

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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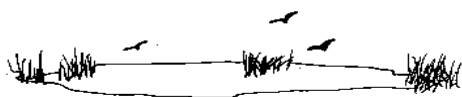
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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

A rich mélange

International awards and honours, giant clam conservation, human elephant conflict, tiger deaths in railway accidents, poisoned tigers, increase in tiger numbers, increase in gharial numbers, increase in Giant squirrel numbers, mining in wildlife corridors, threats to the Asiatic lion, World Heritage site, unpaid tiger reserve staff, destruction of grasslands, tourism promotion, tourism awards, expanded protected areas, new protected areas, opposition to protected areas, relocations from PAs, successful breeding of endangered species, ecological changes, floods and damage to wildlife, environment exemptions for road construction, poaching bustards, catching poachers, conserving bustards, counting floricans, protecting flamingoes, tribal rights, forest rights, grasslands, mangroves, forests, wetlands....and all this in only 24 pages.

If there is one thing that stands out in this issue of the *PA Update*, it is the rich diversity of the stories that appear here. The mind boggles to see the different kinds of things that are happening and the different challenges that need to be faced. It is not a new observation and one that has been made in this column earlier as well. It is still worth taking note of because conservation is far more complex than we often tend to make of it. There is a rich and colourful mosaic out there that is as much social as it is ecological, as much political as it is managerial, as much about humans as it is about the tigers, the floricans, the trees and the giant clams.

By implication conservation is not and cannot be a straight-forward enterprise because there will be multiple, even conflicting claims. Most readers of the *PA Update* will be acutely aware of this multiplicity and these conflicts: claims to livelihoods and traditional rights as against demands for relocation; tourism as an aid in conservation as against the many problems it causes for habitats and wildlife; the need for more dams, more mines and more roads for the economy at the cost of the nature's infrastructure and natural

capital; even clashing world views of what the wilderness is and the methods by which it is created. How does one really deal with all of this?

Providing an answer, if at all possible, may not be easy. The *mélange*, however, also throws up something else that is interesting. It is evidence that conservation action becomes viable and important in multiple domains. It is needed in parliament and in state assemblies just as it is in the field. Local communities, traditional and modern knowledge, ecologists, activists, lawyers, the media, educators, writers, photographers...all become important players. No one is left unaffected and everyone can make a difference.

The challenges and the opportunities are two sides of the same coin. The future will depend on what we make of this, not only as individuals but also as collectives.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

BNHS to study conservation of giant clams in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has been awarded a grant of about Rs. 64 lakh from the UK-based Whitley Fund for Nature to study giant clams in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The award is in the form of a continuation grant to the project led by Dr Deepak Apte who had been awarded the Whitley Conservation Award for work in the Lakshadweep islands a few years ago.

The larger aim of the BNHS project is to come up with a national conservation plan for giant clams. The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) had already sanctioned Rs 27 lakh for the project that is expected to start this October. As part of the project, researchers will evaluate the population status of giant clams in Andaman

and Nicobar. They will also identify potential areas where conservation reserves may be set up.

Source: 'Bombay Natural History Society to study conservation of giant clams in Andaman & Nicobar Islands' *The Times of India*, 08/07/13.

Contact: Dr Deepak Apte, BNHS, Hornbill House, Shahid Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai-400023, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2821811. Fax: 2837615. Email: spiderconch@gmail.com

ASSAM

Continued human-elephant conflict in Udalgiri

Six people and an elephant were killed in the month of June in continued human-elephant conflict in Udalgiri district located along the India-Bhutan border. Green Valley Forest and Wildlife Protection Society, a local NGO, has pointed out that elephant herds are entering villages almost every day and damaging houses and crops. People are scared and worried. Villagers are being attacked and killed by the animals in their desperate attempt to chase away the herds.

There are also reports of retaliatory killings of elephants. The Forest Department (FD) found the body of a tusk-less male elephant in a tea garden in the Badlapara area of Udalgiri in the 2nd week of June. Preliminary investigation revealed that the animal was poisoned to death. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 6)

Source: 'Man-elephant conflict unabated in Udalgiri, six killed in June', *The Times of India*, 29/06/13.

Insecticide used to kill tigers in the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) NP; FD announces cash reward for information on killings

The authorities of Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park have said that a highly toxic insecticide was used in killing three tigers in February this year. The carcasses of the animals were found on the banks of the Panchnoi River within the park on February 9, 11 and 26. The park authorities had

sent samples from the carcasses to the Directorate of Forensic Science, Assam (DFSAs), which sent them the forensic test report recently. The report confirms that organophosphorous was used to kill the tigers.

The park authorities have, however, been puzzled by the fact that the tigers were killed despite there being no instance of the big cats straying out of the park and killing livestock in fringe villages between January and February.

The Assam Forest Department (FD) has also announced a cash reward of Rs. 50,000 for actionable information on those who killed the three tigers.

Two tigers had been poisoned here in 2009 and 2010. While the insecticide organochlorine was used in 2010, organophosphorus was detected in the carcass recovered in 2009, just like it has been in the incidents this year.

According to the DFO here, the FD has been taking steps to check the revenge killing of tigers. The measures include paying an ex gratia amount of Rs. 2,500 to the owners for each head of cattle killed, whether inside or on the periphery of the park. Additional forest personnel have been deployed in villages near the park as well. The FD's main target is Phatasimalu village, as the carcasses of two tigers were found near it.

The park authorities have also sought the National Tiger Conservation Authority's (NTCA) assistance for installation of a few more surveillance towers along with fencing of the park's perimeter, and have requested the NTCA to bear salaries of casual workers so that more people can be roped in to beef up security. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVII, No. 1 and Vol. XVI, Nos. 5, 2 & 1)

Source: 'Insecticide used to kill tigers at Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park', *The Times of India*, 01/06/13.
Pullock Dutta, 'Reward for arrest of tiger killers', *The Telegraph*, 01/06/13.

Contact: **DFO**, Orang NP, Mangaldoi Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Darrang - 784125, Assam. Tel: 0914-22065(O), 22349(R)
Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam. Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386.

CHATTISGARH

Relocation from the Barnawapara WLS

According to information provided in the Chattisgarh Assembly in July 2013, 136 families of the Rampur forest village inside the Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary have been relocated to Vijaymaalin Forest Compartment Nos. 500 & 501. Relocation of families from Latadadar and Navapara is presently in progress.

Each family is being provided with two hectares of agricultural land, a pucca house of 800 sq. ft on a plot of 500 sq. m, Rs. 50,000/- as cash incentive and access to basic services like roads, a school, an anganwadi, a community centre, electricity, public toilet, drinking water, and a PDS shop.

The state forest department has received Rs. 5.40 crore as central assistance and Rs 29.83 crore from the CAMPA fund for relocation of displaced villages. Rs. 28.83 crore have been spent from out of Rs. 35.29 crore received so far.

Source: 'Update from Chhattisgarh State Assembly on issues related to Forest Rights' Note prepared by Vijendra Aznabi, Oxfam India, 18/07/13.

Contact: **DFO (WL)**, Barnawapara WLS, P.O. Pithora, Dist. Raipur, Chattisgarh. Tel: 0771-2425064

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Chhattisgarh State, Jail Road, Raipur, Chattisgarh. Tel: 0771-331121.

GUJARAT

FD orders tests on Gir lions

The Gujarat Forest Department (FD) has ordered random tests on lions in Gir for detection of the possible presence of dangerous viruses. The tests will be conducted by the Veterinary Department

and Anand University and their study is likely to be completed before Diwali this year.

