

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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## EDITORIAL

### The South Asia Challenge

There are many things that stand out about this part of the world we all know as South Asia. It is comprised of only a handful of countries but is home to a sizeable chunk of the planet's human population, a majority of who are classified as poor by conventional metrics. There is huge cultural and ethnic diversity here, mirrored perhaps, only by the rich ecosystem and biological diversity one sees in this region. And critics and criticisms notwithstanding, the two have managed to get along together rather well.

From the deep oceans to the high Himalayas, from vast grasslands and arid deserts to thriving wetlands and tropical rainforests, this small subcontinent supports an astonishing array of wild diversity. It is a region as much united as it is divided by nature's systems and by geography as it is by history and politics.

India has a particularly important position in this scheme of things, sharing as she does all borders and ecologies – the oceans and coastline with nearly all the other countries, Sunderbans with Bangladesh, the Terai with Nepal, the arid regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat with Pakistan and the Himalayas with Bhutan. Be it elephants, rhinos, tigers or turtles, not to mention birds and other smaller creatures, there is a constant flow across the boundaries and efforts of all kinds will be needed if effective conservation and protection is to be ensured. This particular issue of the *PA Update* does provide, after a long time, some insights into these cross-border issues (see Page 12).

It is not very often that we get this information, indication perhaps that the media is not attentive to these issues and also that there is little co-ordinated cross border research (there are notable exceptions, though) that might provide us information and insights into how wildlife might be negotiating these international borders, or how developments and changes on one side affect the other.

Of the many challenges that the countries of South Asia face, this is, perhaps, the

one that has received the least interest and investment. Much, in fact, is at stake and the earlier we accord it the seriousness it deserves, the better it will be.

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### Relocating villages from Kawal TR would help improve the habitat: Study

A study conducted by the Hyderabad Tiger Conservation Society (HYTICOS) with support from Panthera has highlighted the importance of relocation of a few tribal villages from the Kawal Tiger Reserve (KTR) to ensure conservation and better protection.

HYTICOS has pointed out that there has been a remarkable improvement in prey density in KTR since the management intervention of the last two or three years. There is an overall biomass availability of over 1,700 kg per sq km now, which is sufficient to support 20 to 30 tigers in the core area of the reserve. The density of ungulates in these parts is abysmally low at 0.64 *sambar* and 3.2 *chital* per sq km when compared to the 10.7 and 38.4 at the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan. However, the study records a much larger presence of wild boar at 22.8 per sq km to just 3.6 in Ranthambhore.

The villages of Alinagar, Dongapalli, Malial and Maisampet located in the core area of KTR are reported to have all accepted the offer of a relocation package. There is a delay in shifting, however, as tribals in other habitations on the fringes or located close to the KTR also apprehend being uprooted.

The report has also expressed the need to realign the present Nirmal-Luxettipet road, which cuts through the KTR causing a lot of disturbance in the prime habitat. It has suggested that the traffic can be diverted after strengthening the old road connecting all 40 villages located along the banks of river Godavari (See accompanying story; also see *PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 3).

Source: S. Harpal Singh, 'Relocate villages from tiger reserve: study', *The Hindu*, 19/08/13.  
Contact: **HYTICOS**, 22-8-512/2, Purani Haveli, Hyderabad- 500002, Andhra Pradesh.  
Tel: 040- 55716607.  
**DFO Wildlife**, Kawal WLS, Jannaram, Dist. Adilabad - 504205. Andhra Pradesh.  
Tel: 08739-236224.

### **Heavy vehicular traffic continues through Kawal Tiger Reserve**



Heavy traffic continues to ply through the Kawal Tiger Reserve in spite of the decision of the Andhra Pradesh State Board for Wildlife to ban heavy vehicular movement through the forests here (*PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 3). The State Chief Minister had, in January earlier this year, approved a proposal by the Forest Department (FD) to completely ban heavy goods vehicles between Gudihatnoor and Luxettipet.

However, the plying of heavy vehicles on the stretch has continued, causing disturbance to wildlife, and also leading to a heavy loss to the government exchequer by way of damaging the road which is not suitable for bearing enormous loads carried by the heavy vehicles. Besides, there are frequent traffic jams, especially in crowded areas such as Gudihatnoor crossing, Indervelli, Utnoor and Jannaram mandal headquarter villages as the road does not have sufficient width. Often, traffic comes to a standstill for long hours on the narrow ghats inside the Kawal forests on the Utnoor-Indhanpalli road as the lorries fail to negotiate the gradients.

Concerned departments such as the Roads and Building (R&B) and the FD have failed to implement the ban decision. The R&B Department, in particular, has been unable in coming up with a plan to divert traffic at Gudihatnoor crossroads on the NH 44 and Luxettipet on the other side.

Several wild animals are also reported to have been killed in road accidents by heavy vehicles in the time that has lapsed since the new decision was communicated to authorities here.

Source: 'Kawal forest wildlife under threat', *The Hindu*, 06/08/13.

### **ASSAM**

#### **NGT seeks Centre and State's responses over expansion of road inside Kaziranga NP**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought the Centre and the Assam government's responses on a plea opposing expansion of the National Highway (NH) 37 stretch running through the Kaziranga National Park on the ground that it would lead to death of wild animals due to road accidents. The tribunal has also issued notice to the National Highways Authority of India, the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Pollution Control Board and Forest Department of Assam, on the plea which also alleged violation of the conditions under which environmental clearance (EC) was granted to the Numaligarh Refinery Limited.

According to the petitioner, the EC was granted subject to strict compliance of various conditions, one of which related to de-notification of the stretch of NH 37 passing through the park and diversion of the highway away from the protected area.

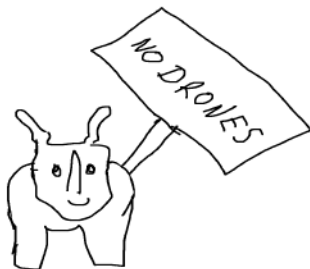
The petition has opposed widening of that portion of the highway which passes through the sanctuary on the grounds that continued and unregulated use of NH 37 is resulting in death of wild animals and reptiles in large numbers in road accidents and its expansion will further aggravate the situation.

The petition has sought action against the agencies concerned, including government officials, for willful non-compliance of the EC condition and failure in regulating traffic that is leading to 'road kills' of animals. It has also asked for a stay on ancillary infrastructure like hotels, and eateries that are coming up on the NH 37 portion passing through Kaziranga. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVI, Nos. 5, 4 & 1; Vol. XIV,

No. 6; Vol. XIII, Nos. 6, 2 & 1 and Vol. XI, Nos. 6 & 4).

Source: 'NH expansion through Kaziranga opposed, govt response sought,' *Business Standard*, 19/08/13.

### No drones for Kaziranga NP: Centre



The Central Government has turned down Assam's proposal for aerial surveillance of the Kaziranga National Park (NP) by using drones (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 6). State Forest Minister, Rockybul Hussain, said that the proposal had been turned down due to military and security reasons. The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests had earlier cleared the proposal but the state has now received a letter from the Defence Ministry informing that the proposal had been turned down. The state has requested the ministry to review the decision.

The proposal was mooted in 2012 when the park registered a sudden spate in rhino poaching (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 6). Over 20 rhinos were killed by poachers in Assam last year and more than 20 have been killed in the park so far this year.

