

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XIX No. 3

June 2013 (No. 103)

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Protected Area Update

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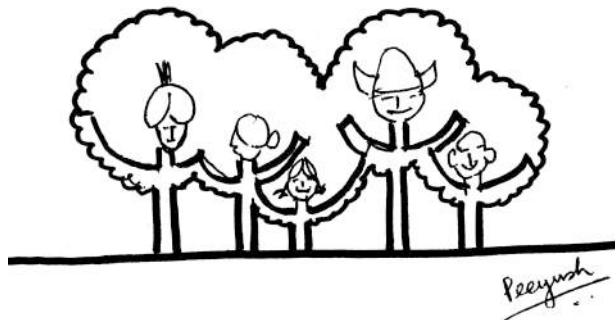
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EDITORIAL

Exciting times for the *PA Update*

Admittedly the last few months have constituted an exciting period for the *PA Update*. Six months ago we reached an important milestone with the publication of our 100th issue and a number of readers wrote in, congratulating and wishing us the best for the future. There is nothing more gratifying for a publication than the fact that it has a readership and one that finds it interesting, useful and relevant.

Then, a couple of months ago, with support from the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) we published the 300 page '*The State of Wildlife In North East India: 1996-2011: A compilation of news from the Protected Area Update*' (please see *PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 2). It is the first publication that goes beyond the bi-monthly newsletter to excavate and present in a modified format the wealth of information that the *PA Update* has been putting together now for nearly two decades. As the editorial note in the book points out, it is an analysis of the English mainstream media's reporting on wildlife as much as it is an account of wildlife itself in the north east. The first set of review copies have gone out and many regular *PA Update*'s have also ordered and received their copies. The initial feedback has been positive but more substantial critiques are still awaited, which we also then hope to report back through the 'Readers Write' page in the newsletter.

It is also hugely gratifying that over the years the *PA Update*, all its serious limitations notwithstanding, has accumulated a dedicated and reasonably large readership. Nearly 2000 people receive a copy through the post and roughly the same number have subscribed to paupdate@yahoogroups.com to receive the pdf as soon as it is released.

We are hosted on a number of websites and have also tried to keep pace with the exciting new opportunities offered by communication technologies, particularly those created in the rapidly evolving electronic world. The yahoo group is an example; and now the *PA Update* also has its own facebook page

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

The idea of the facebook page is to aggregate what the media in India is telling us about our wildlife and particularly our protected areas, and one suddenly realizes that there is more news and information than we can deal with. What appears in the *PA Update* is actually only a fraction of what is actually out there. Readers are encouraged to check out the facebook page – both to get regular information but also to contribute stuff that might have been left out. Active participation by all of you will make it more comprehensive, interesting and even more relevant.

And finally, as we get into the new year (our funding cycle follows the financial year), I'd like to shamelessly take this opportunity to request for your support and help. Finding funds for the *PA Update* has been a constant struggle and for the last few years we've had to consistently deal with significant shortfalls. The FES and the Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust, like has been for so many years, continue to be our biggest support. But that is only half of what we need. Please support us with your individual donations, subscriptions or with larger support that institutions can perhaps think of. There are a number of ways this can be done, including bulk subscriptions, or support to send the *PA Update* to wildlife staff in different parts of the country. If you have ideas or need more information please write to me at psekhsaria@gmail.com

The challenges don't go away, but this perhaps is what makes the effort all the more satisfying and exciting.



NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Ban on heavy vehicular traffic through Kawal Tiger Reserve



The Andhra Pradesh government will soon ban heavy vehicular traffic through the Kawal Tiger Reserve (KTR). This decision was taken at the January 29 meeting of the State Board for Wildlife chaired by Chief Minister, N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, and was subsequently communicated to the forest department for implementation.

The district administration needs at least a few days to gear up for the situation as a ban could result in large-scale dislocation in the flow of goods transportation between the north and the south. South-bound heavy vehicles, including 40-tonner behemoths, began using the Gudihatnoor-Utnoor-Jannaram-Luxettipet road cutting through the KTR towards Vijayawada, Rajahmundry and Visakhapatnam as an alternate route after the four laning of National Highway (NH) - 7 and the introduction of toll plazas about four years ago.

Passing through Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal and Khammam districts, the truckers save about 250 km in distance travelled and about Rs. 3,000 as toll fee at the eight plazas on NH-7, NH-9 and NH-5. A survey conducted by the Roll Mamda and Gamjal toll agency, Eagle Infra India Ltd., has shown that about 1,000 lorries of two or multiple axles take this diversion from the NH-7 every day in addition to the 700 four- and seven-tonners plying between destinations within the district.

Source: S. Harpal Singh, 'Ban on heavy vehicles in KTR soon', *The Hindu*, 02/04/13.

Contact: **DFO Wildlife**, Kawal WLS, Jannaram, Dist. Adilabad - 504 205. Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08739-236224
PCCF (WL), Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhavan, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

Remains of a rare spider sighted in the Seshachalam BR

The remains of a rare spider, *Poecilotheria Metallica* (Pocock), which was officially last seen in 1899 in the railway timber depot near the Gooty Railway Station in Anantapur district, were sighted near the Kapilatheertham forest office complex on January 29.

A wildlife biologist working in the bio-lab. of Seshachalam Wildlife Management Circle at Tirupati, M Bhubesh Gupta, sighted the remains of the spider while carrying out a detailed biodiversity inventory of the Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve (BR) that is spread over the Chittoor and Kadapa districts.

Very little is known about this species' ecology, distribution and breeding biology. The spider was listed as Critically Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. As it was found in Gooty for the first time, it is also called the Gooty Sapphire Ornamental Tree Spider in addition to having other names. The spider is poisonous and its bite causes intense pain, sweating, headache, cramping and swelling. But no human death has been recorded so far due to its bite.

Source: T Karnakar Reddy, 'Rare spider specimen found in Tirumala forest', *The New Indian Express*, 02/04/13.



GUJARAT

No lion poaching in Gir in two years

The Gujarat Government has said that precautionary measures and support extended by the people of Saurashtra have helped in ensuring that there has been no lion poaching in and around Gir in the last two years (*PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 3).

92 lion deaths, 46 in each year, were indeed reported but of these 83 were reported to have resulted from natural causes and the remaining nine were accidental deaths, particularly due to fall into deep wells. The casualties included 20 males, 29 females with the rest being cubs. The state government has launched a drive to cover all the unprotected wells in the sanctuary and in its adjacent villages (*PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 3; Vol. XV, No. 4; Vol. XIII, Nos. 5 & 2 and Vol. XII, No. 6).

Source: Manas Dasgupta, 'No lions poached at Gir in two years: Gujarat', *The Tribune*, 27/03/13.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/630051. Fax: 631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in
CWLW - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar-382010, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-230007. Fax: 221097.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Trikuta WLS de-notified

A decision has been taken to completely de-notify the 3.14 sq. km Trikuta Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) located in Jammu district. A proposal for the de-notification had been put up by the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board and placed before the State Board for Wildlife in December 2010.

The board in its meeting held on December 20, 2010 decided to accept the de-notification, subject to the following conditions: a) The state forest department shall identify three alternate sites and the state shall issue a notification under Section 17(1) of Jammu & Kashmir Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1978 for the notification of an area equal or double the area proposed to be de-notified from the

Trikuta Wildlife Sanctuary, and

b) The User Agency shall initiate an environment impact assessment (EIA) study report for the better management of the pilgrimage to the Vaishno Devi shrine.

The proposal was then forwarded to the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), the Standing Committee of which, in its 22nd meeting held on April 25, 2011, also approved of the de-notification proposal subject to certain conditions. The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), vide its order dated October 31, 2011, also granted environmental clearance for a rope-way project at Katra, intended to carry materials and passengers for the shrine.