A deadly virus had killed a large number of wild lions in the African Serengeti in the mid-1990s. The FD is reported to have said that the bogey of a deadly virus wiping out all the Asiatic lions in Gir is being raised in support of the proposal to transfer some of the lions to a new but hostile habitat in Madhya Pradesh. A report released earlier this year had claimed that scientists in India had 'recently' found Peste des Petits Ruminants Virus (PPRV) to be behind the death of a lion in Gir in 2006. PPRV is the same virus that had killed 1,000 lions in Serengeti, but that was in the year 1994.

State officials have said that they don't want to take the matter lightly and that they were also aware that Madhya Pradesh will raise this issue in the apex court. Hence, they want to be ready with the test report so that it can be produced in court when the issue is raised.



The alarm regarding the threat to Gir lions was also raised by Dr. Richard Kock of Britain's Royal Veterinary College. He has been quoted as saying "The lions in India are a small vulnerable population and widespread infection with such a virus can kill at least 40% of the Gir lions." Dr. Kock plans to visit India in September to conduct tests with the help of the Wildlife Institute of India.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik 'Forest department orders study to thwart MP bid for Gir lions', *The Times of India*, 07/06/13.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag,
Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/
630051. Fax: 631211. Email:
cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in
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230007. Fax: 221097.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

UNESCO puts Great Himalayan NP on 'referral' list

The World Heritage Committee of UNESCO in its 37th session held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, recently, has put the Great Himalayan National Park (NP) on the 'referral' list. The Himachal Pradesh State Wildlife Department has said that had it been put on the 'deferral' list, then it would have been mandatory for them to carry out a technical evaluation of the park once again before submitting the proposal next year. But with its upgradation to the 'referral' list, only the required information will now have to be furnished by February-March next year, following which the committee could consider the claim for World Heritage Site in 2014.

The 16-member team from India that attended the meeting in Phnom Penh from June 16 to June 27 include two senior wildlife officials from the state – the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and Great Himalayan NP Director. The UNESCO committee reportedly wants that the Sainj and Tirthan Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLSs) be merged with the Great Himalayan NP. Their basic concern is of connectivity, which the FD says it has already been trying to address since 2010.

The committee has also asked for the resolution of the rights-based issues with respect to local communities and indigenous peoples in Tirthan and Sainj WLSs. It has also pointed to the need for long term plans to progressively increase the size of the nominated property with the addition of other surrounding protected areas to form an aggregated property that potentially includes the Rupi Bhabha WLS, Pin Valley NP, Khirganga NP and the Kanawar WLS.

In February, earlier this year, local communities had objected to the proposal for inclusion of the park in the World Heritage list. For details of their objections and demands see *PA Update* Vol. XIX, No 1.

Source: Anand Bodh, 'UNESCO panel upgrades Great Himalayan National Park to 'referral' list', *The Economic Times*, 06/07/13.

Contact: **Director, GHNP**, Shamshi, Dist
Kullu-175126, Himachal Pradesh.
Email: dirghnp@vsnl.com

JHARKHAND

No payment for Palamau TR staff since April

About 155 staff members of the Palamau Tiger Reserve (PTR) have been working without pay since April. Of these, about 120 are trackers, 30 belong to the tiger protection force while the remaining five are part of the strike force. The first two categories of officers get wages on a daily basis at the rate of Rs. 145.54 per day. Those belonging to the strike force are ex-servicemen who have been engaged on a monthly emolument of Rs. 11,500 each.

Though the PTR director has been apprised of the situation and has also been urged to arrange for funds at the earliest, no action is reported to have been taken.

Source: 'No pay for 155 workers in cash-strapped PTR', *The Times of India*, 12/06/13.

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

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KARNATAKA

Plantations in Grasslands affecting Dandeli-Anshi tiger habitat



Conservationists have expressed concern over the Forest Department's (FD) move to take up plantation work in natural grasslands inside the Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve (TR).

The FD has planted exotic varieties of tree species like acacia at Sulavali, Marli and Kalpe areas of Kumbharwada range, and several other areas of the Dandeli-Anshi TR. These grasslands are feeding grounds for a large number of herbivores, they hold water and also provide for green grass even during peak summers, making them an important habitat for multiple reasons. The fences built around these plantations also block free movement of herbivores in the already fragmented TR.

It has been pointed out that these plantations are in violation of Section 26 of the Indian Forest Act, the Karnataka Tree Preservation Act, and Section 29 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, which prohibits destruction of wildlife habitats.

Source: M Raghuram. 'The tiger's new enemy: forest officials', *DNA*, 05/07/13.

Contact: DCF, Dandeli Wildlife Division, Dandeli – 581325, Uttara Kannada, Karnataka. Tel: 08284-231585(O), 230114(R). Fax: 230300.

Increase in tiger population in Bhadra TR

The tiger population in the Bhadra Tiger Reserve (BTR) at Chikmagalur has gone up to 36 in 2012-13 from 28 in 2010-2011. According to the Deputy Conservator of Forests- Wildlife, the intensity of human habitation is less on the periphery of the forests of Bhadra. There are coffee plantations all around, providing artificial forest cover. Even if

wild animals stray beyond the boundaries of the reserve, they are safe.

Besides, water sources from the Shola Forests of Mullayanagiri, Bababudangiri and Kemmannugundi are abundant and water flows perennially in the forest. There is also an added source of water from the Bhadra reservoir backwaters. This has led to a good forest cover and consequent increase in the herbivore population leading to a favourable situation for the big cats.

Source: B Thipperudrappa, 'Bhadra earns its stripes, tiger numbers rise in two years', *The New Indian Express*, 06/06/13.

Contact: Dy. Conservator of Forests Bhadra Wildlife Division (Bhadra Tiger Reserve) Chikmagalur – 577101, Karnataka. Tel: 08262-234904(O), 230751(R)

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

KERALA

More security for the Periyar TR

The Kerala State government has issued an order to further strengthen the protection force for the 925 sq. km Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR). The government order, following a formal request from the Chief Wildlife Warden, says that four new forest stations and 88 new posts are being created for the purpose. The 88 new posts comprise of four deputy range forest officers, 16 section forest officers, 64 beat forest officers, and four drivers. Each station will have one deputy range forest officer, four section forest officers, 16 beat forest officers, and one driver.

At present, the protection force for the reserve comprises of only 194 personnel. This is in spite of the fact that the Sabarimala temple and the Mangala Vanam Devi temple where thousands of pilgrims visit every year are situated within the PTR.

Three of the new forest stations will come up inside the Pampa range under the west division of the PTR and one in the Vallakadavu range under the east division. The stations sanctioned for the Pampa range will be known as the Sannidhanam, Mukkuzhi, and Pachakanam forest stations. The one sanctioned under the Vallakadavu range will be at Gavi.

Personnel attached to the Sannidhanam station will be responsible for the protection of Sabarimala pilgrims entering the PTR from Triveni to Pampa and from Ranni to Uppupara. Personnel at the Mukkuzhi station man the 22 km pilgrimage route through the PTR from Azhutha to Pampa. Ponnambalamedu and the route from Vallakadavu to Uppupara, mostly used by Sabarimala pilgrims from Tamil Nadu, will come under the Pachakanam station. The personnel of the Gavi station will concentrate on the Angamuzhi-Uppupara route and the entire Gavi sector.

Source: Ignatius Pereira, 'PTR protection force to be strengthened', *The Hindu*, 09/06/13.