In other moves to curb poaching, the Forest Department (FD) has proposed to fence a stretch of 50 km in the Kaziranga NP with solar powered electric fencing to stop rhinos from straying outside. The centre has sanctioned additional firepower for the FD and the state government plans to buy 2,000 self-loading rifles, 540 carbines, 30 nine mm pistols, 25 revolvers and 10 light machine guns to equip the FD.

Source: 'Centre rejects drones for Assam's national park', *The Times of India*, 22/08/13.

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

### Rhino calf poached in Manas NP

In an incident in the first week of August, the carcass of a male rhino calf with its horn, ears, nails and tail missing, was found in the Katajhar area on the southern side of the Manas National Park (NP). The calf had been translocated to Manas from Kaziranga NP last year along with its mother under the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 project.

This is the fifth rhino killed in the Manas NP since 2011 and the third one killed this year. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 6 & 2; Vol. XIV, Nos. 6 & 5 and Vol. XIII, Nos. 5 & 2.)

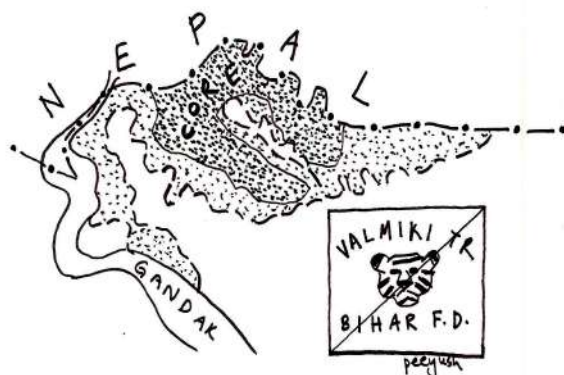
Source: 'Rhino calf killed in Assam's Manas National Park, horn taken', *The Times of India*, 07/08/13.

Contact: **Director**, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd. Dist. Barpeta – 781315, Assam. Tel: 03666 – 261413. Fax: 232253 / 260253. Email: ghoshsonali@gmail.com

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

### BIHAR

#### Four more mammal species at Valmiki TR



Four new mammals – the Crab-eating mongoose, Hoary-bellied squirrel, Himalayan serow and the Yellow-throated marten have been recorded for the first time in the forests of the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (TR). The discoveries were made over the period of a year with the help of camera traps. All the animals except for the squirrel were recorded between the months of May and

July. The last Zoological Survey of India report from 1998 had recorded 53 mammals at the Valmiki TR. These species were not recorded then.

The regional head of the Wildlife Trust of India, Dr Samir Kumar Sinha, said that the reasons for the appearance of these four mammal species could be linked to changes in habitat. It is also possible that these were simply never spotted before.

The serow and the mongoose are present in Nepal's Chitwan National Park, which is contiguous with Valmiki TR, though at higher altitudes.

Source: Kim Arora. 'Bihar's Valmiki Tiger Reserve finds four more species in its premises', *The Times of India*, 07/08/13.

Contact: **Director**, Valmiki Tiger Reserve, Bettiah, Dist. West Champaran, Bihar. Tel: 06254 – 235331/232909. Fax: 232909

## GOA

### 49 mines within 10 km of wildlife sanctuaries



A survey has indicated that there are 49 mines within 10 km of Goa's wildlife sanctuaries, while four are situated over 10 km away. The Directorate of Mines and Geology has submitted a list of 38 additional mining leases to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) after the mines were surveyed to map their distance from wildlife sanctuaries. With this, details of 92 mining leases, out of a total of 118, have been submitted to the MoEF.

The survey was conducted in view of the Expert Appraisal Committee meeting for granting environment clearances. These had been suspended in October 2012, following the tabling of the Shah Commission report in

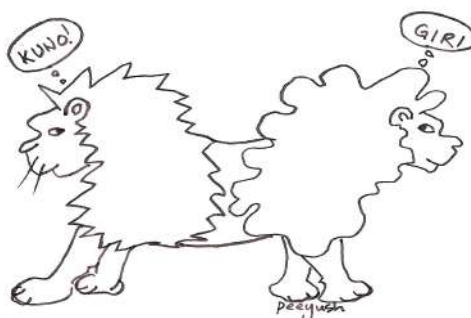
parliament that had exposed a Rs. 35,000 crore illegal mining scam in Goa. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII. Nos. 6 & 1).

Source: 'Additional info on 38 mines given to MoEF', *Herald*, 20/08/13.

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

## GUJARAT

### Two committees to study the issues associated with the Lion Translocation Project



A 12-member committee has been formed to look into the translocation of lions from the Gir National Park to Kuno-Palpur in Madhya Pradesh (MP), particularly, to study the threat perception to these big cats in the new habitat. A two-member expert committee involving Dr Ravi Chellam and Dr YV Jhala has also been formed to list out threats and to resolve issues as mentioned in the new guidelines issued by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. This committee will prepare a list of studies that need to be carried out before shifting the lions to Kuno-Palpur and then give it to the 12-member committee for further action.

In a meeting held on July 29, the two-member committee was asked to draw up a translocation protocol and to submit their report within six weeks. In the same meeting, members had raised doubts over the prey base count submitted in the previous meeting by the MP government. The state official had stated that there are 69 *chitals* and 80 animals per sq km in the proposed 314 sq km Kuno Sanctuary. Tigers, however, are not making Kuno a permanent home despite this good prey base. Members

have, therefore, questioned the MP claim about the same and have asked for a clearer picture on the presence of tigers in the sanctuary.

The members also sought to know from the Chief Wildlife Warden of Gujarat as to what happened to the state government's plan to shift lions to the Barda sanctuary in Porbandar district. Besides this, the state officials were also asked about the status of the new 108 sq km conservation reserve which the government plans to set up in Bhavnagar district.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, Nos. 4 & 3).

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. 'Experts to study threat to lions in Kuno-Palpur', *The Times of India*, 20/08/13.

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.

## KARNATAKA

### GPS to track elephant movement in Karnataka

The Forest Department (FD) has decided to use the Global Positioning System (GPS) to track elephant movement in order to address the issue of human-elephant conflicts in seven districts of Karnataka. The attempt is to be first made with four elephant herds in the Bandipur National Park that are known to regularly raid villages in the Kodagu and Hassan districts.

The GPS collars have been developed by the Department of Electronics Study, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. They are waterproof and have a battery life of more than two years. The cost of each collar is Rs 1.5 lakh and it weighs less than 2 kg.

Source: Shyam Sundar Vattam, 'GPS to track movement of jumbo herds', *The New Indian Express*, 31/08/13.

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

### Granite quarries and factory in vicinity of the BRT TR

An alleged illegal black granite factory is being built in the K. Gudi eco-sensitive zone of the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserve (TR). There are already three black granite quarries in the zone. The privately-owned factory is coming up on 1.35 acres in Devarajapura village and the site is just 2.5 km from the reserve boundary. The land conversion was done by the deputy commissioner's office for industrial purposes in 2009. It has also secured approval from the district industries centre and the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board.

Additionally, 10.52 hectares in the Punajanur state forest have been given on lease to Mysore Minerals (700 meters from the forest), 10 acres have been leased to Mohan Enterprises in Jyothigowdanapura (two km from the forest area), and two acres have been leased out in Melmala village (1.25 km from the forest), to the Bharat Granites Company for 20 years.

All these firms have not taken permission from the Forest Department (FD) as required under the Environment Protection Act, 1986. Also, as per a Supreme Court order, the area within a 10 km radius of the reserve forest should be declared an environmentally sensitive zone.

According to the Conservator of Forests, the FD has submitted a report to the state government asking for the declaration of the sensitive zone. It had also written to the deputy commissioner to cancel the licences given to the factory and the quarries.