The Jammu & Kashmir State Government vide S.R.O. No. 47 dated January 30, 2012, also announced its intention to declare an area of 66.27 sq. km adjacent to the Hirapora Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Srinagar district as the Tatakuti Wildlife Sanctuary, in lieu of the de-notified Trikuta WLS.

The de-notification was confirmed by the Supreme Court in March 2013.

Source: *Forest Case Update*, Issue 77, January-March 2013.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Trikuta WLS, Udhampur, Kathua, Dist. Kathua, Jammu & Kashmir.

JHARKHAND

Palamau TR takes up repair of its core roads

Repair work on two core roads within the Palamau Tiger Reserve (TR) - the one from Lat to Mandal via compartment 9 and the other from Mandal to Meral- has been taken up recently. The stretch between Lat and Mandal via Saidupe is 22 km long while that from Mandal to Meral is 10 km.

The two stretches undergoing repair work are located in sensitive areas and are notorious for landmine explosions. Security forces such as BSF, IRB, CRPF, CoBRA, ITBP, and Latehar police hardly take these roads as they are planted with landmines.

Villagers are also unable to use these roads and it has been suggested that the repair work will be to their benefit and also help the forest department in ensuring better and effective patrolling.

Source: 'Repair work on for Palamu Tiger Reserve core roads', *The Times of India*, 21/04/13.

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

KARNATAKA

Water level in Kabini reservoir drops to lowest in ten years



The water level in the Kabini reservoir has fallen to 2,248.10 ft, the lowest in a decade. The last time it had hit the 2,248 ft mark was when the state witnessed a severe drought in 2003. Officials attribute the present situation to the failure of the monsoon and shortage of rainfall in Wayanad, the Kabini catchment in Kerala.

The Irrigation Department had stopped releasing water to irrigation canals in December 2012 to keep the water level from slipping further. Officials have provided water for one crop only, and farmers were warned against growing paddy or sugarcane as most of the water was released for Tamil Nadu following the Supreme Court directives.

The Kabini reservoir has a storage capacity of 19.5 tmcft, of which 6.5 tmcft is the dead storage. An irrigation official is reported to have said 2.75 tmcft of this dead storage can be released in the worst case scenario. This, however, would seriously affect the wildlife, including hundreds of elephants and other animals that depend on water from the reservoir.

Source: Shiva Kumar, 'Kabini reservoir level drops to 10-year low of 2,248.10 ft', *The New Indian Express*, 03/04/13.

19 tiger deaths in Karnataka in one year ending March 2013

Karnataka has recorded 19 tiger deaths in the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. Although, most deaths were natural, a few of the big cats died of poaching and poisoning, which has become a cause of concern for the Forest Department (FD).

Recently two tigers were poisoned and the post mortem report revealed that they had eaten animal meat laced with poison. The FD is investigating the cases.

Nine tiger deaths had been recorded in the state for the corresponding period in the earlier year.

Source: Shyam Sundar Vattam, '19 tigers die in 12 months in state', *The New Indian Express*, 03/04/13.

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

KERALA

Kerala to prepare Marine Biodiversity Register

The Kerala State Biodiversity Board, in association with Protsahan, a Thiruvananthapuram-based NGO, has initiated a programme to prepare a Marine Biodiversity Register (MBR) documenting the underwater ecology of the inshore areas and the traditional knowledge systems of fishermen in the state. The pilot phase will cover a 20-km stretch of the Thiruvananthapuram coast from Valiathura to Puthukurichy.

The project is expected to help demarcate marine protected areas, reconstitute the areas undergoing habitat destruction, and formulate ecosystem-based fishing management policies. It will also

suggest measures to protect the marine ecology in the biodiversity-rich coastal waters.

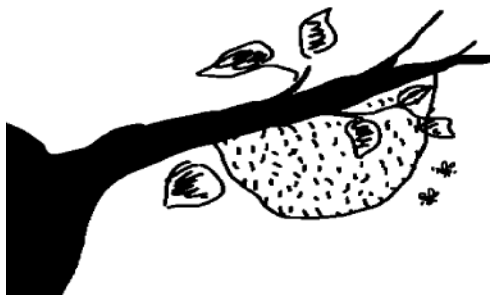
The MBR will document traditional knowledge on navigation, bottom configuration of the seabed, ocean currents, and wind patterns. It will also provide indicators of overfishing and marine resource depletion.

The pilot phase involves the preparation of a map of natural reefs in the region and documentation of different kinds of seasonal fishing. It will cover a depth of up to 25 fathoms of inshore waters. The reefs and their characteristics will be documented with the help of GPS and the details plotted on a map. It will record the demersal species around the reef areas.

Protsahan has proposed the documentation of reefs with underwater images and filming of flora and fauna in the next phase.

Source: T. Nandakumar, 'Kerala to map marine biodiversity', *The Hindu*, 18/03/13.

Decline in Rock bee colonies in Idukki WLS



A decline has been reported in the number of Rock bee colonies in the Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary and the Cardamom Hill Reserve areas. According to local communities from Kozhimala in the sanctuary, the number of bee colonies and the quantity of honey have reduced in recent years. A cliff at Thenpara which had nearly 40 colonies in the past now has only 15. Each colony, according to them, also yields only one-third of the honey it used to, earlier.

The decline in the bee colonies has been attributed to increased air and noise pollution and increased human interference and other activities in the forests here.

Source: Giji K. Raman, 'Rock bees taste the bitter fruits of man's greed', *The Hindu*, 03/04/13.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Idukki Wildlife Division, P.O. Painavu, Dist. Idukki - 685 603, Kerala. **Tel:** 04862-232271
Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. **Tel:** 0471-2322217 / 2360452 / 2204896. **Fax:** 2360452 / 2322217

MADHYA PRADESH

NBWL refuses permission for highway upgradation project through Ratapani WLS

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has rejected the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) proposal seeking expansion and upgradation of a road through the Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary. The NHAI had sought de-notification of an area covering 58.5 hectares of the sanctuary to upgrade the two-lane National Highway 69 to four lanes to facilitate higher and faster traffic between Bhopal and Nagpur.

The Standing Committee of the NBWL accepted an expert panel report which said that the project cannot be permitted, as tigers and other wild animals will become more vulnerable to accidents. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had earlier endorsed the report prepared by the NBWL Standing Committee Member Perna Singh Bindra and NTCA official Rajeev Sharma. The report had rejected the proposal, but also admitted that the condition of the road was very bad and the best alternative would be to repair the road and strengthen it.

Source: 'Environment Ministry rejects proposal to expand Bhopal-Nagpur highway', *The Economic Times*, 08/04/13.

Contact: **DFO**, Ratapani WLS, P.O. Obeidullaganj, Dist. Raisen, Madhya Pradesh. **Tel:** 07480-24062
CWLW, MP, Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. **Tel:** 0755-557371/ 550391.

MAHARASHTRA

Three tonnes of plastic removed from relocated village in Melghat TR



Volunteers of Amravati-based Satpuda Foundation, Swawalambi Eco Club, Akola, and forest staff of the Akot Wildlife Division of Melghat TR removed three tonnes plastic from Gullarghat, a village relocated from Melghat Tiger Reserve (TR).

The plastic had been used by villagers for waterproofing of their roofs which were dismantled after relocation and had been left in the area. Most of the plastic was buried and a large quantity littered all over the place.

A similar campaign was conducted last year in Dhargad, another village relocated from the reserve.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Students remove 3 tonne plastic from relocated village in Melghat', *The Times of India*, 22/04/13.

