Watch) and forest guards is following a tiger that is moving from the Ranthambhore National Park to the forests of Kuno in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh. The tiger has moved 80 kms already.

7 Feb

The Supreme Court passes directions that 5% of the total cost of 478.91 crores (an amount of nearly Rs, 24 crore) of the Chambal-Sawai Madhopur-Nadoti drinking water project on the Chambal River be deposited with the Rajasthan Forest Department for conservation of species such as the gharial and the Gangetic dolphin.

8 Feb

Ranthambhore is visited by 45 judges from Delhi.

11 Feb

Tiger Watch announces Conservation Leadership course 2013. Dates: 11 to 15 May 2013.

19 Feb

- A forest guard gets stabbed by poachers at a poaching site when he was trying to collect information related to poaching.
- Finalisation of the annual 'Fateh Singh Rathore Conservation Award'. Awards to be given on March 1

1 Mar

Fateh Singh Rathore Conservation Awards given away in Sawai Madhopur at the hands of chief guest, Dr. Asad Rahmani, Director, Bombay Natural History Society. The awardees include local villagers forest guards, and officials. A total of 26 awards were given.

A Decade Ago
Protected Area Update February – April 2003

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Chail residents demand denotification of their lands from sanctuary area

The residents of Chail town have sent a representation to the President of the country asking for the denotification of their lands from the Chail Wildlife Sanctuary. The final notification for the sanctuary was issued in 1999.

The residents have pointed out that more than 15000 residents were being denied their rights though they had been resident in the area for many decades. They also say that there was no effort to get the opinion of the seven panchayats of Chail area and two from Simla that fall within the boundaries of the sanctuary, when the sanctuary was notified. People are now unable to avail basic facilities like fodder and firewood from the forests and their houses too are in a dilapidated condition. They have also pointed out that the town came into existence much before either the Wildlife (Protection) Act - 1972 or the Forest Conservation Act - 1980 and therefore there should be no delay in the denotification of the lands that belong to them.

The villagers have been petitioning the central and state governments for a long time, but to no avail. The officials of the State Wildlife Department have clarified that they had sent the case to the Central Government a number of times, but no success could be achieved in getting the area denotified.

The total area under the ownership of the town and its residents (technically being called encroachments) is reported to be 3600 bighas. A stretch of 25 bighas had been gifted to the people here in 1953 for the construction of houses and markets. There are a number of government departments on the encroachers list as well. These include the Forest Department itself, the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC), the

Defence Department, the PWD, the IPH, and the Horticulture, Health, HPSEB, telecommunications and animal husbandry departments.

Source: Ambika Sharma. 'Woes of Chail residents', *The Tribune*, 14/11/02.

KARNATAKA

World Bank probe into eco-development project functioning in Nagarhole

The World Bank initiated a probe into allegations of irregularities in the functioning WB eco-development project in Nagarhole that it has been funding since 1998. The probe followed the raids made by the *Lokayukta* of Karnataka to look into allegations of timber smuggling and the misappropriation of the money earmarked for eco-development work.

The World Bank team was to have submitted its report towards the end of the month of March.

The Senior Social Development Specialist of the WB, Mr. S Satish did however point out that the bank was satisfied with the progress and implementation of the eco-development project in the park. He said that he would allot seven marks on a scale of ten to the project and that it had helped generate a lot of awareness amongst the people.