Source: 'Illegal quarrying, granite factory pose danger to wildlife in BRT', *Deccan Herald*, 22/08/13.

Contact: **DCF - Wildlife**, BRT Wildlife Sanctuary, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka. Tel: 08226-22059(O), 22156(R).

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

## KERALA

### Increase observed in melanism, albinism in wildlife in Kerala forests, PAs



An increase has been observed in the presence of melanism in the animals in the forests of Silent Valley, Parambikulam, Nelliampathy and Attappady. Forest officials say a scientific study is required to confirm this and get a sense of the extent. A melanistic spotted deer was seen close to the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve recently, while a black panther was photographed in the Attappady forests. Experts say that melanistic animals are found more often in dense forests.

Albinism is also found among wild animals in these areas. A white *sambar* has also been photographed in Nelliampathy. Albinism in peacocks has also been found in the Ramana Ashram at Thiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu since 1945. Even now, albino birds can be seen in the ashram.

Source: G. Prabhakaran, 'Melanism, Albino syndrome among Palakkad wildlife', *The Hindu*, 19/08/13.

### WWF provides equipment support to the Wayanad WLS

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - India has recently provided patrolling and wireless equipment to the frontline staff at the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary as help for better protection.

The equipment includes 17 global positioning systems, 17 magnetic field compasses, 17 pairs binoculars, 24 wireless base sets, 48 walkie-talkies, 150 raincoats and rain-proof shoes.

Source: 'WWF arms anti-poaching measures', *The Hindu*, 05/08/13.

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

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

## MADHYA PRADESH

### Proposal to shift *barasinghas* from Kanha TR to Satpura NP

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has proposed to shift some *barasinghas* from the Kanha Tiger Reserve (TR) to the Satpura National Park (NP), as insurance against the outbreak of disease.

The FD has made a fresh request to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) seeking approval for the translocation. An earlier project where the translocation was slated for January 2012, was put on hold by the Centre following the death of more than 20 blackbucks after shifting them to Kanha from Seoni district.

The Centre had asked the state to carry out a viability study on the *barasingha* translocation project pointing out the state's earlier attempt to reintroduce black bucks in Kanha had proved disastrous. Similarly, 17 *barasinghas* were also killed while being translocated from Kanha to the Bandhavgarh TR during an earlier translocation effort.

According to the Director of the Kanha NP, Population and Habitat Viability Assessments (PHVA) have been completed and reports are positive.

Source: 'Barasinghas shifting: Forest department seeks Centre's nod', *The Times of India*, 07/09/13.

Contact: **Director**, Kanha Tiger Reserve, Mandla, 481661 Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07642-250760(O), 250761(R). Fax: 251266, 250830



## MAHARASHTRA

### **Maharashtra State Wildlife Board reconstituted**

The Maharashtra State Wildlife Board was reconstituted recently, five months after the term of the previous team ended. The 33-member board will be chaired by the Chief Minister while the Chief Wildlife Warden will be the member-secretary.

Executive director of Wildlife Protection Society of India, Belinda Wright; Sanctuary Asia editor Bittu Sahgal; Bombay Natural History Society Director, Asad Rahmani; Satpuda Foundation's, Kishor Rithe; wildlife expert, Anish Andheria; Wildlife Conservation Trust's, Hemendra Kothari; Eco-Pro president, Bandu Dhotre; social worker, Prakash Amte; Devaji Tofa from Mendha-Lekha; MLAs Anandrao Gedam from Armori and Jagdishchandra Valvi are some of those who have been nominated as members.

The Forest minister is the de facto vice-president of the board while the minister of state for forests, managing director of the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra, head of the forest force, field directors of tiger reserves, principal secretary (forest), and principal secretary (tribal development) among others are also on the board.

Source: 'Maharashtra State Wildlife Board reconstituted', *Economic Times*, 03/09/13.

### **Sanctuary status proposed for Kanhalgaon forests**

The Maharashtra Forest Department has proposed sanctuary status for the forests of Kanhalgaon that form a corridor between the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in the north and the Kawal TR in Andhra Pradesh to the south.

The proposed sanctuary will comprise of the 58.13 sq km area of the Kothari range in Central Chanda and 311.34 sq km of area presently under the control of the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM). The total area includes 152 compartments of reserve forest, besides 176.78

hectares of private area. Almost 90% of this area is in the possession of FDCM, which has been carrying out felling operations as per the approved working plan. As per the 2012 estimation, there are 10 tigers in Central Chanda division overlapping the proposed Kanhalgaon area.

Some political leaders have, however, expressed concern that the proposed sanctuary is surrounded by villages in the Dhaba range. Rajura MLA Subhas Dhote has questioned the need for Kanhalgaon to be declared a sanctuary when two PAs - Tadoba and Chaprala already exist in the region. He said he plans to talk to the people before giving his consent.

The Chandrapur Honorary Wildlife Warden Bandu Dhotre has allayed the MLA's fears. He said that the 30-40 villages in Dhaba and the forest area here would not be included in the proposed sanctuary. Only two villages - Ganpur and Kanhalgaon - will fall within the new sanctuary. He noted that Ganpur being on the roadside needs no relocation. He also added that locals have been deprived of employment as the FDCM engages labour from neighbouring MP and Chhattisgarh for its felling operations and the sanctuary will bring income from ecotourism for the locals.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Kanhalgaon in Chandrapur proposed to be a sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 22/08/13.

### **Two new TRs proposed for Maharashtra**

The Forest Department (FD) plans to send fresh proposals to the state government for setting up two more tiger reserves (TRs). The state currently has four TRs in Melghat, Pench, Tadoba-Andhari and Sahyadri. The fifth TR would be formed by integrating the Nagzira and Navegaon protected areas in Bhandara-Gondia districts, while the Bor sanctuary in Wardha district will once again be proposed as the sixth TR. Bor had been proposed as a TR in 2010 by the then minister of environment and forests, Jairam Ramesh, but it was considered too small.

The Nagzira protected area complex includes the Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), the New Nagzira WLS and the recently constituted Koka WLS. These three protected

areas collectively have an area of around 400 sq km. The Navegaon National Park, covering an area of around 130 sq km, and the Navegaon sanctuary with an area of 120 sq km, together with Nagzira will constitute the other new TR.

In March 2012, the state had notified 61 sq km area around existing Bor WLS as the New Bor WLS. Together, they cover an area of 129 sq km. Despite being small the area has around six tigers and is connected to the Pench, Melghat TRs as also the forest areas in adjoining Madhya Pradesh.

Source: Neha Madaan, 'Forest dept to send fresh plans for two more tiger reserves in state', *The Times of India*, 07/08/13.

### Radio collars for two female leopards in the Tadoba-Andhari TR



The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has radio collared two female leopards. One is from the Adegaoon area in the buffer zone of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) and the other one was captured within the city limits of Chandrapur. The animals had been captured following public pressure and an outcry over the increasing human-leopard conflict in the region.

The collaring was accomplished at Moharli in the first week of August.

The collaring process had been delayed by nearly two months due to a delay in procurement of the costly radio collars. The imported collars would last for eight to nine months and would drop automatically from the neck of the animal. It will cause no allergy or irritation to the animal. This radio collaring is part of WII's long term programme to study the habitat use, behavioral and kill pattern of these carnivores. The two animals will be monitored by WII personnel and local field officers.

Source: Mazhar Ali. 'TATR, WII officials radio collar two leopards', *The Times of India*, 04/08/13.