Contact: **Satpuda Foundation**, 201, Sapphire, Opp. Jantar-Mantar Flats, Bharat Nagar, Amravati Road, Nagpur, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-2557320(0) / 9422157123. Email: satpuda_found@yahoo.com
DCF (Wildlife) Popatkhed Road Akot Dist. Akola – 444001, Maharashtra. Tel: 07172-251414

NTCA releases funds for STPF in Tadoba-Andhari and Pench

Just three days ahead of the financial year coming to a close, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) released over Rs. 1.73 crore for the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) in the Tadoba-Andhari and Pench Tiger Reserves (TRs). The wildlife wing had proposed Rs. 12.94 crore for the two platoons to procure weapons, vehicles,

equipment and infrastructure for personnel. However, that has not been released.

The NTCA had, in February 2009, mandated setting up of STPFs in all TRs. Accordingly, Maharashtra set up one STPF battalion each in Tadoba and Pench in January 2012. The project is a 100% supported scheme of the Centre. However, even with the financial year (2012-13) coming to a close, the NTCA had failed to release funds towards salaries and other infrastructure and to raise STPF.

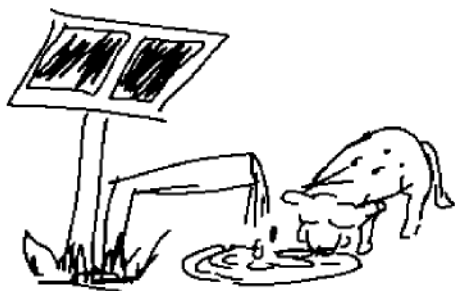
Also, the Centre has objected to the fact that locals were not recruited to STPF and the appointed foresters were above 40 years, violating the norms. The Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) and Field Director of Pench has explained in response that a ban on direct recruitment of foresters in the state has made it difficult to get foresters below 40. Hence, the composition of the STPF was modified and posts of foresters were completely withdrawn. These posts will be replaced with van majoors or local forest watchers.

Earlier, the each platoon consisted of 112 personnel, including 90 forest guards, 18 foresters and 3 range forest officers, to be headed by an assistant conservator of forests (ACF). Now there will be no foresters, but 81 forest guards and 27 van majoors. The replacement of foresters in STPF at Tadoba and Pench is in progress.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Breather as NTCA releases Rs1.73cr for STPF', *The Times of India*, 31/03/13.

Contact: **Field Director**, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Project, Mul Road, In front of Sanchiti Chamber, Chandrapur – 442401, Maharashtra. Tel: 07172-51414(O), 56382(R)
DCF, Pench National Park, I/c, Bor WLS Near Govt. Press, Civil Lines, Nagpur-440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 - 2524727(O) , 2227282(R). Fax: 2539226

Special funds to provide water to wildlife in drought-hit districts



The Maharashtra State Government has approved the proposal demanding special funds for providing water to wildlife in the drought-hit districts of the state. A plan has been prepared to ensure that wild animals in nine districts in Marathwada and Western Maharashtra region continue to get water during summer.

All deputy conservators of forests and sub-divisional forest officers in the nine districts - Satara, Sangli, Solapur, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Beed, Osmanabad, Jalna and Pune - have been asked to survey Reserve and Protected Forest Areas to identify natural water sources that have completely dried up and where water holes, borewells and solar water pumps need to be set up.

As per Maharashtra Energy Development Agency rates, an amount of Rs. 48,200 has been earmarked for each water hole, Rs. One lakh for a bore-well and Rs. 2.5 lakh for solar water pumps. A limit of Rs. 10 lakh has been set for each district and respective collectors have been asked to approve the proposals accordingly. Stress is on solar powered pumps at water holes.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Govt okays water plan for wildlife in drought-hit districts', *The Times of India*, 04/04/13.

One tiger cub killed, another injured in train accident in buffer zone of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

A speeding passenger train killed a tiger cub and seriously injured another near Kelzhar, the railway station situated in the buffer zone of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). The accident occurred early on April 15, at about 6:15 am, when

a tigress was reportedly crossing the railway track along with her three cubs.

The tigress and one of her cubs succeeded in crossing the track but the remaining two could not, and were hit by the passenger train running from Gondia to Chandrapur. One of them died on the spot while the other was seriously injured. The latter was shifted to the Wildlife Rescue Centre at Nagpur in the evening. .

Other wild animals have also been similarly killed in train accidents in this section in the recent past. This includes, among others, a sloth bear and a leopard a couple of years ago. The Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department has reportedly booked the railway authorities under various sections of the Wildlife Protection Act.

A subsequent meeting between senior officials of the Railway Board and Ministry of Environment and Forests has decided to put in place safeguards to prevent such deaths in the future. A decision was made to identify the sensitive stretches of the Gondia-Chandrapur railway sector, to limit the speed of trains to 40 km per hour in the entire sector and to put in place electronic-surveillance of tiger movement using 24X7, intelligent, thermal cameras at sensitive points near railway tracks.

A system will be installed for sharing of 'tiger spatial use data' in advance between the Forest Department (FD) and the Railways using wireless technology on a day-to-day basis, with monthly joint reviews by senior officials of the Railway and the FD at the division level. Wildlife sensitization workshops, with help from the officials of [the National Tiger Conservation Authority](#) will also be organised for railway personnel.

The meeting also reviewed the country-level status on tiger deaths due to train hits and the on-going tiger monitoring protocol that has been put in place.

Source: Pradip Kumar Maitra. 'Tadoba tiger cub run over by train', *Hindustan Times*, 16/04/13.
'Electronic surveillance of tiger movement to be put in place', *The Times of India*, 23/04/13.

Leopards kill six, tigers two, in and around Tadoba Andhari TR, Umred-Karhandla WLS

Leopards are reported to have killed at least six people in a month's period between March and April 2013 in and around the forests of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) and of Chandrapur district. The places where the leopard attacks occurred included Sadagadh in the Saoli Range and Adegaoon. The Adegaoon leopard was reportedly trapped by FD which said it was different from the one in Sadagadh.

In another incident in the 2nd week of April, a woman, Lalita Pendam, from Pathri village in Brahmapuri area of Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) was killed by a tiger. The 50-year old had gone to the jungle with other women to collect mahua flowers. Pendam was alone near a nullah when the tiger is said to have attacked her. The Forest Department made an immediate ex-gratia payment of Rs 25,000 to her family and installed traps for the tiger.

In another incident a few days later, a 65 year old woman, Lajabai Bhagwan Fukat of Ranbodi village within the sanctuary, was killed by a tiger in the Umred-Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary situated about 55 km from TATR. She too was out collecting mahua flowers and when she did not return home till late in the afternoon, a search was launched. Her body was found in compartment number 364 in Wanoda. Officials said that she had been killed near a solar water hole in compartment number 435, following which the tiger had dragged her body for around 500 metres.

At least 25 villagers have also been injured in attacks by animals here. Ranbodi, with a population of 550, is situated inside the sanctuary and is to be relocated. Wildlife conservationists have argued that once the relocation happens, the issue of human-animal conflict will not arise.

Source: 'Chandrapur again: Tiger kills woman; killer leopard caught', *The Indian Express*, 13/04/13.

Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tiger kills woman in Umred-Karhandla sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 18/04/13.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden** – Maharashtra, Jaika Building, Civil Lines, Nagpur – 440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 – 526758 / 530126.