Contact: **Field Director**, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Aranya Bhavan, Forest Complex, S.H. Mount P.O. Kottayam - 686006. Kerala. Tel: 0481-2562940(O) / 2560297(R). Fax: 2569217 / 2565740.

Kerala to have its own Red List of threatened plants and animals



The Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB) and a group of bird enthusiasts have started separate programmes for preparing the conservation status of the flora and fauna, including birds of Kerala. The exercise will be conducted along the lines of the global conservation status assessments carried

out by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Dr. V Oommen, Chairperson, KSBB, said that the data generated by agencies like IUCN and independent researchers would be used for the Kerala list. Considering the constraints in carrying out extensive field studies for the purpose, the conservation data available in the public domain would also be used as would scientific assessments carried out by private research groups and national agencies like Zoological Survey of India, Botanical Survey of India and international agencies. The IUCN criteria for assessing the threat perspectives will be applied for the State list too. The programme would be implemented in consultation with agencies like BirdLife International, which prepares the Red List for IUCN.

According to a wildlife expert associated with the programme, in at least a few cases, the global assessments of the conservation status of birds had failed to reflect the ground realities. The regional list hopes to correct such inconsistencies and fix priorities for conservation.

Source: K. S. Sudhi, 'Soon, a Kerala Red List of threatened species', *The Hindu*, 15/06/13.

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

MADHYA PRADESH

One more mine in Pench-Satpuda tiger corridor

The State government plans to start one more mine in Pench-Satpuda tiger corridor, a three km wide area identified as a regular route for the movement of tigers between the Pench and the Satpuda Tiger Reserves. The mines are in the Chhindwara district, and Union Urban Development Minister Kamal Nath

who contests from the area is said to be strongly in favour of the mine.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), had allowed only underground mining in the patch, opening the gates for the public sector undertaking, Western Coalfields Ltd (WCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Ltd (CIL). The MoEF, while giving a go-ahead, had put a rider that only CIL mines could operate in the corridor. However, Dhau North block in the corridor was not allotted to WCL.

Now the Ministry of Coal has brought this block too under CIL ambit, giving WCL the right to go ahead with the operations. WCL will now be able to operate four mines in the Pench-Satpuda tiger corridor. The WCL already has three blocks – Dhanwa, Haradol and Tansi – in the corridor.

Environmentalists have been strongly opposing mining activity in this area, saying it is an important wildlife corridor. It has been argued that even if the mining is underground, there would be substantial surface activity for transporting coal. Blasting would also disturb wildlife movement, and miners' colonies that may come up in the area will also be a threat.

Source: Shishir Arya, 'Eco ministry okays another mine in Pench-Satpuda tiger corridor', *The Times of India*, 05/07/13.

Contact: **Field Director**, Pench Tiger Reserve, P.O. Barapathar, Dist. Seoni – 480661, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07692-250794/250594. Fax: 250794/221180. Email: root@trpench.ren.nic.in

Madhya Pradesh FD seeks power to tap phones to deal with wildlife poaching

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has asked for permission to tap and intercept phone calls and also access call records of suspects in cases pertaining to wildlife poaching and trading. An application for the same has been sent to the State government. The FD has also sought the intervention of the National Tiger Conservation Authority in the matter.

The FD had used copies of call data records (CDRs) and subscribers' detailed records (SDRs) in some cases to prove charges against

poachers. At present, it has to depend on police to get these records as it does not have direct powers to ask telecom firms or others for CDRs, and this, they have argued, leads to a delay in the probe and also the investigation processes.

Police officers have, however, said that the FD cannot be given these without amendments in the Indian Telegraph Rules, 1951.

Source: P Naveen, 'Bid to save tigers: MP forest dept. seeks police-like power to tap phones', *The Times of India*, 03/07/13.

Lonely Planet: Madhya Pradesh is the best wildlife destination

The Lonely Planet Group has conferred the 'Best Indian Destination for Wildlife' award to Madhya Pradesh Tourism. The award was bestowed by film actor Tushar Kapoor to Dr. Mohan Yadav, Chairman, Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation, at a function held in Mumbai recently.

The selection for the award was done by readers of Lonely Planet magazine through online voting.

Source: 'Madhya Pradesh gets best wildlife destination award', *The Times of India*, 09/06/13.

MAHARASHTRA

MLA for shifting Gondia wildlife division's office to Sakoli

BJP MLA, Nana Patole, has written to the State Forest Minister, Patangrao Kadam, urging him to shift the Gondia wildlife division's office to Sakoli to ensure better monitoring of wildlife and forest and also to enable effective administrative control. Naturalists and wildlife activists have already been demanding the same.

The issue is said to be particularly relevant in the context of increased poaching

in the area, a matter that the Forest Department (FD) is grappling with. Poaching is rampant in and around PAs in the area such as the Nagzira, New Nagzira and Navegaon Wildlife Sanctuaries and the Navegaon National Park. Officers, who are based in Gondia, are unable to do much to prevent this and it has been suggested that a move to Sakoli will help, also in establishing a better rapport with the local people.

All the five PAs are at a distance of between 20 km and 27 km from Sakoli, whereas they are between 45 and 75 km from Gondia. Wildlife department officials too admit that shifting the office from Gondia is a good option.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Patole pushes for wildlife office at Sakoli', *The Times of India*, 06/07/13.

Villages oppose notification of the Mansinghdeo WLS

Villagers living in the vicinity of the recently notified Mansinghdeo Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) have expressed opposition to the sanctuary. The 21 villages in the area say they were not taken into confidence before notifying 183 sq. km sanctuary which was created in lieu of de-notification of a large part of the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary in Solapur district (*PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, No. 1; Vol. XVII, No. 1 and Vol. XIV, No. 2).

The gram sabhas of these villages have already passed a resolution against the creation of the sanctuary. They are also demanding that they be allowed to fish in Totladoh in Pench Tiger Reserve, and be granted grazing and MFP collection rights in Mansinghdeo. They also want the National Highway, NH7, to be widened from Mansar to Deolapar (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 3), and for roads within the sanctuary Ambazari-Saleghat (5 km) and Dhawlapur-Ghatkukda (14 km) to be tarred. They have noted that declaration of the sanctuary has led to serious restrictions on grazing cattle and collecting tendu, mahua and gum. There are also no jobs and irrigation facilities in the region and all of this has adversely affected local livelihoods.

The Gondwana Ganatantra Party (GGP), which is spearheading the stir here, has suggested

that giving community rights under the Forest Rights Act 2006 can be a solution to the present situation.

Forest officials have meanwhile clarified that grazing and collection of MFP cannot be permitted within the sanctuary as per Supreme Court orders of February 14, 2000 which states that removal of dead, diseased trees, grazing, MFP collection, construction activity, widening of roads and removal of bamboo, biomass, even cutting of grass cannot be undertaken in national parks and sanctuaries without its permission.

It has also been argued that the sanctuary area is a reserve forest where no rights can be granted. There are no villages within it either. Fishing has already been banned in the Totladoh reservoir and the tarring of roads too needs the approval of the State Board for Wildlife and the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Forest minister's visit no balm for angry Mansinghdeo villagers', *The Times of India*, 11/07/13.

Tiger death in railway accident near Tadoba-Andhari TR: MoEF and Railways differ on the speed limit for trains

After a tiger died on being run over by a passenger train on the Gondia-Chandrapur track in April earlier this year (*PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 3), the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) had insisted on restricting the speed of trains to 40 km/hr on this route. The Railways have, however, said that the trains will continue to run at the regular speed, though the drivers will take extra care to spot wildlife movement and ensure that accidents are avoided. It has been suggested by the Railways that there are several technical aspects related to controlling the speed; for instance, a specific speed has to be maintained when a train is running on a curve as against straight tracks.