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

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

## ODISHA

### STPF for Simlipal TR

A Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) would soon be in action in the Simlipal Tiger Reserve (TR). 17 foresters and 45 forest guards were recently recruited for this special force. These have been deputed from the Baripada, Karanjia, Rairangpur and Simlipal TR divisions to form the STPF.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife, has informed that only temporary staff would manage the STPF till the state government gives a go-ahead for a more permanent recruitment process.

Source: Riyan Ramanath V, 'Special task force to protect big cats', *The Times of India*, 22/08/13.

### Serious staff shortage at Simlipal TR

A serious staff shortage has been reported from the Simlipal Tiger Reserve (STR), resulting in an impact on conservation and protection activities.

Of 19 ranges in the reserve's core and buffer zone, seven ranges do not have full-time forest range officers. Udala and Bangiriposhi in the buffer zone, and National Park, Nawana North, Upper Barahkamuda, Jenabil and Pithabata (all in the core zone) ranges do not have any range officers. For three ranges, officers from other ranges are in additional charge while foresters are managing the show in four others.

Some of the critical range offices are at risk of facing a breakdown in the management.

Upper Barahkamuda has not had a range officer since March as the officer who was transferred from Balasore division, has not joined yet. The range officer has been on leave on medical grounds while the office of the Regional Chief Conservator of Forests, Baripada circle has rejected his medical certificate.

While such instances have affected protection measures in the core areas, the absence of full-time officers in Udala and Bangiriposhi are reported to have increased poaching here. Absence of range officers has also emboldened the smugglers residing in the villages on the fringes of STR.

Source: 'Poachers have field day as STR reels under staff shortage', *The New Indian Express*, 05/08/13.

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

## UTTARKHAND

### 111 villages excluded in rationalization of boundary of the Askot WLS

111 villages located within the boundary of the Askot Musk Deer Sanctuary will now be excluded. The decision is part of the exercise for the rationalization of the boundaries of the protected area. Over 54000 people are said to be living in these villages. A decision has also been taken to rename the sanctuary that will now be spread over an area of 600 sq km as the Askot Wildlife Sanctuary.

The notice to demarcate Askot Musk Deer Sanctuary was first issued in 1986. The boundaries were, however, not specified at that point of time.

Source: 'Askot Sanctuary: 111 villages to be removed from perimeter', *Business Standard*, 26/07/13.



Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Askot & Binsar WLS, Dist. Almora, Uttarakhand. Tel: 05964-225234/225390. Fax: 285376.  
**CWLW**, 5, Chandrabani, Mohobewala, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0135-2644691.

## WEST BENGAL

### Unidentified deer photographed in Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary



Four images of an animal that looks like a barking deer but is completely black in colour have been obtained by camera traps at the Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary. Though the species has not been identified yet, it has been suggested that it might be a melanistic barking deer. The images were taken between October 2010 and 2012 by cameras set up to help estimate the population status of the Asiatic black bear here. While there have been unconfirmed reports of the presence of melanistic barking deer in the forests around Darjeeling, this is perhaps the first photographic documentation of the animal in the wild.

It has also been suggested that the animal could be a black barking deer, a separate species. If it is the black barking deer, it will be only the second such sighting in India after Arunachal Pradesh's Namdapha Tiger Reserve.

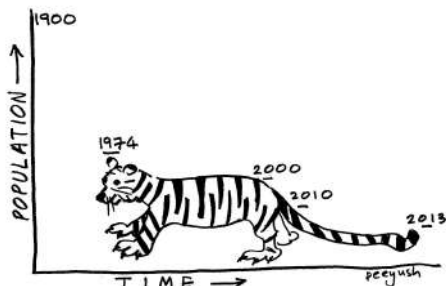
The 3<sup>rd</sup> possibility, based on greater geographical proximity of Namdapha to Yunnan in China and the morphological appearance, is that both these records could actually be of the Gongshan Muntjac - *Muntiacus gongshanensis*, another species of barking deer described from north-west Yunnan. The specimens from Namdapha did not have the orange tuft on the forehead which is typical of the black barking deer.

Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee, 'Mysterious deer spotted in Darjeeling forest', *The Times of India*, 31/07/13.

Contact: **DFO**, Senchal WLS, Wildlife Division-I, Old Secretariat Campus, P.O. & Dist. Darjeeling – 734101, West Bengal. Email: dfowl1@dte.vsnl.net.in

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### National tiger census to start in December



The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has announced that the all India tiger estimation 2013-14 will start in December, later this year. The census will be carried out using the refined methodology of double sampling and the states of Goa and Nagaland will also be included in the count this time.

The census will be conducted in three phases with Phase I involving collection of ground data using an eight-day protocol. Phase II will include use of remote sensed data to generate landscape and related indices, while Phase III will involve use of camera traps and distance sampling for computing densities of tigers. During this phase, expert teams from Wildlife Institute of India will visit states to monitor the process and to collect data.

Under the ongoing centrally sponsored scheme 100% assistance will be provided for conducting the eight-day field protocol towards primary data collection, besides organizing orientation and training workshops. The important new feature in the estimation this time would be use of tiger reserve level monitoring data.

The regional workshops for forest officials will be conducted from September 4 to October 1, 2013. The first workshop will be held from September 4 to 6 in Dudhwa for Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh; in Kanha from September 11 to 13 for Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand & Chhattisgarh; in Periyar from September 18 to 20 for Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu; in Kaziranga from September 25 to

27 for Assam, Arunachal, Mizoram, Buxa; and in Sundarbans from September 30 to October 1 for West Bengal.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'National tiger census to kick off in December', *The Times of India*, 09/08/13.

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

### 50 tiger deaths in first seven months of 2013

50 tiger deaths have been reported in the country in the first seven months of 2013. Heading the list is Karnataka with the loss of 13 tigers, followed by Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh with five deaths each. Of the five deaths in Madhya Pradesh, two were reported from Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, two from Pench Tiger Reserve and one from the Katni forest division.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has also issued a new protocol, according to which the cause of every tiger death will be considered a case of poaching till the time state government proves it otherwise with proper evidence. The move aims at bringing in more transparency in the post-mortem process. This has been done to deal with the trend of hiding the exact cause of the death.

The NTCA is also maintaining a photographic record of every tiger in the country. Recently, three tiger skins seized in Nepal were found to be from Madhya Pradesh based on the pattern of their stripes.

Source: 'Country lost 50 tigers in six months, 5 in Madhya Pradesh', *The Times of India*, 06/08/13.

## SOUTH ASIA

### Bangladesh joins regional wildlife protection project

The government of Bangladesh, along with Nepal and Bhutan, has joined the World Bank

supported project for “Strengthening Regional Cooperation in Wildlife Protection in Asia”. The project aims at conserving wildlife and checking illegal wildlife trade.

The project will support the Bangladesh Forest Department (FD) in enforcing the newly enacted Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012. In addition to strengthening the capacity of the Wildlife Circle responsible for wildlife management within the Bangladesh FD, the project will support the establishment of a Wildlife Center which will undertake training, research, education and awareness on the issues of wildlife conservation and protection.

As mandated by the new Act, the Bangladesh FD has created a Wildlife Crime Control Unit to carry out forensics, quarantine, and provide legal aid in discharging its responsibilities as a signatory to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Source: ‘Bangladesh joins WB-supported wildlife protection regional project’, [www.bangladeshtoday.com](http://www.bangladeshtoday.com).