ODISHA

CAG points to serious deficiencies in tiger reserve management in Odisha

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has pointed out a series of serious deficiencies in the management of tiger reserves (TRs) in the state of Odisha. The CAG report notes that the TRs were not under one single line of command and control and the dual administration in supervision was in violation of the Project Tiger guidelines and has affected project implementation and protection in TRs. It says that the tiger population declined drastically in Odisha due to inadequate protection measures and deficiency in project management in the form of lack of inviolate space, low expenditure and delay in relocation of villages from core areas.

It notes that in the Satkosia TR, for instance, there was no full time Field Director and it was under supervision of the Satkosia Wildlife Division and Mahanadi Wildlife Division. In case of Simlipal TR, the entire buffer zone as well as the transition zone of the Simlipal Biosphere Reserve was under three territorial divisions, indicating there was no unified command and control system. The Field Director and the Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF), Baripada, used to be two different officers manning the two positions till last year when the government managed to merge the two posts for better management of the TR.

The CAG also notes that the state government passed a resolution, in May 2012, for establishment of the Special Tiger Protection Force, a full three years after the relevant resolution was passed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority and this indicated lack of sincerity and seriousness on part of the state administration. As a consequence, the CAG report notes, poaching of elephants, illegal tree felling and mass animal hunting like *Akhand Shikar* in Similipal TR could not be controlled.

Further, during the five-year period 2006-11, the annual plan of operations

budgeted Rs. 103.43 crore for the state . The Simlipal TR had asked for funds for five years, while Satkosia, which was notified in 2007, sought funds for a three-year period from 2008 to 2011. The Centre sanctioned Rs. 31.62 crores (with a state share of Rs. 5.85 crores) against which an amount of Rs. 27.23 crores was released (state share of Rs. 4.79 crores). However, only about Rs. 23.37 crores was utilised by the two TR managements and Rs. 3.86 crores had remained unutilised.

Source: ‘Odisha sitting over funds for tiger reserves: CAG’, *The New Indian Express*, 31/03/13.
 Contact: **Director**, Simlipal Tiger Reserve, P.O. Baripada, Dist. Mayurbhanj – 757002, Orissa. Tel: 06792-252593(O), 252773(R) Fax: 256705

Rice for Olive Ridley Conservation scheme in four coastal districts



As many as 10,133 fishermen families have been identified under the Rice for Olive Ridley Conservation (RORC) scheme in Kendrapara, Puri, Ganjam and

Bhadrak districts where the turtles arrive for nesting each winter.

The scheme seeks to ensure food security for the fisherfolk since they are barred from fishing along the coast during the mass nesting of the Olive Ridley turtles from November to May. Each family will be provided with 25 kg. of rice at a subsidized rate every month and a special card will be issued to those who can avail this provision under the scheme.

The Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Department along with Fisheries and Animal Resources Development Department have been entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the scheme.

Source: ‘10,113 fishermen families identified for RORC’, *The New Indian Express*, 25/03/13.
 Contact: **DFO**, Bhitarkanika NP, At/PO Rajnagar, Dist. Kendrapada – 745225. Orissa. Tel: 06729-72460/64. Fax: 06727-20775

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

TAMIL NADU

Blackbuck population rises in Vallanadu Sanctuary

A recent census has shown that the population of blackbuck in the Vallanadu Sanctuary has doubled from 39 animals in 2010 to 79 now. The census was conducted by the forest department (FD) with the help of 30 volunteers from the Tuticorin based Pearl City Nature Society (PCNS). Two spotted deer and a barking deer were also spotted during the exercise.

According to the forest officials, protective measures taken in the sanctuary have yielded good results. After the 2010 census, the FD recruited six anti-poaching watchers and surveillance was increased. Awareness programmes were held for the villagers near the sanctuary. As grazing the cattle in the sanctuary exposes the blackbucks to diseases from domestic animals, the FD conducted veterinary camps in the adjoining villages.

A PCNS member who helped conduct the census pointed out that with the rise in numbers, the sanctuary needed to be developed with better pasture lands. The fences are also broken at many places and a number of feral dogs and cattle could be seen in the sanctuary area which pose a serious threat for the blackbuck.

A forest official has said that funds have already been allocated to the sanctuary and work for improving the pasture lands and water facilities was to start soon.

Source: J Arockiaraj, ‘Blackbuck count doubles in Vallanadu sanctuary’, *The Times of India*, 31/03/13.

Contact: **DFO**, Tirunelveli Division, Tirunelveli – 627009, Dist – Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0462-572712

UTTARKHAND

Uttarakhand seeks tiger reserve status for Rajaji NP

The Uttarakhand Government has planned to send a proposal to the Centre seeking tiger reserve status for the Rajaji National Park (NP). Chief Minister Vijay Bahuguna said that bringing Rajaji NP under the purview of the project is a must to give a boost to the tiger population at the park. He was speaking at a function at the Dhikala range of Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) to mark four decades of tiger conservation efforts in the country.

The Chief Minister announced that the Doggada range of Lansdowne forest division in Uttarakhand will be made a part of the CTR. He also met representatives of the Van Gujjar community living close to the CTR and Rajaji NP, and assured them that steps are underway to provide them with permanent settlements.

Source: 'Bahuguna for inclusion of Rajaji Park under Project Tiger', *Business Standard*, 02/04/13.

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP, 5/1 Ansari Marg, Dehradun – 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-2621669 Fax: 2621669
CWLW, 5, Chandrabani, Mohobewala, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0135- 2644691

WEST BENGAL

Sunderban tigers to be radio-collared



The West Bengal Forest Department (FD) has proposed to radio-collar up to ten tigers in the Sunderbans. A team of from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), led by senior scientist Y V Jhala, would help the FD to decide on the exact number of tigers to be collared.

In 2010, a total of five tigers, consisting of two adult females and three adult males, were radio-collared by the WII scientists here. The study had revealed that the tigers' home ranges hovered between 190 to 200 square kilometres, that there is tiger movement between the Indian and Bangladeshi segments of the Sunderbans and also that the movement rate was higher during the day.

However, the exercise didn't yield the desired result then, as several collars stopped working within a few days of their deployment. This time the WII has made some changes in the circuitry of the collars to make them more robust. These collars have been used on lions in Gir and have functioned without a problem for a year at a stretch.

Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee, 'Ten tigers to be radio-collared in Sunderbans', *The Times of India*, 30/03/13.

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

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

NPV of forest land for CAMPA to be reviewed

The imposition of the net present value (NPV), which was to be used by the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) to initiate afforestation, is reported to have helped accumulate over Rs. 25,000 crores. The Government has now asked the Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM) to submit a report within three months on revising the NPV to be charged to project proponents.

At present, the government charges a maximum of Rs. 10,43,000 per hectare for leveling dense forest, and Rs. 6,99,000 is the minimum charge. The IIFM has been mandated to review the slab rates imposed

for diverting different types of forests for non-forest use and also to review policy to indicate whether some kinds of projects should get a partial or complete exemption from the levy.

The fund has been a bone of contention between states and the centre, with the former asking for the sum to be repatriated after it is collected from project developers. Several states have demanded that the funds be used to augment the forest department's infrastructure and for capacity building. Wildlife experts have asked that the funds be used for conservation while the Central Ministry of Environment and Forests has argued for using the funds for its Green India Mission under the National Action Plan for Climate Change.

Source: Nitin Sethi, 'Levy charged for using forestland set to go up', *Economic Times*, 04/04/13.

Any citizen can move National Green Tribunal to report violations

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has held that any citizen can report violations of green norms. The person need not be someone directly or indirectly affected by a project. The tribunal has also put in mandatory obligations on the government and project developers to disclose details of clearances.