The decision to restrict the speed to 40km/hr had been taken following a meeting between the Minister for Environment and Forests, Ms Jayanthi Natarajan and Railway officials immediately after the accident. Other steps announced to prevent accidents included tracking tiger movement through thermal imaging, camera traps and keeping the Railways informed through wireless.

According to the Divisional Railway Manager for SECR, drivers have been instructed to be on the lookout for big cats trying to cross the tracks on this route. Some 15 trains run on the track daily, including 5-6 express trains, which have an average speed of 100 km/hr. The passenger train, which hit the tiger, was reported to be running at a speed of 80km/hr. It is the 23 km stretch between Kelzar and Chanda Fort that is the risk area. This is also because there are a few water holes along the tracks, which attract animals.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, however, said that it is the responsibility of the Railways to control the speed of trains, while other steps such as not littering tracks with food can also help prevent wildlife movement.

Source: Shishir Arya, 'Railways, environment ministry differ on slowing trains in tiger area', *The Times of India*, 07/06/13.

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

Navi Mumbai airport, within a 10 km radius of Karnala Bird Sanctuary, gets wildlife clearance

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has granted approval to Navi Mumbai International Airport. CIDCO, the development authority, had sought the approval after objections were raised by environmentalists, saying that the airport near Panvel was less than 10 km (9.5 km) away from the Karnala Bird Sanctuary.

The NBWL was asked to inspect the site and submit a report to a review committee. The inspection was conducted last month. The review committee concluded that the project is crucial to

Mumbai, even though it is within 10 km of the sanctuary. The clearance was, accordingly, given on June 6.

Source: 'Navi Mumbai airport gets wildlife board nod', *The Indian Express*, 08/06/13.

Contact: **DCF (Wildlife)** Thane, Karnala WLS
L.B.S. Rd, Naupada Near High Way
Naka Thane-400602, Maharashtra.

Leopard presence detected at Bhimashankar WLS; increase in giant squirrel population



The leopard has made a comeback in Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary after three years. Although the Forest Department (FD) is yet to sight the animal, officials have collected evidence that includes pugmarks and scat. The finds were made during the animal annual census held from May 14 to June 6. 18 units, each consisting of one forest official, two assistants and three volunteers, equipped with a GPS conducted the count.

The Assistant Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) also said that the FD had been collecting such evidence for three months as part of the animal census preparation. Pugmarks had been found in various parts of the sanctuary while droppings were also found and tested. Two goats were recently killed in a nearby village and the killing pattern appears to be like that of a leopard. Four camera traps have been installed strategically inside the sanctuary and the FD is hoping to get a glimpse of the leopard.

Last year officials had counted at least 900 giant squirrel nests. This year, preliminary results suggest that the number may have doubled.

Source: Swati Shinde Gole. 'Pugmarks, scat indicate leopard presence in Bhimashankar', *The Times of India*, 11/06/13.

Contact: **MK Rao**, Conservator of Forest (WL), Forest Colony, Salunke Vihar, Pune – 411040, Maharashtra
Chief Wildlife Warden – Maharashtra, Jaika Building, Civil Lines, Nagpur – 440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 – 526758 / 530126.

TAMIL NADU

Sandwich tern disappears from the Kadalundi Vallikkunnu CR

The Sandwich tern, known locally in the Kadalundi Estuary region as the Kadalundi Aala, has not been sighted in the Kadalundi Vallikkunnu Community Reserve (CR) here for three years, raising concerns about the changes in the ecology of the estuary. A team led by M. Nasser, Associate Professor at the Department of Zoology, Calicut University, has now begun a study on the matter.

Although found in large numbers here during the wintering season in the 1990s and 2000s, the Sandwich Tern began to gradually disappear after 2007 and has not been sighted at all since 2010. Interestingly, however, the bird is now found in places such as Manjeswaram and Kannur and also been reported from some parts of northern Malabar.

Source: 'Concern over ecological imbalance at Kadalundi', *The Hindu*, 05/06/13.

TRIPURA

Successful breeding of three endangered species at Sipahijala; proposals for elephant conservation centres, bird sanctuary in Tripura

The Central Zoo Authority of India (CZAI) has deemed the Sipahijala Wildlife Sanctuary as a National Breeding Centre (NBC) for endangered

species such as the Clouded leopard, Pig-tailed macaque, Binturong and the Spectacled Monkey. Except for the Binturong, the other three have started breeding here successfully.

Sipahijala is one among 42 NBCs in the country, and the CZAI has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 616.96 lakh in the current fiscal year for the conservation of the four endangered species mentioned above.

In other developments in Tripura, at a meeting of the State Board for Wildlife held recently, it was decided that one elephant conservation centre will be created at Gandhari in Amarpur subdivision of Gomati district in an area of about 13 sq. km, and another will be built at Atharamura hill range in Dhalai district over 3,535.25 hectares of land. The Board has also taken an initiative to create a conservation centre for bison at Bhairabnagar along the India-Bangladesh border in South Tripura district, and the State Forest Department has demarcated 636.99 hectares of land for a bird sanctuary at Baramura hill range in Khowai district.

Source: 'Sipahijala sanctuary to be breeding centre for endangered animals', *The Times of India*, 04/06/13.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Sepahijala WLS, P.O. Golaghati (Sepahijala) - West Tripura – 799102, Tripura. Tel: 0381-2220773.

Chief Wildlife Warden, Tripura, Aranya Bhawan, Nehru Complex, Agartala – 799001, Tripura. Tel: 0381-225223. Fax: 0381-225253/224013, 2422249.

UTTARKHAND

Centre asks Uttarakhand to assess flood related damage to forests, wildlife

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has asked the Uttarakhand government and the Forest Survey of India (FSI) for a report on the damage caused to forests and wildlife in the recent floods that devastated large parts of the state. The FSI has also been asked to use its remote sensing technology to assess

the extent of the damage and how much forest cover and agricultural land may have been washed away.

According to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, initial assessments by the FSI indicate that about 100 hectares of forest area may have been washed away. Several Forest Department (FD) properties, guest houses, nurseries, forest paths, culverts have also been damaged. A forest guard also lost his life while trying to save some pilgrims at Rambada.

As far as wildlife is concerned, the FD has not sighted or received any report of a wild animal found dead or floating in the water. The PCCF has said that there was no question of larger wild animals being swept away or being buried under debris, but that smaller animals and reptiles must have suffered. The Kedarnath Musk Deer Sanctuary has also not reported any casualties of the endangered animal.

A more accurate assessment, however, will be conducted only after road connectivity is restored.

Source: Anubhuti Vishnoi. 'Assess damage to forests, wildlife, says Centre', *The Indian Express*, 06/07/13.

Three tiger deaths in Corbett TR in the last week of May

Seven tigers have been reported dead in Uttarakhand in the first five months of 2013. Three of these were in the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) and its adjoining areas in the last week of May. Preliminary investigations suggested that the deaths in and around the CTR were not due to natural causes and neither did poaching appear to be the motive as the bodies were intact. It is believed that the three may have been poisoned or become victims of 'revenge killing'.

While the mutilated body of one tiger was found inside CTR on June 1, the carcasses of two tigers were recovered from the area under the Tarai West Forest Division on May 27 and May 29. The State government had asked CTR officials to send samples of the carcasses to the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Bareilly, and the Drug Research

Institute, Lucknow, to conclusively establish the cause of death.

The latest in the matter is not known.