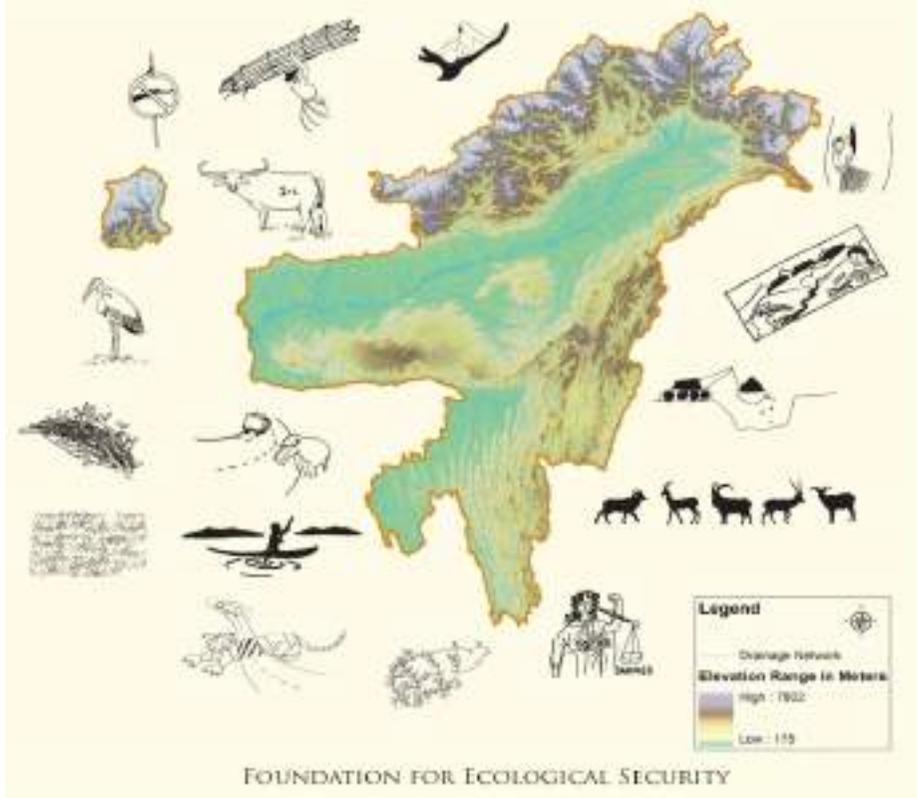
He also expressed happiness over the success of the rehabilitation project for the tribal people from Kodagu in Nagapura near Hunsur. The relocation had been taken up by an NGO with the Union Government providing funds, the Karnataka Government land and the WB, technical assistance. (Also see *PA Updates* 39, 38, 34, 32, 27 & 24).

Source: Jeevan Chinnappa. 'WB team begins probe into Nagarhole project', *The Hindu*, 28/02/03.

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Annexures

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PERSPECTIVE

Guiding Tours on the Kas Plateau

“It is an inevitable destiny: the very reasons why a property is chosen for inscription on the World Heritage List are also the reasons why millions of tourists flock to those sites year after year.”

These words of Francesco Bandarin (UNESCO) reminded me of my present study site, Kas Plateau, located in Satara district, Maharashtra which was recently declared a World Natural Heritage Site for its exceptional beauty. Come monsoons, and the plateau springs to life with over 200 different species of flowering plant species that bloom in their millions. Due to wide media coverage of this mass blooming, visiting numbers rose from a few thousands in 2005-2006 to an astonishing 3,50,000 in 2011. The challenges this poses to the rich diversity of highly specialized flora and fauna is evident.

When I started my eco tourism based research project here in June 2012, guided walks led by well-trained locals along pre-designated paths seemed to be the obvious solution in tackling the problem of extensive trampling at Kas. A month later the Satara forest department (FD) conducted a workshop, where we trained around 25 local men as nature guides. However, very few of those who had been trained turned up when the tourist season started. What came to light was that in these job-deprived villages, the majority of youth migrate to Mumbai for a better livelihood. When asked they noted that this would only be seasonal employment and they needed to think of something for the remaining eight months.

Interviews with tourists, on the other hand, revealed that they were genuinely interested but also clueless about where to go, what to look at and how to identify what they saw – having a local nature guide would be the best solution, they said. This helped me realize that often, tourists are insensitive not by choice, but simply because they are unaware, and this is because the right kind of information has not been conveyed to them. Well-planned nature walks could, in fact, be a win-win situation for both, the locals and the visitors.

What initially seemed a very easy option to implement, however, unfolded into unanticipated and unplanned challenges. The next step now is to identify the unemployed locals who have chosen to stay back and train them...people who will not only function as nature guides but also become the future guards of this fragile habitat. And convey the right message of conservation and the heritage value of Kas to develop responsible and sensitive tourism.

- **Prerna Agarwal** is an independent researcher, presently working on an eco-tourism based research project on Kas plateau supported by the Ruffords Small Grants Fund, UK.
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