The order came in the case of the 780 MW Nyamjang Chhu Hydroelectric project in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The developer of this project had put out a small advertisement in a local newspaper instead of publishing the entire clearance details. In its order, the NGT said, "Law gives a right to 'any person' who is 'aggrieved' by an order to prefer an appeal. The term 'any person' has to be widely construed. It is to include all legal entities so as to enable them to prefer an appeal, even if such an entity does not have any direct or indirect interest in a given project. The expression 'aggrieved', again, has to be construed liberally."

The NGT also noted that the project proponent is legally obliged to make public the environmental clearance granted for the project

with the environmental conditions and safeguards and their cost, by promptly advertising it in at least two newspapers of the district or in the state where the project is located and that a mere notice of securing a clearance by the project developer is not enough.

Strict guidelines have also been put in place for disclosure by the government within one week of passing of the order.

Source: 'Now, any citizen can move National Green Tribunal to report violations', *Economic Times*, 27/03/13.

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

Barasingha population rises in Shuklaphanta



A recent census has revealed that the population of the barasingha in the Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve has increased from 1825 last year to 2170 now. Of these, 505 are male, 1,280 female and 385 juveniles.

The team that carried out the census included 25 staff members of the reserve and the National Trust for Nature Conservation, as also members of the Nepal Army and the buffer zone management committees. The census was supported by the Terai Arc Landscape Programme.

Source: Chitranga Thapa, 'Number of swamp deer increases', www.ekantipur.com, 22/04/13.

Important Bird Areas Update



ANDHRA PRADESH

Dispute over Kolleru land remains unresolved

The meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted to examine the issues related to Kolleru Lake has been deferred without any indication of when it will be held next.

The GoM was presented with the dispute over 7,586.14 acres of land in the Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS) at its first meeting held in December 2012. Locals claim that the 7,500 acres that was declared part of Contour +5 was wrongly included in the KWLS. Local political leaders have demanded that the land be distributed to the poor. The forest department has, however, said that the land was within the +5 contour and was therefore part of the sanctuary.

The GoM, at their first meeting, had said they needed the advice of the Advocate General before the denotification of the disputed area from the KWLS.

Meanwhile, the different parties pursuing the issue seem to be losing interest in it. Only two ministers attended the second GoM meeting held on March 2, 2013. The Forest Minister, who is the convenor and host, and the Revenue Minister were the only Ministers who attended. The GoM meeting, consequently, has been deferred indefinitely with the observation that the issue is no more important enough to bring six ministers together to discuss it.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, No. 1 and Vol. XVIII, No. 6)

Source: 'GoM meeting on Kolleru postponed', *The Hindu*, 02/04/13.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, I/c Kolleru WLS, Eluru. West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08812-232356.

GUJARAT

Increase in vulture populations in lion country in Gujarat



The vulture population in the Bhavnagar and Amreli districts of Gujarat is reported to be steadily increasing. Besides serious conservation efforts and people's awareness, the increase is also attributed to the presence of a large number of lions in the revenue land in this region. Vultures here, experts have pointed out, feed on [the animals](#) that have been preyed upon by lions. Most of these are domestic cattle that have not been administered Diclofenac, and therefore the vultures are not impacted.

The number of vultures in the 70-km Mahua-Rajula-Nageshree coastal stretch has steadily increased from an all-time low of 87 in 2010 to 134 in 2012. Lions are found in good numbers in Mahuva, Rajula, Khambha, Jafabad and Savarkundla areas, and most of them are outside of the protected forest area.

Vultures are often seen here, feeding on kills made by the lions.

Notably, the Mahuva area was also recently proposed as one of the six Provisional Vultures Safe Zones in the country (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 4).

Source: Vijaysinh Parmar. 'Thanks to lions, vultures return to Gujarat coast', *The Times of India*, 29/04/13.

'Mission Clean Thol' by CCI

The Conservation Consortium India (CCI), an NGO based in Ahmedabad, has launched an initiative 'Mission Clean Thol' to develop the Thol Wildlife Sanctuary as a model that can be followed by other sanctuaries.



The initiative seeks to involve the forest department (FD), and citizens from the two adjoining cities Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. During the first three months starting December 2012, CCI helped the FD in cleaning up garbage, installing dustbins, and monitoring the implementation of tourism rules and guidelines around the sanctuary.

Plans for the future include involving locals by organizing free community health camps, training in local schools, and involving corporate groups from both Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar as stakeholders who may want to take up different activities in and around Thol on a regular basis.

CCI also plans to prepare a long term strategy for developing and maintaining the sanctuary through a scientific and management-oriented approach.

Contact: CCI, B60, Harshnagar Society, D Cabin Sabarmati, Ahmedabad – 380019. Tel: 09227485109, Email: ccindiafoundation@gmail.com

KERALA

CRZ nod for huge construction project in Vembanad Lake

A huge construction project involving a 217-room hotel, 572 apartments, a convention centre with a capacity of 3,400 seats, a restaurant and a health club on Mulavukad in the Vembanad lake has been granted Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance. The buildings are to be spread over an area of 1.49 lakh square metres at the site.

The Kerala State Coastal Zone Management Authority recommended the project at its 53rd meeting that was held recently and has now forwarded it to the State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA).

Though the Coastal Zone Management Authority banked on a report by its subcommittee for giving clearance, the subcommittee had also recommended that 'activities permissible under the CRZ notification 2011 and port-related activities can only be allowed on leased land.' However, in its clearance letter, the authority observed that the 'said construction is proposed in the land reclaimed by the Port Trust for port activity and subsequently leased out to the proponent.'

The report of the committee was discussed in detail and after considering various ecological aspects, it was decided that the area being part of an island, the CRZ extends up to 50 metres while the proposal is for construction of non-port related activity envisaged outside the 50 metres. The proposal, therefore, was deemed fit for recommendation and to be forwarded to the SEIAA.

Source: KS Sudhi. 'Construction on wetland site gets CRZ nod', *The Hindu*, 10/04/13.



MAHARASHTRA

Project to study forest owlets in Melghat & Tadoba TRs and in Toranmal, Nandurbar district

The Pune-based Wildlife Research and Conservation Society (WRCS) will soon embark on a project to study the critically endangered forest owl in the Melghat and Tadoba Tiger Reserves and in the forests of Toranmal in the Nandurbar district. As many as 25 pairs of the bird will be colour-banded to study their distribution, population, demography and ecology. In the first phase of the project that will begin in September 2013, a team will capture and mark the birds with differently-coloured bands.

The project is supported by the Government of India's Department of Science and Technology (DST) and MBZ Species Conservation Fund. Permissions from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and the State Forest Department have also been obtained.

Source: Tarini Puri. 'Colour-banding may help save forest owlets', *The Times of India*, 16/04/13.

Contact: WRCS. Email: mail.wracs@gmail.com

UTTAR PRADESH

Illegal construction, sewage discharge and fluctuating water levels threaten Soor Sarovar WLS



Illegal construction, sewage and chemical discharge and fluctuating water levels are said to be steadily degrading the habitat of the Soor Sarovar Wildlife Sanctuary. One of the prime culprits is alleged to be the Anand Engineering College, a unit of the Sharda Group of

Institutions, that is located on the southern boundary of the sanctuary.

The institution is believed to have expanded infrastructure in violation of Supreme Court orders prohibiting non-forestry activities in and close to protected areas without its prior permission. The college directly discharges all waste and sewage into the Keetham Lake that forms the heart of the sanctuary. The forest department (FD) has actively attempted to deal with the situation but has been unsuccessful, mostly on account of the clout the institution yields in political and administrative circles.