Source: Sanjay Singh, '3 tigers found dead in Corbett area in a week, probe indicates 'revenge killing'', *The Indian Express*, 04/06/13.

Contact: **Field Director**, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar –244715, Nainital, Uttaranchal. Tel: 05947 – 285489.

Fax: 285376

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

UTTAR PRADESH

Gharial population rises in the Chambal



The census 2012-13 has counted 785 gharials in the National Chambal River Sanctuary, up from a little over 300 three years ago. This increase is in line with the trend witnessed for the period. More than 100 gharials had died in the region between December 2007 and March 2008 leading to concerns for their long term survival (*PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 2 & Vol. XIV, No. 2). The census in 2008-09 had counted 307 individuals. The number has been rising ever since and was reported to be 674 in the year 2011-12.

The Forest Department (FD) has also located nesting sites like the one in Barendra village where 24 nests have been identified. At least 14 of these nests have been protected by the FD. It has also protected about 42 nests at several other locations like Bamrauli, Gudha, Mau Imli Khar, Chiknipura Ghat, Udaipur Khurd, Gohra Top and Kyori. Each

nest houses 35-40 eggs. If the eggs hatch safely, more than 2,500 to 3,000 hatchlings will find their way to the Chambal river. Since some of these areas are communal nesting sites, there are likely to be more nests than the number counted.

The mugger population too is reported to have gone up here: from 74 in 2008-09 to 122 in 2011-12 to 181 in 2012-13.

Source: Neha Shukla. 'Ghariyal population rising in Chambal', *The Times of India*, 10/06/13.

Contact: **Sujoy Banerjee**, DCF, National Chambal Sanctuary Project, Agra. Email: banjoy@gmail.com

WEST BENGAL

103 tigers in Sunderbans TR

According to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), there are 22 tigers in the west range of the Sunderbans National Park (NP), thus taking the minimum number of tigers in the mangroves to 101. The Chief Wildlife Warden has informed that two tigers are undergoing treatment at Sajnekhali and Alipore Zoo, and if one takes them into account as well, the estimate stands at a minimum of 103. The Centre, had in 2011, given an official number of 77 tigers here. However, the figure for the west range comprising forests of Netidhopani and Choto Hardi had not been included in the count.

According to the new findings, the tiger density here has also managed to beat the official estimates. Going by this study, Sunderbans has a minimum of five tigers per 100 sq. km, compared to the figure of 4.3 given during the national census in 2011.

While the camera-trap exercise for South 24-Parganas forest division, Sajnekhali, NP east and Basirhat was conducted by WWF-India, officials of WII conducted the study in NP west.

The FD is also happy that there are 19 tigers in the tourism zone in Sajnekhali. They are planning to utilize small pockets in the core area for tourism. However, it will have to be restricted since the apex court has directed utilization of only up to 15% of the core area for tourism.

Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee, 'With 103 tigers, Sunderbans beats official estimates', *The Times of India*, 08/06/13.

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

EIA exemption for road construction; greens worried

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has been granted exemption from environmental clearance (EC) for road stretches up to 100 km in length and 40 meters in width. The relaxation, earlier, was for roads of 30 km in length and 20 metres in width. With the new norms, over 70% of NHAI projects will not need environmental approval now. It won't have to go through the process of EIA with the MoEF and even public hearings in case of soil excavation from 2-5 hectare area will be exempted. Mining of soil in less than 2 hectare and up to 2 meters deep will not require environmental clearance.

In Maharashtra, for instance, the NHAI is implementing 3,000 km of road projects. Although it will need permission for tree felling and subsequently wildlife and forest clearances, it will not be required to submit EIA reports. Projects on an estimated 9,500 km highway are expected to be awarded this year and they will be the major beneficiaries of this decision.

Serious concern has, however, been expressed on the impact this will have on wildlife and important habitats.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Highway sops, but forest rules too' *The Times of India*, 06/07/13.

‘Member of Honour’ Award from BirdLife International for Dr Asad Rahmani



Dr Asad R Rahmani, Director, Bombay Natural History Society, was awarded the prestigious ‘Member of Honour’ Award by the UK-based BirdLife International on 22nd June in Ottawa, Canada. The Award was presented to him by Princess Takamado of Japan during the recent BirdLife

International World Congress that was attended by people from more than 120 countries.

The Award was presented to Dr Rahmani to honour his persistent efforts in research and conservation of birds in general and Great Indian Bustard (GIB) in particular.

Source: ‘Dr Asad Rahmani receives Member of Honour Award in Canada’, www.indiaeducationdiary.in, 01/07/13.

Important Bird Areas Update



GUJARAT

48 Lesser Floricans counted in Velavadar NP

48 Lesser Floricans were counted in the Velavadar National Park in a two-day count in the 2nd week of July. 44 of the counted birds were males and four were females. 54 birds had been counted here last year.

Source: Vijaysinh Parmar. ‘48 lesser floricans counted at Blackbuck National Park’ *The Times of India*, 15/07/13.

Contact: ACF, Black-Buck National Park, Velavadar, F/10 Bahumali Bhawan, Bhavnagar – 360001, Gujarat. Tel: 0288-2552077. Fax: 0288-2555336

Rail tracks permitted 700 m from the Thol WLS

The Gujarat State Forest Department (FD) has recently approved a proposal to allow railway tracks to be laid at a distance of 700 meters from the Thol Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). This is part of the dedicated freight corridor project of the Indian Railways.

Wildlifers have pointed out that the decision is in violation of a Supreme Court

ruling that no new infrastructure projects can be allowed within 10 km of a wildlife sanctuary till the state government earmarks an eco-sensitive zone. The state government has in-principle decided to have an area of 2 km around the sanctuary marked as the eco-sensitive zone.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. ‘Gujgovt to kill Thol with rly track; Allows Freight Corridor Close To Sanctuary’ *The Times of India*, 20/07/13.

Work to lay underground cables in Khadir, Kutch to begin in September

The Gujarat Forest Department (FD) has asked the Gujarat Energy Transmission Company Limited (GETCO) to begin underground cabling work in the Khadir area in Kutch soon after the monsoons. This is the same area where over 400 flamingoes were electrocuted by high-tension cables in December 2011 (*PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 6 & 1).

It was in October 2012 that the state wildlife board had cleared the GETCO underground cabling proposal and had sent it for the final approval of the National Board for Wildlife. The forest department had made it clear to GETCO that high-voltage power lines would have to be laid underground. The other

option was to replace the existing wires with insulated cables.

The cost of the project wherein the cables will be laid underground over a distance of about 8 km is estimated to be Rs 8-10 crore for the project. The work is expected to start in September.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. 'Underground cables to save Kutch's flamingoes', *The Times of India*, 21/07/13.

MAHARASHTRA

Bustard Conservation Committee to be set up by FD in Nashik district

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) has proposed the setting up of a Bustard Conservation Committee in the Nashik district based on the Centre's guidelines for preparation of a state action plan for the Great Indian Bustards' (GIB) recovery programme. The plan has been forwarded to the state government and an approval is awaited.

As per the Centre's directions, each forest range in the states where the bustard is spotted will have a committee chaired by the chief conservator of forests (CCF). The committee is to include representatives of a scientific institution working on bustard ecology and conservation or in a related field/an ecologist or conservation biologist in the vicinity of the project area, a representative from a local NGO well-versed with the socio-ecological issues in the vicinity of the project, representative(s) of the local Panchayat(s), member, officer in-charge of the project and member secretary. The chairman can also add additional members.