## BANGLADESH

### Concern over impact of coal-fired power plant near the Sundarbans



Experts and environmental organizations are protesting the Bangladesh government’s plan to build a massive coal-fired power plant close to the Sundarbans. The 1,320 megawatt power plant, to be built within 14 km of the Sundarbans, will be jointly funded by Bangladesh and India under agreements signed last April.

According to the environmentalists, the authorities have not considered the impact of the plant on the Sundarbans’ ecosystem and the forest’s role as a valuable coastal defense against extreme weather. They have also pointed out that coal-fired power is a heavy contributor to climate change, and Bangladesh is considered

one of the world’s most vulnerable countries to impacts of climate change. The forest may be vulnerable to ‘acid rain’ from chemicals released by the plant, and chemicals could also cause health problems for humans. The Ramsar Convention too has expressed its concern and asked the government for more information.

The initial environmental examination of the Sundarbans project was carried out by the Water Resources Ministry’s Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Service, which the environmentalists claim is not an impartial body. This was followed by an Environmental Impact Assessment, but before this could be completed authorities evicted 2,500 families from the 1,830 acres acquired for the plant and began filling in 250 acres of the land. According to the Farmland Protection Committee in Rampal, people evicted from the project area had lost their incomes. It has also expressed concerns that water use for the plant from the Pashur River would leave less drinking water available for people living in the area.

Bangladesh has sizeable coal reserves, and a consultant for the Sundarbans project has said that the government had no option but to go for coal-fired plants to meet the growing demand for electricity as the alternatives were more expensive. The government has announced a 15-year tax waiver to attract private companies interested in bidding for coal-fired electricity production contracts.

Source: Thomson Reuters Foundation, ‘Protests over Bangladesh coal-fired power plant near Sundarbans’, 04/08/13.

### Indo-Bangladesh bilateral tiger conservation protocol remains on paper

No progress at all has been made on the implementation of the bilateral tiger conservation protocol signed in September 2011 between Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, and her Indian counterpart, Dr Manmohan Singh. A committee comprising forest officials and experts that had been constituted the same year for the implementation of the protocol has not had a single meeting so far.

Bangladesh Environment Minister, Hasan Mahmud, said some forest officials had already visited India as a part of the protocol to share and exchange their views on tiger conservation. However, a forest officer from Bangladesh has said that though the issue was related to wildlife protection, no official who works on wildlife was part of the visit.

In its first seven articles, the protocol says both countries will undertake joint scientific and research projects to promote their understanding and knowledge of the Sundarbans' tigers, to share research data and to conduct joint research.

Source: Abu Bakar Siddique, 'No headway on tiger conservation pact', [www.dhakatribune.com](http://www.dhakatribune.com), 29/07/13.

## NEPAL

### Tiger population on the rise in Nepal

The number of tigers in Nepal has increased by 63 percent, from 121 in 2009 to 198 now.

The survey which gave these numbers was carried out between February and June 2013. It covered the Terai Arc region, which spreads across the north Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and into southern Nepal. In Nepal it was concentrated on five protected areas and three wildlife corridors, and found that numbers had increased in all the national parks in the country. In particular, the tiger population in the south-western Bardia NP has risen from about 18 in 2009 to 50 this year.

Nepal is reported to have increased anti-poaching efforts in a bid to curb the illegal wildlife trade. This is said to have contributed directly to the increase in numbers reported.

Source: 'Nepal sees tiger population go up by 63% since 2009', [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 29/07/13.

### Nepal police arrests 159 wildlife traders in last three years

The Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) of the Nepal Police has arrested 159 individuals involved in wildlife trade since its inception on July 17, 2010. The CIB conducted 10 anti-

poaching and anti-smuggling operations in the fiscal year 2010-11, 22 such operations in 2011-12 and 32 in 2012-13. These operations led to the arrest of 159 persons including 10 women.

The biggest of these CIB operations had led to the arrest of four people and the seizure of 1,150 kg of *Chiru* (Tibetan antelope) wool in Gorkha in January this year. It is valued at US \$40 million in the international market.

Bones and skin of leopard, red panda, elephant tusks, python skin, musk pods, bear bile, live pangolins and their shells and rhino horns are among the body parts of endangered wild animals that police have seized. According to police sources, the body parts of wild animals are usually smuggled into China for their supposed medicinal value and for decoration.

Source: '159 wildlife traders arrested in 64 Nepal Police operations', [www.himalayantimes.com](http://www.himalayantimes.com), 05/08/13.

## PAKISTAN

### Project to protect snow leopards in Chitral

The Snow Leopard Foundation (SLF) has launched a project for protecting snow leopard in central Chitral in Pakistan. According to the SLF, the pastures of six villages- Koghuzi, Barghuzi, Kuju, Bokhtuli, Parsan and Mori Payeen - in central Chitral - were habitats of the animal. However, local people often killed the wildcat to prevent their cattle from its attacks in the pastures.

The project will be based on a two-pronged strategy of conservation and research. Economic activities are to be taken up as part of the project to compensate the farmers for their losses. Villagers will be given training on animal husbandry and will also be explained the environmental significance of the snow leopard to treat it as their friend. Vaccination of livestock would also be carried out and corrals would be constructed in the pastures to save the goats from leopard's attacks. Financial assistance for the project has been given by the United States Agency for International Aid (USAID).

Source: 'Project to protect snow leopard launched', [www.dawn.com](http://www.dawn.com), 31/07/13.

## Important Bird Areas Update



<b>State-wise list of wetlands identified under National Wetlands Conservation Programme</b>			
No.	State/UT	No.	Wetland
1	Andhra Pradesh	1	Kolleru
2	Assam	2.	Deepar Beel
		3	Urpada Beel
		4	Sone Beel
3	Bihar	5	Kabar
		6	Barilia
		7	Kusheshwar Asthan
4	Gujarat	8	Nalsarovar
		9	Great Rann of Kutch
		10	Thol Bird Sanctuary
		11	Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary
		12	Little Rann of Kutch
		13	Pariej
		14	Wadhvana
		15	Nanikakrad
5	Haryana	16	Sultanpur
		17	Bhindawas
6	Himachal Pradesh	18	Renuka
		19	Pong Dam
		20	Chandratal
		21	Rewalsar
		22	Khajjiar
7	Jammu & Kashmir	23	Wullar
		24	Tso Morari
		25	Tisgul Tso and Chisul Marshes
		26	Hokersar
		27	Mansar-Surinsar
		28	Ranjitsagar
		29	Pangong Tsar
		30	Gharana
		31	Hygam
		32	Mrigund
		33	Shalbugh
		34	Chushul & Hanley
8	Jharkhand	35	Udhwa
9	Karnataka	36	Tilaiya Dam
		37	Magadhi
		38	Gudavi Bird Sanctuary
		39	Bonal
		40	Hidkal & Ghataprabha
		41	Heggeri
		42	Ranganthittu
10	Kerala	43	KG Koppa Wetland
		44	Ashtamudi
		45	Sasthamkotta
		46	Kottuli
		47	Kadulandi
		48	Vembanad Kol
11	Madhya Pradesh	49	Barna
		50	Yashwant Sagar
		51	Wetland of Ken River
		52	National Chambal Sanctuary
		53	Ghatigaon
		54	Ratapani
		55	Denwa Tawa Wetland
		56	Kanha Tiger Reserve
		57	Pench Tiger Reserve
		58	Sakhyasagar
		59	Dihalia
12	Maharashtra	60	Govindsagar
		61	Sirpur
		62	Ujni
		63	Jayakwadi
13	Manipur	64	Nalganga wetland
		65	Loktak
14	Meghalaya	66	Umiam Lake
15	Mizoram	67	Tamdil
		68	Palak
16	Orissa	69	Chilka
		70	Kuanria wetland
		71	Kanjia wetland