In another case of environmental violations, the Keetham Lake has been experiencing fluctuating water levels due to water supplied to the nearby Mathura Refinery. The refinery, which is an offshoot of the Indian Oil Corporation, began to draw water from the Keetham Lake in 1981. At this time they signed a 25-year agreement with the Irrigation Department of the Government of Uttar Pradesh. Though the agreement came to an end in 2006, the withdrawal of water has not stopped, neither has the agreement been renewed.

The problem does not lie in the drawing of the water per say, but in the habitat disturbance caused by an abruptly changing water level. The Irrigation Department regularly releases fresh water into the lake via a canal. Water is then lifted and channeled to a treatment plant located on forestland in the sanctuary.

The full tank level of the Keetham Lake is 24 feet. While the refinery benefits from high water levels in the lake, from the viewpoint of wildlife management, high water levels are a matter of serious concern. When the water level rises above 19 feet, the islands within the lake and the immediate banks get completely submerged, seriously impacting a number of bird species.

This year too, the lake was filled to 22 feet by the third week of March. The water level was only brought down when the DCF wrote to the superintendent engineer of the Irrigation Department. In order to legally continue using water from the Keetham Lake, the Indian Oil Corporation requires clearance

from the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife. No such proposal has, however, even been sent in yet.

Another serious problem the sanctuary faces is on account of the release of chemicals after the water purification process. In September 2012, a routine check of the treatment plant had revealed the use of these chemicals. It was further found that the residual waste from the process of purification of the water was being discharged directly into an open channel within the sanctuary.

In response to a show cause notice sent by the FD, the executive director of the Mathura Refinery justified water use as it was being carried out prior to the declaration of the sanctuary, with permissions from the Irrigation and the FD. The letter also stated that the refinery continues to pay charges to not just the Irrigation Department but also the FD and the Pollution Control Board.

The Refinery also claims to have phased out the use of chlorine since 2008 and replaced it with the comparatively non-hazardous Sodium Hypochlorite in compliance with environmental norms. Yet, it is reported that in November 2012 when a Mathura Refinery truck was checked at the entrance of the sanctuary, department officials found Sodium Hypochlorite, Poly Aluminium Chloride, Hydrochloric Acid and Sodium Chloride in the vehicle.

There are also reports that the Refinery is planning a massive expansion of their unit that will lead to a higher requirement of water and accordingly result in a permanent rise in the water level of the lake.

Source: Cara Tejpal, 'A silent death for Soor Sarovar Sanctuary', 03/05/13.

The *Important Bird Areas Update* is a new section that is being brought out in collaboration with and support from the *Bombay Natural History Society* (BNHS), the *Indian Bird Conservation Network* (IBCN) and the *Royal Society for the Protection of Birds* (RSPB), UK

WILDLIFE CRIME DIARY

<http://wildlifecrimeinindia.blogspot.in/>

May 15: Uttarakhand police seize two leopard skins and arrested two persons in Chamoli district.

May 14: Police officials seize four elephant tusks from a senior forest officer's home in Bangalore, Karnataka.

May 13: Five persons arrested with meat of wild boar in Chandrapur district, Maharashtra.

May 12: Maharashtra forest officials seize 14 tonnes of red sanders in Dhule district, Maharashtra.

May 11: Forest officials arrest six persons with 2.5kg of tiger bones and deer antlers in Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh.

May 10: The skeleton of the male rhino killed about a month ago and the 4-5 day old decomposed female rhino body recovered without horns in Kaziranga.

May 9: In a case detected by Wildlife Crime Control Bureau and Delhi Wildlife Department on December 2007, a person dealing in mongoose hair paint brushes was found guilty and convicted by a trial court.

May 8: Tamil Nadu forest officials arrest a person for killing five monitor lizards in Kanyakumari district.

May 5: The bear that killed eight persons is beaten to death at Kotpad in Koraput, Odisha. It had apparently gone on an attacking spree after the villagers eliminated two of its cubs a few days earlier.

May 4: The seizure of 12kg of ivory on 22 April lead the forest department to recover three elephant carcasses suspected to be killed by poachers in Hadagarh reserve forest, Keonjhar district, Odisha.

May 2: Villagers in Bhopal district of Madhya Pradesh kill a sloth bear after the animal attacked humans and livestock.

May 1: In a joint operation police and forest officials arrest two persons were arrested with deer meat, a gun and other poaching tools in Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh.

The Forest Rights Act, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation

CHHATTISGARH

Update from Chhattisgarh State Assembly on issues related to the FRA and also to wildlife conservation - Budget Session (From 18th Feb to 22nd March 2013)

1. Displacement from Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary

The forest villages of Bafra, Gudargarh, Mudpaar, Bhimaauri, Dheba and Akaltaraare are proposed to be displaced from the sanctuary. The proposal to such effect has been prepared but has yet to be forwarded to the relevant authority.

So far, forest village Rampur has been displaced from the sanctuary. A total of 135 families were displaced from the village Rampur and have been settled at compartment no. 500 and 501 of Mahasamund forest division.

(Source- Information provided as reply by Minister of Forest to starred question no. 1309/4 of 28th Feb and 2622/3 of 21st March 2013 raised by Dr Shiv Kumar Daharia and Dr Haridas Bhardwaj respectively)

2. Displacement from Achankmar Tiger Reserve

A decision was taken in January 2013 to displace 20 forest villages. Villages of Latadadar, Nawapara, Gudargarh, Bhimbauri, Bafra, Mudhpar, Dhebaand, Akaltaara from Barnawapara sanctuary in Baloda bazaar district are proposed to be displaced while Rampur in Barnawapara and six forest villages from that Achankmar Tiger Reserve have been displaced.

(Source- Information provided as reply by Minister of Forest to starred question no. 1663/28 of 07th March raised by Dr Haridas Bhardwaj)

3. Villages in Proposed Elephant Corridor

A total of 147 villages that includes two forest villages located in the proposed corridor between Tamor Pingla and Badalkol-Manora Elephant reserve have been identified.

32 villages of Pratapur tehsil of Surajpur district, 15 villages of Wadrafnagar Tehsil, 35 villages of Shankarpur Tehsil and 25 villages of

Kusmi Tehsil, 18 villages of Bagicha Tehsil and 24 villages of Manora Tehsil of Jashpur district come under the proposed corridor.

(Source- Information provided as reply by Minister of Forest to starred question no. 322/17 of 21st Feb raised by Dr Premsai Sing Tekam)

4. Only 2000 title deeds for individual forest rights distributed to Adivasis in Bastar

As per information provided in the Assembly, 2000 title deeds for individual forest rights were distributed to adivasis in Bastar in the year 2011-12, while in the year 2012-13 no such deeds have been allotted. The highest number of 665 titles were given in the Jagdalpur block.

(Source- Information provided as reply by Minister of Forest to starred question no. 623/20 raised by Mohammad Akbar on 21st Feb 2013)

5. JFM Committees in Kawardha district

There are 253 JFM Committees working in eight forest ranges of Kawardha district. Only two committees are headed by women. 63 of the committees have zero amount in their account, and 21 committees have less than Rs.1000. Only 32 committees have an amount between Rs 1000 to Rs 10,000 in their accounts, while 31 committees have between Rs. 10,000 to Rs 50,000.

The number of committees with a balance exceeding Rs.50,000 but less than Rs.5 lakhs in their accounts are 78, while only 28 committees have over Rs. 5 lakhs in their account.