The Nashik range committee has members from the Bombay Natural History Society (BHNS), veterinarian and wildlife experts, members of the NGO Nature Conservation Society of Nashik (NCSN), a retired range forest officer, a bird-watcher from Ozar, where the birds have been spotted the most, joint forest management committees

(JFMCs) of three villages and the deputy conservator of forests, East division as the member secretary.

The FD has said that it is looking at Nanaj in Solapur and Nashik as breeding centres for these birds in the state. An area of over 500 ha opposite the Ozarkhed dam has also been earmarked for specific conservation action. The grassland area will be fenced off and no trees will be planted here. Surveys have been initiated in Ozar, Chandwad and Dindori and the FD plans to make the local communities part of the conservation effort.

Ozar, in particular, is a good area for the bustards. Eleven years ago, nine females and five males were spotted in 150 acres of land in Ozar. Over time, however, the conditions have deteriorated rapidly. Seven years ago, a total of 11 birds were spotted; five years ago there were seven while three years ago there were only three.

Source: Sumita Sarkar. 'Panel set up to conserve the endangered bustard', *The Times of India*, 11/07/13.

PUNJAB

Rs. 12.7 crore plan for Harike Wildlife Sanctuary

The Punjab Forest and Wildlife Preservation Department has given 'in-principal approval' for a mega tourism development project in the Harike Wildlife Sanctuary. The project that will cost Rs. 12.74 crores will be funded through the Asian Development Bank and is expected to take four years to implement.

The project entails the creation, among others, of watch-towers, an interpretation centre, a nature trail on the bank of the river, eco-rides and boating. Low cost residential facilities for tourists will also be created. The project would additionally involve soil and moisture conservation work and the restoration of degraded and eroded patches on islands and on river banks.

Local youth and entrepreneurs from villages bordering the sanctuary will be

encouraged to utilise tourism as an employment and income-generating activity. Special emphasis would be laid on the participation of the community in conservation and management of tourism by adopting a participatory approach and through the creation of Eco-Development Committees (EDCs) that will comprise members of local communities. The EDCs will also be expected to help in the management of tourism and eco-development activities and in protection against illegal activities like fishing and encroachment.

Source: Gaurav Sagar Bhaskar. 'Nod to Rs. 12.7 cr plan for Harike wetland', *Hindustan Times*, 11/06/13.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Harike Lake WLS, Near Police Station, Harike, Dist. Firozpur, Punjab. Tel: 0181 – 248409

RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan launches 'Project GIB'



The Rajasthan State government has launched a project for saving the Great Indian Bustard (GIB). Project GIB is proposed to be implemented with an immediate allocation of Rs.12.9 crore. It will be monitored by a task force that would include wildlife experts and local elected representatives as its members. Chief Minister Mr. Ashok Gehlot launched this project at the Desert National Park (DNP) in Jaisalmer district. He also spent nearly one-and-a-half hours in the region and saw 12 GIBs in addition to spotting three young birds and two females sitting on eggs.

The State Forest and Environment Minister Ms. Bina Kak said that the recovery plan for the critically endangered species, formulated as part of an integrated development programme for wildlife habitat, would be submitted shortly to the Union

Ministry of Environment and Forests for approval.

She also added that the Forest and Environment Department had constructed enclosures for the GIB in a 400-hectare area in Jaisalmer and Ajmer districts following the budgetary announcement in 2012-13. As part of the new project, enclosures would be built in an area of 2,500 hectares. Other works to be taken up include development of water sources and strengthening of infrastructure with an emphasis on reducing the pressure on the GIB habitat.

The Rajasthan government also plans to make an intervention through the Ministry of External Affairs to ensure that the hunting of GIB and other rare birds in the border areas of Sindh province in Pakistan, adjoining Rajasthan, is stopped forthwith.

During the past five months, Rajasthan has lost three GIBs – two of them due to poaching (see following story and also *PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 1) in the DNP and one due to delay in treatment following an injury. The irrigation activities promoted by the Indira Gandhi Canal in western Rajasthan have also affected the GIB's habitat, even as hunting continues to be a major threat.

Source: 'Plan to protect Great Indian bustard', *The Hindu*, 07/06/13.

Vimal Bhatia, 'Project launched to save Great Indian Bustards in Jaisalmer', *The Times of India*, 09/06/13.

GIB poachers arrested in Sriganganagar

A team of forest officials has arrested three members of a poaching gang active in hunting the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) in the Sriganganagar area. The arrests were made in the first week of July. A four-wheeler (gypsy) and cartridges used for hunting were also seized.

Some unidentified poachers had fired on two GIBs in December last year and one of them had died in the Sudasari area of the Desert National Park (*PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 1). The poachers had managed to get away

with the dead bird. The recent arrests were made based on photographs of the poachers with the dead bird that came into the possession of the forest department (FD) recently. Those arrested have been involved in earlier incidents of hunting the GIB, and the houbara as well, in the region.

Source: Vimal Bhatia. 'Three GIB hunters nabbed in Sriganganagar', *The Times of India*, 05/07/13.

Contact: **DCF**, Desert National Park, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. Tel: 02992-252489 (O), 252490(R). Fax: 02992-252201/252063.

TAMIL NADU

Area of Point Calimere WLS increased

The Tamil Nadu State government has expanded the Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), adding to it 12,407.27 hectares of the Great Vedaranyam swamp in Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam and Thanjavur

districts. The gazette notification to this effect was issued recently.

The reserved forests of Muthupet, Thuraikadu, Vadakadu, Maravakadu, Thamarankottai, Palanjur in Pattukottai and Thiruthuraipoondi taluks and Kodiakadu of Vedaranyam taluk will now be part of the sanctuary.

Source: Julie Mariappan, 'Chennai's Point Calimere wildlife sanctuary gets bigger', *The Times of India*, 05/06/13.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Calimere WLS, 110, Public Office Road, Nagapattinam – 611001. Tamil Nadu. Tel: 04365-22349.

The *Important Bird Areas* Update 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)

UPCOMING

» Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCN)

Venue: Bangalore, India

Dates: 25-28 September, 2013

Contact: Email: sccs@sccs-bng.org

Web: <http://www.sccs-bng.org>

» The 6th Great Himalayan Bird Count

Venue: Across Uttarakhand

Dates: 18-21 October, 2013

Contact: Prateek Panwar. Tel: 09412054216;

Email: arch.birdcount@gmail.com

» The 2nd International Conference on Indian Ornithology

Venue: SACON, Coimbatore

Dates: 19-23 November, 2013

Web: <http://iciosacon.in/>

» Conference on Cultural Heritage: Environment, Ecology and Inter-Asian Interactions

Venue: Rajgir, Dist: Nalanda, Bihar, India

Dates: 6-8 January 2014

Organized by: Nalanda University and International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS)

Contact: Email: conferences@nalandauniv.in; <http://www.nalandauniv.edu.in/conference.html>

» The 8th Asian Raptor Research and Conservation Network's (ARRCN) Raptor Conference

Venue: Pune, India

Dates: 6-9 February, 2014

Deadline for abstracts: 31 August, 2013

Early Bird registration: 31 October 2013

Contact: Dr. Satish Pande. Email:

pande.satish@gmail.com;

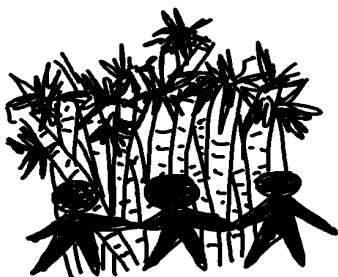
arrcn.india@elafoundation.org;

Web: <http://www.arrcn.elafoundation.org/>

The Forest Rights Act, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation

GUJARAT

CFR titles awarded in Shoolpaneshwar WLS



Community forest rights of 72 villages in tehsil Dediapada, district Narmada, have been recognised. Of these 72, 33 villages are located within the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and the CFRs recognized cover a total area of 17,979.59 hectares. The titles were distributed in the month of February 2013.