		72	Daha wetland
		73	Anusupa
17	Punjab	74	Harike
		75	Ropar
		76	Kanjli
		77	Nangal
		78	Sambhar
18	Rajasthan		
19	Sikkim	79	Khechupuri Holy Lake
		80	Tamze Wetland
		81	Tembaowetland Complex
		82	Phendang Wetland Complex
		83	Gurudokmar Wetland
		84	Tsomgo Wetland
20	Tamil Nadu	85	Point Calimere
		86	Kaliveli
		87	Pallaikarni
21	Tripura	88	Rudrasagar
		89	Gumti Reservoir
22	Uttar Pradesh	90	Nawabganj
		91	Sandi
		92	Lakh Bahoshi
		93	Samaspur
		94	Alwara Wetland
		95	Semarai Lake
		96	Nagaria Lake
		97	Keetham Lake
		98	Shekha Wetland
		99	Saman Bird Sanctuary
		100	Sarsai Nawar
		101	Patna Bird Sanctuary
		102	Chandotal
		103	Taal Baghel
		104	Taal Gambhirvan & Taal Salona
		105	Aadi Jal Jeev Tal
23	Uttaranchal	106	Ban Ganga Jhilmil Tal
		107	Asan
24	West Bengal	108	East Kolkata Wetland
		109	Sunderbans
		110	Ahiron Beel
		111	Rasik Beel
		112	Santragachi
		113	Patlakhawa-

			Rasomati
25	Chandigarh (UT)	114	Sukhna
26	Puducherry UT)	115	Ousteri Lake

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1918, Date: 19/08/13.

## GUJARAT

### Status of vultures in and around Ahmedabad



The cantonment area, ATIRA campus, Indian Institute of Management (IIM) campus, MG Science College and Shahibaugh have the biggest vulture colony in the city of Ahmedabad. The monitoring under the provisional vulture-safe zones (PVSZ) has revealed that in the urban areas in Ahmedabad and Kadi, the nesting sites were near the residential colonies.

The monitoring that is being carried out by the Jivdaya Trust has revealed that except for Ahmedabad and Kadi, all the nests recorded in PVSZ in central Gujarat were near village ponds and primarily on large old trees. Vultures were found to have avoided the places where digging of deep ponds with JCB machines had taken place. They have been observed to depend on shallow village ponds for bathing and sunning activities and drinking water, but these ponds were fast vanishing on account of the digging activities.

Another challenge faced by the vulture population is the use of organophosphate by farmers for killing *nilgai* and wild boar as they cause heavy crop damage. When vultures feed on their carcasses they get killed due to the intake of the chemical. Also, *nilgai* killed in road accidents cannot be left to be fed upon by



vultures as they have to be buried in the presence of forest officials as per the Wild Life Protection Act 1972.

In the month of August the Trust also received two dead white-rumped vultures from the campus of the IIM. Both the deaths were because of visceral gout, a symptom caused by eating animal carcass containing either diclofenac, ketoprofen or aceclofenac.

Based on satellite tracking data, the Trust has pointed out that *Gyps indicus* and *Gyps bengalensis* are known to forage in an area of about 100 km radius from their nesting site. Hence, an area of 100 km radius - about 30,000 sq km, around their nesting site needs to be made safe from diclofenac and other factors adversely affecting vulture population.

With the purpose of providing them with the safe zones, the vulture-safe zone project has been initiated in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand by Bombay Natural History Society in collaboration with state level organizations. Gujarat has a good population of both the vulture species and hence, two PVSZs have been proposed in Saurashtra and Central Gujarat. The area under the project is spread over 8 districts; Ahmedabad, Mehsana, Surendranagar, Anand, Sabarkantha, Kheda, Patan and Gandhinagar. Out of these eight, Ahmedabad, Mehsana, Surendranagar and Anand districts have active colonies of *Gyps bengalensis*, totaling to around 150 birds.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik, 'Vulture nesting sites found in the heart of city', *The Times of India*, 22/08/13.

'Two vultures found dead at IIM-Ahmedabad', *The Times of India*, 22/08/13.

## KERALA

### Kerala seeks Ramsar tag for Kavvayi

The Kerala environment department plans to propose to bring the Kavvayi backwaters, situated near Payyannur in Kannur, under the Ramsar convention. It would be the fourth Ramsar site in the state after Sasthamkotta, Ashtamudi and the Vembanad Kol wetlands. Kavvayi, fed by five rivers and spotted with

small islands, is spread across an area of 37 sq km. This, the biggest wetland in North Kerala, is under threat of pollution, land filling, destruction of mangrove forests and sand mining.

A study conducted by O Jayarajan, IFS, former Deputy Conservator of Forests, as part of the Dr Salim Ali National Wildlife Fellowship Award, has recommended 14 sites in North Kerala including Kattampally, for immediate protection as community reserves. The list includes Cherandathur, Chempallikkundu, Edattummal Kuniyan, Vellimukkuchal, Koottayi Purathur Estuary, Thirunavaya wetlands (Valiyaparappur, Thamarakkulam & Pallattukayal) Ezhome vayal, Pulathuruthupandy wetlands (Elathuruthupandy & Pulathuruthupandy), Neeleswaram Kanhangad wetlands, Mavoor vayal, Madakkara mangroves and Paana vayal along with Kattampally and Kadalundy Estuary.

The study had suggested that Kattampally, in Kannur should also be proclaimed a Ramsar site. Though smaller in size - 7.5 sq km - it is one of the three wetlands in the state identified as an Important Bird Area.

Source: K R Ranjith, 'Kavvayi wetlands: The next Ramsar site in Kerala?', *The New Indian Express*, 20/08/13

## RAJASTHAN

### Lesser Floricans in Sonkhaliya grasslands to be fitted with satellite transmitters

In a first-of-its-kind initiative the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun has proposed to fit the endangered Lesser floricans with satellite transmitters to trace their migration patterns after breeding in the north-western parts of the country. The proposal was to fit these transmitters onto two birds in the Sonkhaliya grasslands in Ajmer before the end of September.

The proposal was awaiting the approval of the MoEF and it is not known, at the time of going to press, if the project was finally executed.

Source: Rachna Singh. 'Elusive Lesser Floricans to be fitted with satellite transmitters', *The Times of India*, 17/09/13.

## UTTAR PRADESH

### **Water sharing with Mathura refinery affecting Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary: BNHS**

The claim of the Uttar Pradesh (UP) forest department (FD) that water sharing with the Mathura refinery is affecting the health of Sur Sarovar Bird Sanctuary has found support in a recent report by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). The BNHS team visited the sanctuary on the request of Mathura refinery in July to study the impact of water level on birds in the Keetham lake that forms the sanctuary.

The BNHS report has been submitted to the chief secretary and the principal secretary forest along with other higher-ups in the forest department. The report has suggested that keeping the interests of the birds in mind, the water level in the lake should be maintained between 14 to 17 feet and it should never be allowed to go beyond 19 feet. At the time of BNHS visit, it was 22 feet! It said further that a large number of eggs and chicks are destroyed when the water level is suddenly lowered or increased.

The Keetham lake is a common source of water between the sanctuary and the refinery. The UP irrigation department has an agreement with the refinery to refill the lake. The department, in between November and April, releases excess water to meet the needs of the refinery. Since winter is the time when a lot of migratory birds visit the sanctuary, the excess water threatens the population of water birds that prefer the shallows.