(Source- Information provided as reply by Minister of Forest to starred question no. 788/04 raised by Dr Subahu Kashyap on 19th March 2013)

The information was compiled by **Vijendra Aznabi**, Programme Officer - Economic Justice Oxfam India, 301 Samruddhi Plaza, 3rd Floor, Opp. Old Petrol Pump Mira-Bhayander Road, Mira Road (East) Dist. Thane - 401 107, Maharashtra. Phone: +91-22-33074800 Ext.216

MAHARASHTRA

No basis yet for declaration of Critical Wildlife Habitat: a report from Yawal WLS

The forest department (FD) organized a meeting in the month of April to discuss issues related to the Yawal Wildlife Sanctuary. The meeting was organized in response to a request from the Lok Sangharsh Morcha in light of some developments related to the declaration of a Critical Wildlife Habitat (CWH) here. Newspapers, for instance, had been reporting that there was a proposal which listed about 16 villages to be relocated for creation of the CWH. There was, however, no explanation on how these villages had been identified and when the committee that identified these villages had been constituted.

The meeting was attended by officials from the revenue and forest departments and about 100 representatives from various villages around the sanctuary, mainly from the Bhil community. The FD informed during the meeting that a committee for the identification of the CWH had indeed been formed on the basis of a Maharashtra state G.R. (No. WLP-9007/279/F-1) dated 11th October 2011, which directs all protected area (PA) managers in the state to constitute a committee under section 5.1 of the draft protocol for identification of CWH.

It was pointed out in the meeting, however, that action on the ground cannot be

initiated on the basis of a draft protocol, which in any case is currently under revision. In response to a demand from the participants, the FD agreed to stop any further process towards identification of the CWH till the protocol was finalised. It was also pointed out that no such process can begin until recognition of rights has been completed. Both, the individual rights and CFRs have been filed in all the villages within the sanctuary about a year ago but no response has been received from the concerned agencies.

Prior to this meeting and following substantial pressure from local activists, the above-mentioned committee had in fact, already been dissolved and was in the process of being reconstituted. This was in response to objections raised by the activists to the inclusion of 'ecologists' and 'tribal experts' who they believed had little connection with the area. They have demanded that the committee should include people who are qualified and are actually working with the local people and have knowledge of the local ecosystems. It was also suggested that in schedule V areas, any such committee when constituted must be approved by the local gram sabhas.

Source: Trip report by **Neema Pathak**,
Kalpavriksh; Email:
neema.pb@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/>

Quick NEWS

Registration and abstract submission for the **Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS)** - 2013 are now open <http://www.sccs-bng.org/> Conference dates: Sept 26-28, 2013 in Bangalore

For online courses on biodiversity - The Conservation Education Center of BNHS <http://www.indianwildlifeclub.com/NGOs/Bombay-Natural-History.aspx> managed by Dr Dr.V.Shubhalaxmi

NEW issue of BUCEROS from the BNHS ENVIS website <http://www.bnhs.org/research/envis-centre.html>

<http://www.bannigrassland.org>
FOR a new initiative in the BANNI grasslands on Kutch. Applications called for the Thakar Jaikrishna Indrajai Research Fund under the Research and Monitoring in the Banni Landscape (RAMBLE) Project.

In MUMBAI 1-year PG Diploma in Sustainable Natural Resource Management & Conservation - Sunday lectures - begins July 7, 2013. Jointly organized by **Ecological Society**, Pune and **Palaash Environmental Education & Research**, Mumbai. E-mail:

parthbapat@gmail.com, Tel: +91 – 9969105570/ 9922247749

MoTA (MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS) status report on FRA implementation <http://tribal.nic.in/writereaddata/mainlinkFile/File1567.pdf>

March 2013

Adani project in Mundra has violated environmental norms, rules MoEF committee <http://cseindia.org/node/4925> Report provides incontrovertible evidence of destruction of mangroves, blocking of creeks and non-compliance of other clearance conditions

TURTLE CONSERVATION FUND (TCF) administers a turtle conservation and research grants program. Awards are granted to organizations or individuals for specific conservation or research projects dealing with highly endangered tortoises or freshwater turtles, but not with marine turtles, with either partial or full support as funding allows. <http://www.turtleconservationfund.org/grants/>

VULTURES, NEPAL

Starting April 2012, two species of vulture (Red-headed and Egyptian) were studied in **middle mountain range of**

central west Nepal. The study was focused on the population status and breeding success as well as the threats to the remaining population. Download the report from <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/26729726/Vulture.Report.2012.Nepal.Subedi.pdf>

“The 6th Great Himalayan Bird Count” is to be conducted along 72 popular trekking trails situated in the river-valleys of **Tons**, Yamuna, **Pabbar**, Kamal Nadi, **Aglar**, Bhagirathi, **Bhilingna**, Ganga, **Mandakini** and Alaknanda in Garhwal Himalayas including Asan & Jhilmil Jheel Conservation Reserves, plus Bhimgauda Barrage in Dehradun & Haridwar districts respectively. Landscape covers diverse bird-habitats from wetlands to alpine meadows in Uttarakhand Himalayas. For details contact **Prateek Panwar**. Email: arch.birdcount@gmail.com Tel: +91-9412054216
18th to 21st October 2013

"Clicking in Shallow Rivers: Short-Range Echolocation of **Irrawaddy and Ganges River Dolphins** in a Shallow, Acoustically Complex Habitat." Download from the following link: <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0059284>

A Gir Diary: April & May 2013



April 15: Supreme Court (SC) passes order for translocation of lions from Gir to Madhya Pradesh within six months.

April 16: A group of local residents, mainly guides, protests the presence of Dr Ravi Chellam as he attempts to enter the sanctuary with a group of visitors from Prague zoo. Chellam is prevented from entering the sanctuary and is forced to leave the area.

- Residents of Kodinar and Sasan take to the streets to oppose the relocation of lions.

April 18: Five villages of Sasan observe a bandh to protest the translocation of lions. The bandh was supported by the Gypsy Association, Forest Guides Association and Gir Hotels Association.

April 21: A team of 13 senior forest officials from Maharashtra including the Chief Wildlife Warden and officers of the level of additional principal chief conservator of forest and chief conservator of forest visit Gir for a three day study of rescue of wild animals including the leopard.

The visit was a follow-up to a visit in March by Principal Secretary, Forests and Environment, Maharashtra, Praveen Pardeshi.

April 23: News reports suggest that land prices around the Kuno-Palpur WLS in the Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh have gone up three times after the SC order for the relocation of lions from Gir.

April 25: Meeting of the Gujarat State Board for Wildlife – CM Narendra Modi calls for the filing of a strong review petition before the SC to prevent the translocation.

April 28: 25,000 people from Surat, Vadodara and Ahmedabad, gathered at Ankolvadi village of Talala taluka in Gir, pledge to not allow the translocation of lions. The people had actually gathered to raise funds for cattle fodder in scarcity-hit Saurashtra. But the 'Bhavya Lok Dayro' organized by Samast Junagadh Jilla Parivar of Surat and Talala Taluka Gau Seva Samiti also became a platform for people to vent their resentment against the SC order.

May 3: Signature campaigns launched in Rajkot and Bhavnagar to oppose the translocation of lions from Gujarat.

May 17: Gujarat Government files a plea in the SC challenging the order of April 15.

(For more on the issue of translocation of lions from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh see *PA Updates* Vol. XV, Nos. 4 & 3; and Nos. 50, 46, 43, 34, 33, 32, 26, 22 & 20)

A Decade Ago **Protected Area Update 43, June 2003**

ANDHRA PRADESH

Kolleru lake goes completely dry

A severe drought in Andhra Pradesh, considered the worst in the last four decades, has resulted in the complete drying up of the Kolleru lake. This has adversely affected the flora and fauna here, as also the people who depend on it for survival. Though drought has affected the state from time to time, this is the first time that even the rich and fertile delta area of the Krishna River has been hit so badly.

Villages in the area like Kovvadalanka, Kolletikota, Shrungaravarapadu and Gummalapadu are now being provided water by water tankers.