The rights awarded include those for minor forest produce collection, use and disposal; fishing and grazing; rights to traditional and conventional practices including use of burial places and sacred spaces; right to biodiversity, cultural diversity, intellectual property and traditional knowledge, customary community rights and also management of community forest resources.

The titles have been given conditional to Section 5 of the FRA which empowers the right holders to protect the wildlife, forests and biodiversity along with adjoining areas; ensure that the habitat is preserved from destructive activities and to ensure compliance to decisions taken by the Gram Sabha to stop any activity adversely affecting the environment. The titles also have the additional condition that this right doesn't include ownership on forest land.

Gram sabhas of many of these villages have already formed forest management and protection committees and are discussing ways of conserving and managing forests using the recognised rights.

Contact: **Trupti Parekh Mehta**, ARCH Vahini.

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Shiba Desor.

Email: desor.shiba@gmail.com

DCF (Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary), Nandod Taluka, Rajpipla, Narmada District.

KARNATAKA

Court upholds Soliga tribe's community forest rights inside the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple TR

The court of the judicial magistrate of Chamrajnagar in Karnataka has upheld the rights of Soliga tribal people in the Biligiri Rangaswamy Tiger Reserve to harvest and sell forest produce independent of the forest department (FD). In an order issued on May 24 earlier this year, the court ordered the Punjanur range forest officer to return 1,100 kg of honey seized from the Hosepodu gram sabha, located within the Biligiri Rangaswami Temple (BRT) tiger reserve, during a raid. The honey was returned to the gram sabha.

The BRT tiger reserve is the first protected area in the country where community forest rights (CFR) have been granted under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA) (*PA Updates* Vol. XVII, Nos. 6, 4 & 2). On October 2, 2011, as many as 25 villages of the Soligas located within the sanctuary received community rights, including the crucial forest conservation and management right to around 60 per cent of the sanctuary area, comprising the Yellandur, K Gudi and Punjanur ranges. Some 30 more villages located within the sanctuary are awaiting their CFRs.

However, a year-and-a-half down the line, CFR implementation has not made much headway owing to differences between forest officials and the tribal community over forest management and harvesting practices of non-timber forest produce (NTFP). Forest officials have repeatedly expressed discomfort with the idea of commercial harvesting of NTFP by

Source: Note by Shiba Desor, Kalpavriksh.

villagers within a protected area even though it is already being commercialised by Large-scale Adivasi Multipurpose Cooperative Societies (LAMPS), initiated by the department itself.

The conflict between the FD, which wants to retain control over the Rs 25 lakh worth of annual NTFP trade in the reserve, and the community, appears to have also been the reason behind the altercation involving the honey.

In his court statement, the range forest officer who confiscated the honey said he had acted on a complaint from two LAMPS directors, stating that the village is illegally marketing its honey independent of LAMPS. The park director too had expressed similar views and had pointed out that the honey was being sold in Tamil Nadu through an NGO.

The two LAMPS directors who made the complaint are reported to have said on condition of anonymity that they were asked to sign the document by the department officials and that they were not aware of its contents.

Community leaders have also complained that the FD has ignored their forest co-management plan which they submitted for discussion and joint implementation. In this plan, the community has demanded that it should be allowed to manage its CFR forests range-wise rather than village-wise. This is how the Soligas have traditionally managed their resources. The plan also offers to demonstrate the Soligas' traditional use of fire as a forest management tool. The community has asked for 404 hectares of forests to be handed over to the community for this demonstration, but this has not been agreed to yet, either.

Source: Aparna Pallavi. 'Court upholds Soliga tribe's community forest rights' *Down to Earth*, 04/06/13.

Contact: DCF, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Wildlife Division, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka.
Tel: 08226-222059(O), 222156(R)

WEST BENGAL

Demand to implement FRA in the Sunderbans

Organisations working in the Sunderbans region, - the Sunderban Jana Shramajibi Mancha (SJSJ), National Fish Workers Forum, Sunderban Matshajibi Joutha Sangram Committee and Disha, have asked for the implementation of the Forest Rights Act in the Sunderbans and have also been holding campaigns to create awareness about forest rights among the people here. The Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, Mr V Kishore Chandra Deo, too, wrote to State Chief Minister in February, earlier this year, urging her to implement the rights in the state.

The state Backward Class Welfare Department, the nodal agency for implementation of Forest Rights Act in the state, has identified 11 districts of Bengal for its implementation, but South and North 24-Parganas, the two districts of the Sunderbans, have not been included. Mr Upen Biswas, the Backward Classes Welfare minister is also reported to have said that those living in the Sunderbans are not traditional forest dwellers and they would therefore need permission from the concerned authorities to collect forest products.

Source: Pradip Chatterjee. 'State yet to implement Forest Rights Act in Sunderbans', *The Statesman*, 11/06/13.

'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/>

When the leopard made it to the headlines

A diary of human-leopard conflict: June-July 2013

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MSGNP/>

June 9 *The Times of India*: ‘Tribals poison cattle-killer leopard, 2 held’, Dhar District, Madhya Pradesh

June 10 *The Times of India*: ‘Leopard kills six-year-old near Mahuva’, Kubariya Village, Mahuva Taluka, Bhavnagar District, Gujarat.

June 13 *Mumbai Mirror*: ‘Don’t shoot’: Borivali police get handy tips on tackling leopards’, Sanjay Gandhi NP, Mumbai, Maharashtra.

June 17 *The Hindu*: ‘Leopard found dead in Gudalur forest range’, Gudalur, Tamil Nadu.

June 19 *The Hindu*: ‘Leopard enters house after man opens door to see why his dog barked’, Naganahalli Village, Kunigal Taluk, Tumkur District, Karnataka

June 20 *The Times of India*: ‘Problem leopards stranded for want of collars’, Moharli, Tadoba-Andhari TR, Maharashtra.

June 24 *The Times of India*: ‘Leopardess succumbs to injuries, was pregnant’, Chandrapur District, Nagpur, Maharashtra.

June 27 *The Times of India*: ‘Leopard goes for kill in Mulund lobby’, Mulund (Near Sanjay Gandhi NP), Mumbai, Maharashtra.

June 29 *The Hindu*: ‘Leopard poaching on the rise in Southern states’

July 6 www.gulfnews.com: ‘Mumbai: Clear garbage to co-exist with leopards of Sanjay Gandhi National Park’, Mumbai, Maharashtra.

July 8 *DNA*: ‘SGNP leopards are not blood thirsty; afraid of humans’, Sanjay Gandhi NP, Mumbai, Maharashtra

July 9 *The New Indian Express*: ‘Woman saves husband from leopard’, Khanapur Taluka, Belgaum district, Karnataka

July 10 *Mumbai Mirror*: ‘Leopard in their backyard, Thane residents lose sleep’, Kolshet, Thane district, Maharashtra

July 11 www.daijiworld.com: ‘Bantwal: Leopard that had turned nightmare for villagers, trapped’, Chennaittody village, Bantwal Taluka, Dakshin Kannada District, Karnataka

July 12 *Afternoon*: ‘Adjusting with the adaptable cat, Sanjay Gandhi NP, Mumbai, Maharashtra

July 15 *The New Indian Express*: ‘Leopard menace shifts to Krishnapur’, Belgaum district, Karnataka.