While the irrigation department is told every year to not release excess water, the irrigation department officials said that water scarcity in summers makes it difficult for them to refill the lake, and since shortage of water affects the working of the refinery, they release excess water in winters from 160 km long Agra canal, originating from Okhla barrage in Yamuna.

A water level of up to four feet is used by refinery almost every month and that makes it compulsory to refill the lake every seven days.

Mathura refinery was commissioned in 1982. A contract was signed between the refinery administration and the irrigation department a year earlier in 1981 for water supply. The Sur Sarovar was declared a bird sanctuary in 1991 by the state government.

The contract between the refinery and the irrigation department expired in 2006. But, the refinery did not stop to extract water through its intake well inside the sanctuary all this while. The irrigation department officials said that the proposal for renewal of contract has been sent to the government. Mathura refinery pays about Rs 32 lakh every year to irrigation department for water supply.

(Also see *PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 3).

Source: Neha Shukla. 'Mathura refinery affecting the health of a bird sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 17/09/13.

### **NGT halts construction activities in and around Dadri wetlands**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh environment directorate, a real estate developer and the Shiv Nadar University to not carry out any construction or reclamation activity within 500 metre of the highest water level of the Dadri wetland.

The tribunal said that with the Ministry of Environment and Forests, State Environment Impact Assessment Authority and the state government are "shifting" to each other their responsibility regarding the area, and the environment, the wetland and wildlife have become victims of commercialisation.

Source: 'NGT restrains construction in and around Dadri wetlands', *The Financial Express*, 22/08/13.

**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)***

## The Forest Rights Act, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation

### MAHARASHTRA

#### Fresh encroachments reported in Yawal WLS after cut-off date for FRA

About 177 sq km area of Yawal Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Jalgaon is reported to have been encroached upon after the cut-off date of December 13, 2005, as prescribed under the Scheduled Tribes & Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA). Although the encroachments have been reported since 2006, their pace is alleged to have increased alarmingly in the last couple of years. It has also been alleged that there is a large-scale tree felling in the sanctuary to grab land and get rights under the FRA.

The convener of Satpuda Bachav Kruti Samiti (SBKS) said things had worsened after Jalgaon District Collector (DC) directed the Yawal Deputy Conservator of Forests, on January 15, 2013, not to take action against encroachments. Further, a revised order was issued by the Bhusawal SDO on April 1, stating the stay was for only those claimants who had submitted their claims to village level forest rights committee within the framework and enclosed a list covering 2,750 claims, most of them controversial.

The DC who is also chief of the district level committee on forest rights, denied that he had stayed action against encroachments. He informed that 1,773 claims have been approved while an equal number of them were rejected. These claims belonged to six villages - Gadrya, Jamnya, Usamani, Garkheda, Nimdya and Garbardi- inside the sanctuary.

Members of the SBKS who visited the sanctuary on July 29, reported fresh encroachments and tree-felling in compartments 53, 54, 49, 40 & 41 near Nimdya and Pimparkhund villages. Five hutments were found in compartments 41 and 48 as well. The SBKS has pointed out that there has been no action by forest officials due to lack of support from the police, administration and leaders. It has also

been alleged that activists of the Lok Sangharsh Morcha (LSM) have at times attacked forest officials who acted against encroachers. The matter has been reported to the Principal Secretary (Forests), Praveen Pardeshi, and he too is reported to have admitted that the situation in Yawal was serious.

According to the Assistant Conservator of Forests here, offences were registered against 118 persons for fresh encroachments last year. Failing to produce papers about the encroached land, they took out a protest march under the LSM and the DC then ordered a stay on encroachments under pressure. Also, once claims are filed under FRA, encroachments cannot be removed unless a final decision is made.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Encroachments overrunning Yawal sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 09/08/13.

### UTTAR PRADESH

#### Land in Ranipur WLS claimed under FRA

In a development in August, 1000s of adivasis and members of other 'forest dwelling communities' took over nearly 3000 bighas of land of the Ranipur Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) claiming rights under the provisions of the Forest Rights Act. They then went on to plant fruit trees and medicinal plants over an area of 20 bighas and named the area as the 'Bharati Smariti Van' in memory of one of their leaders who passed away a couple of years ago. The action was taken under the banner of the All India Union of Forest Working People which has said that the particular area will be developed into a model forest in another two to three years with the planting of trees and crops.

The Forum has claimed that the land originally belonged to the Kol community. They are, however, not in the SC or the OBC category in the Bundelkhand and Kaimur region and are also being asked to show proof of 75 years of existence to claim rights. As a consequence the

forest department (FD), local feudal interests and the police are taking advantage of this situation and misleading the communities so that the FRA is not implemented here. It has also been alleged that many atrocities are being inflicted on the community members by filing false cases, intimidation and victimization by police and by bringing plantation schemes like the one under JICA, which are against the FRA.

In a related event the next day around 2000 people gheraoed the Tehsil headquarters in Karvi, Chitrakoot and organized a big roadblock in the main chowk of Karvi, demanding implementation of the FRA. A review of the formation of the Forest Rights Committees (FRCs) was asked for and a withdrawal of all false cases against the adivasis was also demanded.

Source: 'Thousands of tribal and other forest dweller took over sanctuary land and planted forest with fruit and medicinal plants in Chirakoot district, UP', Report by the National Forum of Forest Workers and Forest People (NFFWWP), Recd. 02/09/13.

Contact: **NFFWWP / Human Rights Law Centre**  
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05442-53126

**'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.**



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## **A Decade Ago** ***Protected Area Update 45, October 2003***

### **JAMMU & KASHMIR**

#### **Rs. 179 project formulated for Wular lake**

An integrated Rs 179-crore, 10 year project to restore the Wular lake has reportedly been formulated by the J&K Government. The features of the project and measures required to conserve the water body in the valley were discussed at a high-level meeting held in August that was attended by the Chief Minister of state. Various activities envisaged as part of the project include protection of the lake body, correct land usage and flood control strategy, and proper sewage disposal.

The CM asked for the prioritising of the various components and stressed on the need to explore possibilities for external funding in addition to the funds that will be made available by the Central Government. He also emphasised that the people of the adjoining areas should be made aware about the objectives of the Wular lake development project and should be involved in it in a big way.

He also ordered the Deputy Commissioner concerned not to allow any plantation in and around the lake. He said steps should also be taken to demarcate the area of the lake and asked the revenue, wildlife, environment and other concerned agencies to work in a coordinated manner for the purpose.

Source: 'Wular to get lease of life under project', *The Tribune*, 11/08/03.

#### **Tourism impacting Ladakh wetlands**

The opening up of the high altitude wetlands in the Changthang region of Ladakh for tourism is reported to be disturbing the fragile ecosystem here. The wetlands that are being affected include Tsokar, Pangong Tso and Tso Moriri, the last of which is also a Ramsar site.

Changthang was opened up for tourism in 1994 and since then the number of visitors has increased substantially: from a couple of 100 in 1996 to more than a 1000 in 2000. This

is, reportedly, breaking down the traditional management systems and affecting the local communities and their cultures as well. There has also been an increase in the number of trekkers' pack animals like donkeys, mules and horses and this has started putting pressure on the few pasture lands here as well.

Additionally, the latest move of the State Government to settle Tibetan refugees in the area is adding to the complexity of the situation. The refugees have been given marshy land for farming. This is playing havoc with the wetland systems and also driving away the waterfowl that depends on the marshes.