Source: Omer Farooq. 'Drought takes its toll on Kolleru', *Pioneer*, 12/03/03.

GUJARAT

Water tankers for wildlife in Gir

Scanty rainfall for the last four years in the region has led to a severe water crisis in the forests of Gir National Park. All the natural water bodies in the park - about a dozen odd rivers and a similar number of small and large reservoirs have dried up early, creating severe problems for the wildlife here. The biggest reservoir in the area, the Kamleshwar Dam, dubbed 'the lifeline of Gir' has also dried up completely.

Water is now being provided to the animals by the dozen odd tankers that have been put into service by the Forest Department. Water is being provided at over 350 water points all across the forest area and the FD has said that they feel the supply was adequate for the moment.

The water scarcity has also resulted in the increased incidences of animals straying from the forests, resulting in increased human - animal conflict. This problem has been larger in

the case of leopards, particularly in the forests of Panchmahals and Baria. The situation has been further compounded by the fact that there are thousands of heads of cattle, belonging to the 'Maldharis' inside the forests. Additionally there are a number of villages in the region that share the limited water resources with the wildlife.

The State FD has asked the Centre to provide special financial assistance to deal with the recurring water problem, and a sum of Rs. 20 lakhs has reportedly been promised.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'Central aid likely for water crisis in forests', *The Times of India*, 21/04/03.

ODISHA

Severe water crisis grips PAs, forest areas

Prolonged drought conditions have led to a severe water crisis in Orissa, adversely impacting forests and wildlife. There have been such reports from the forest areas of Keonjhar, Koraput, Nowrangpur, Dhenkanal, Athmalik, Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Rairakhol, Kalahandi, Daspalla, Kondhmal, Khariar and Ghumsur. In many places animals have moved out of the forests in search of food and water and there are also reports of increased hunting and poaching.

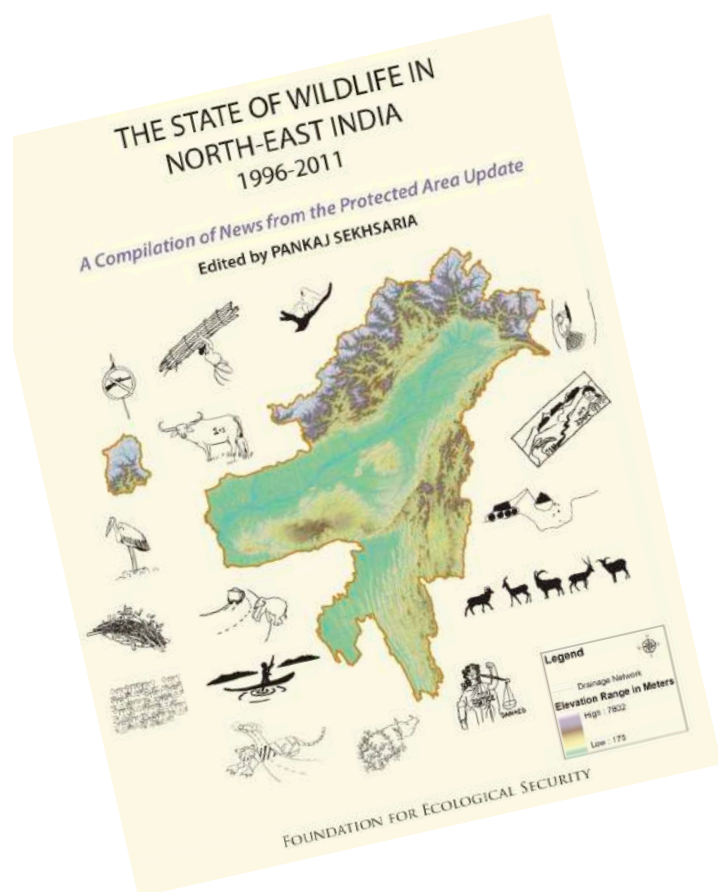
Animals like *sambar*, barking deer and even elephants are reported to have moved out of protected areas like Satkosia and Simlipal. The situation in Simlipal, which is endowed with good water resources, is however reported to be better than in other parts of the state.

Cases of the hunting of wild animals who may have come out of the forests in search of water have been reported from the sanctuaries of Satkosia, Bhitarkanika, Chandka, Sunabeda, Kotgarh and Hadgarh.

Source: 'Water crisis grips forest areas', *The Statesman*, 28/05/03.

THE STATE OF WILDLIFE IN NORTH-EAST INDIA 1996-2011

A Compilation of news from the Protected Area Update



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Perspective & Opinion: The Print Media's Kaziranga obsession – An analysis (Mehak Siddiqui & C Rajesh Reddi); A case study of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in western Assam (Sonali Ghosh: Snow leopards in the land of the rising sun (Yash Veer Bhatnagar); Karbi Anglong: A little known wilderness of Assam (Anwaruddin Choudhury); Elephants and other memories of the Garo Hills (Nimesh Ved); Dams in the North East (Neeraj Vagholikar) and Community conservation of wildlife (Neema Pathak)

Annexures

READER'S WRITE

I got my copy of The State of Wildlife in the NE yesterday. It has been a most interesting read; particularly interesting is the linking of stories over a timeline, relating to a particular PA. The articles are an excellent bonus as well. Well done! ...and hope to see an additional compilation, possibly covering the WG, or that most neglected part, Central India.

- Gopakumar

www.gopakumar-rootcause.blogspot.com

The book, The State of Wildlife in North-East India, is done in a very unique way. It will be very helpful for my travel to the NE later this year. There is generally little information about the area as such, particularly places like Arunachal Pradesh and your book will help people get interested. You have very rightly said that most of the updates are about Kaziranga which in spite of being a small area gathers a lot of media attention.

- Gauraang Pradhan

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PERSPECTIVE

The lion translocation judgment: implications for wildlife conservation in India

The recent judgment of the Supreme Court of India has attracted a lot of media attention but much of it has only focused on issues like victory for Madhya Pradesh and defeat for Gujarat or Gujarat's continued objection to the proposed translocation.

In my view the following important principles have been established in this judgment and these have the potential to enable better conservation of wildlife in India. The "Species' best interest standard" which places the conservation interest of the species above every other consideration, and the primacy of the National Board for Wild Life, for wildlife conservation policy making have been clearly established. Further, that no individual, government or entity can claim ownership over wildlife is also a key aspect of this judgment along with the invoking of the doctrine of public trust. This strongly places the responsibility on the national and state governments, together with the citizens, to view development and life in general through the eco-centric and not the anthropocentric lens and to conserve species for their intrinsic value. This very clearly places the onus on all of us to take conservation of wildlife much more seriously.

As far as the lion translocation itself is concerned, the judgment is strongly supportive of the principle on which it is based and directs MoEF to translocate lions following IUCN guidelines and with the active participation of experts. A period of six months has been mentioned and that does seem like a very tight timeline to work with, especially since a

thorough review of the preparedness of Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary to host lions needs to be conducted first.

The judgment focuses on endangered species and directs the Government of India to specifically legislate for the conservation of endangered species and for the formulation of species-specific recovery programmes. I see this action to be the most positive development. For its implementation, conservation science will have to play a very strong role in conservation planning. It also requires very regular scientific monitoring and reporting, which will enable a much better-informed and stronger engagement by the citizens of India with wildlife conservation.

Lion translocation has been proposed only to strengthen the long-term conservation prospects of free-ranging Asiatic lions and to enable much better management of the success that Gujarat has been able to achieve. For how long do we want to tempt fate by retaining all our eggs in one basket, however large that basket may be?

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