July 15 *The Times of India*: ‘‘Lovelorn’ leopard escapes cage, captured within hours’, Moharli, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Chandrapur district, Maharashtra.

July 16 *Hindustan Times*: ‘Leopards scare students away from Aarey Municipal school’, Sanjay Gandhi NP, Mumbai, Maharashtra.

July 17 *The Times of India*: ‘Sohelwa Wildlife Sanctuary leopards prey on villagers’, Uttar Pradesh

A Decade Ago

Protected Area Update 44, August 2003

JHARKHAND

Train kills four elephants near Palamau TR

Four elephants were killed on the outskirts of the Palamau Tiger Reserve by a goods train on the Chipadohar-Hehegarha track. The incident happened on the night of July 18 and resulted in holding up of traffic on the route for more than eight hours. The elephants killed included a tusker, a pregnant female and two cubs.

This is not the first time such deaths have occurred on this section. In an attempt to prevent more elephant deaths on the Chakradharpur - Manoharpur track, the Forest Department has conceived a Rs. 60 lakh plan, which envisages fencing a section of the track to prevent elephants from crossing here. The cost of the plan was to be equally borne by the FD and the Railways.

The project is yet to take off, though the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has, reportedly, already released its share from the Rs. 90 lakh given to the state government under Project Elephant.

Source: Manoj Prasad. '4 pachyderms run over by goods train', *The Indian Express*, 21/07/03.

MAHARASHTRA

500 teak trees allegedly felled in Nagzira WLS

National President of the Bharatiya Kisan Morcha and former Minister for Finance and Planning in the Government of Maharashtra, Mr. Mahadevrao Shivankar has charged Forest Department employees with illegally felling around 500 teak trees in the Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary. He has also demanded the resignation of the State Forest Minister, Surupsingh Naik.

Shivankar has pegged the value of the felled trees at Rs. 500 crore (some reports put the value of the timber at Rs. Five crore) and alleged that such felling could not have been possible without the involvement of the senior forest

officials. He has also demanded the investigation should be handed over to the Central Bureau of

Investigation and that POTA should be applied against the DFO, Ranger and Beat Guard reported to be responsible for the incident.

CCF (Wildlife) Mr. Jwala Prasad, when contacted, accepted that trees had been cut, but their number was 40-45, and not 500 as alleged. He said that one person had been suspended and also conceded that the felling could not have been possible without the involvement and assistance from forest personnel.

According to a news report, later in July, a RFO and a forest guard were suspended.

Source: '500 teak trees felled in Nagzira wildlife sanctuary', *Hindustan Times*, 25/06/03.
'Nagzira forest officer, guard suspended', *The Times of India*, 07/07/03.

UTTARAKHAND

Parasitic plant threatens Valley of Flowers

A paper published recently in the journal *Current Science* has said that the floral wealth of the Valley of Flowers National Park is being threatened by the proliferation of the parasitic plant 'dodder'. The plant, which coils around the stem of the host plants and thrives on the nutrition it drains from them, has been found on different species of medicinal and flowering plants across the valley.

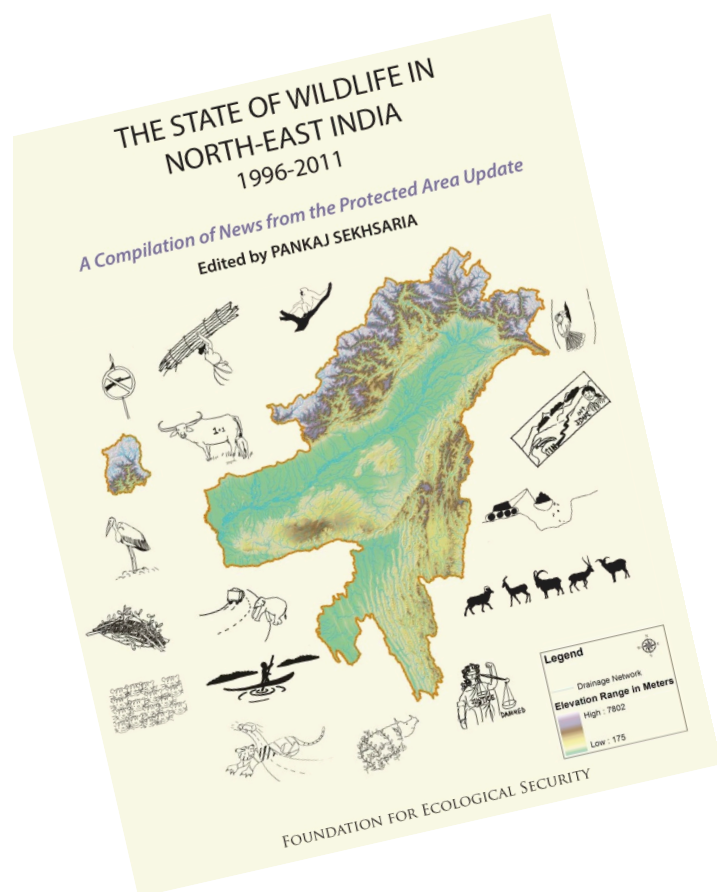
An important medicinal plant, called Indira's Hand, which is critically endangered was found to be heavily infested by the parasite.

The study was done by a team of scientists from the GB Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development that was led by Soumai Kant Joshi and Sanjay Gairola.

Source: P Sunderarajan. 'Parasitic plant threatens Valley of Flowers', *The Hindu*, 22/06/03.

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

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PERSPECTIVE

The Uttarakhand disaster A report from the field

It is over a month now, since the massive floods hit large parts of Uttarakhand and for those who live here, much remains hidden behind a smoke screen. There is obfuscation in providing accurate data on every aspect - be it the number of deaths, the loss of homes and land, the amount of rain that fell or the river flow volumes.

The thousands of tourists evacuated will return to their “normal lives” and some may endure the trauma for a long time. The real and long term impact will be on the permanent residents of the region; those who lost their homes, their lands and their livelihoods and more importantly the loss of faith in their ability to cope and their ability to rebuild.

Over the past few weeks we have already witnessed the romanticising of technological fixes. Leading dam companies and their ardent supporters, including the CM of Uttarakhand, have claimed that large dams like the Tehri saved large towns. This, inspite of the indisputable evidence that in many cases dams were the cause of extraordinary damage downstream; firstly because they blocked the path of a raging river, secondly, because they were unable to contain the flood and thirdly because they were forced to open their gates, causing flooding water and debris to cause havoc downstream.

Factual data is difficult to obtain at the moment, but anecdotal accounts and prior

experience from such major flooding events suggest strongly that wildlife, particularly riverine fauna, has certainly been affected. In the Ramganga East river many hundreds of dead fish including a 17 kg Golden Mahaseer was reportedly found floating downstream. Many of these were collected by the local villagers. Similar observations were reported from the banks of the Gori river too; the raging river, however, was too terrifying for anyone to go near and collect the fish as in the Ramganga East.

A similar flooding event in the Gori in 1995 had caused the Golden Mahaseer and the Short Clawed Otter to disappear. The Mahaseer population has still not recovered and it was at least a decade before the otters managed a visible return. The recent event will again set back such fauna by many years. They might manage a return only if their refugia populations are left intact and if the rivers themselves are left untouched.

This will be as big a challenge for the residents of these mountains and valleys, as it will be to re-build their lives and their worlds.

- K. Ramnarayan

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