These findings have been published in a recent report of the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) - India report titled, 'High Altitude Wetlands of Ladakh: A Conservation Initiative'. The WWF is also now trying to motivate the security and defence forces in Ladakh to refrain from conducting shooting exercises near the lakes. The army has also provided space to the organisation to set up a nature interpretation centre in Ladakh for the orientation of defence personnel.

Source: Aarti Dhar. 'Tourism hits Ladakh ecosystem', *The Hindu*, 06/07/03.

### **RAJASTHAN**

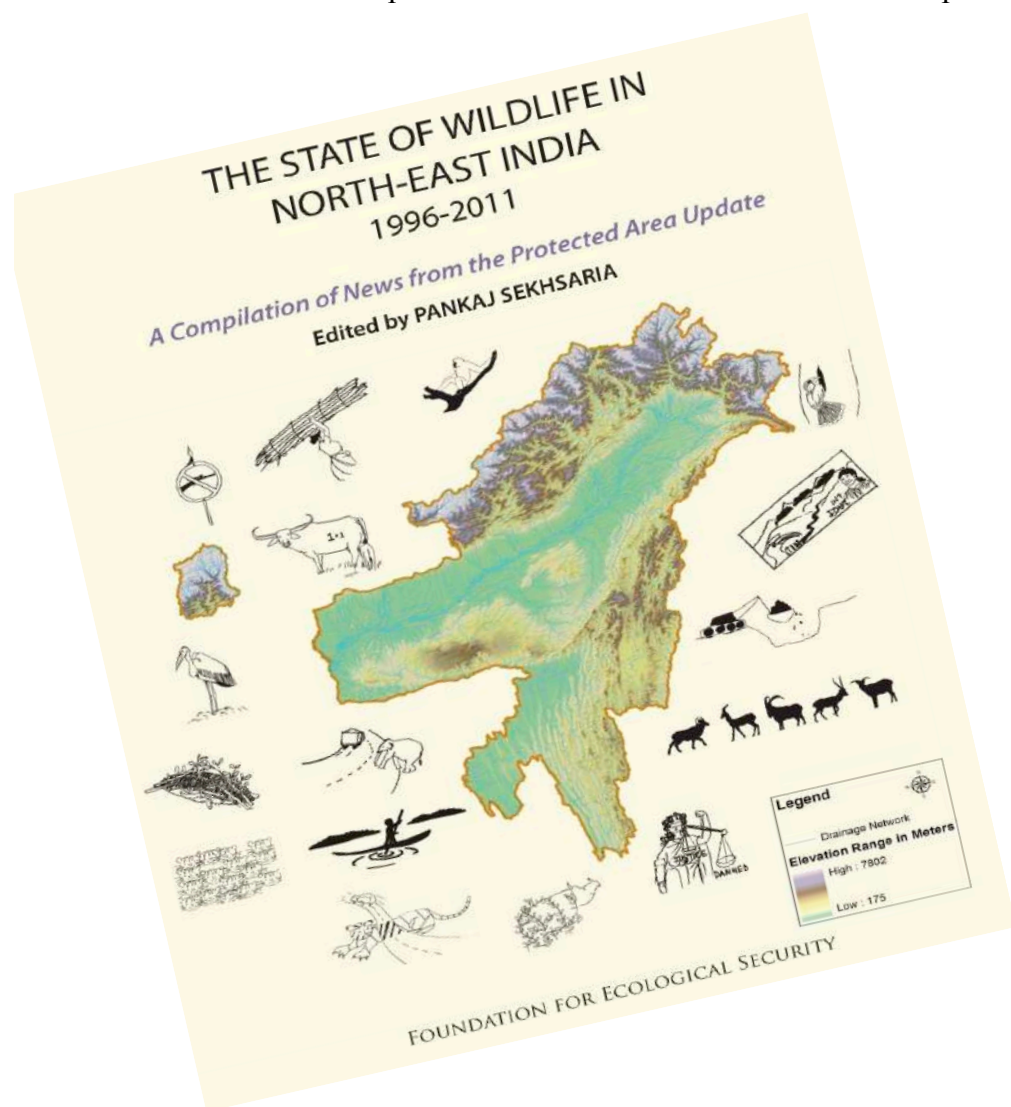
#### **Nine people washed away in floods inside Sariska; park indefinitely closed**

Nine visitors, six from Jaipur and three from Kairthal in Alwar district, were washed away in a stream at Pandupole inside the Sariska TR. The incident occurred in the third week of July, following continued heavy rains that led to the overflowing of the streams. The rain had also caused extensive damage to the mountain roads inside the sanctuary. As a safety measure the park has been indefinitely closed to visitors.

Source: 'Sariska sanctuary closed', *The Hindu*, 23/07/03.

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

A Compilation of news from the Protected Area Update



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## Annexures

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- A **National Consultation on 'Forest Rights Act and Protected Areas'** is being held on 11-12 November, 2013 at Indian Social Institute, Lodhi Road in New Delhi from 9:30 am to 5 pm. The consultation is being organised by the members of the 'Future of Conservation Network' to share policy issues and the on-ground situation of FRA implementation in PAs. The objective is to enhance collective understanding of the issues and also explore possibilities of joint action by bringing together civil society organisations, researchers, and officials from the states, the MoEF and the MoTA.

Contact: Shiba Desor, Kalpavriksh. Email: [desor.shiba@gmail.com](mailto:desor.shiba@gmail.com)



- The fifth edition of **YETI (Young Ecologists Talk and Interact)** 2013 will be held at Nagaland University, HQ: Lumami, from 17th to 19th December 2013. Interested students, researchers and educators are invited to register online for the Meet.

Web: <http://www.nagauniv.org.in/index.php/administration/deans/219-yeti-meet-2013>



- The **Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON)** is hosting the second edition of the International Conference on Indian Ornithology 2013 (**ICIO-2013**) on its campus at Anaikatty, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India during 19-23 November, 2013. The conference will deliberate upon various aspects of **Indian Ornithology** and would offer a platform to share the experiences of researchers from India and abroad. It will also encompass a wide range of people who include scientists, academics, protected area managers, policy-makers and administrators from government departments, and NGOs involved in ornithological studies and conservation. The plenary / theme talks will be delivered by leading experts on ornithology and conservation.

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



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## PERSPECTIVE

### **The shark finning ban: treating the symptom, not the cause**

A few weeks ago, an internet post pertaining to shark finning caught my attention. It was fuelled by a newspaper article, which argued for the need “to stem the tide of illegal shark finning by Indian fishermen” and went on to describe how a “fins attached policy” is being advocated for. According to the policy - any possession of shark fins that are not naturally attached to the body of a shark, would amount to “hunting” of a Schedule I species and therefore will attract punishment. The essence is that lesser number of sharks will be caught if a vessel has to come back with intact shark bodies rather than if they come back with fins alone.

An astounding 26 to 73 million sharks are harvested annually each year for catering to the demand for the exotic fin soups and Indian fisherfolk are also fishing sharks. They, however, utilize most parts of the shark’s body including meat, skin, teeth and fins and believe that taking the fins and throwing the shark back (shark finning), is a wasteful practice. I was told, in fact, that the Association of Deep Sea Going Artisanal Fishermen (ADSGAF), an association of the largest shark fishing villager’s association in India, took the initiative to ratify the policy to ban shark finning. Shark finning in Indian waters, it is important to bear in mind, is done mostly by foreign vessels.

Importantly all the policy, legal and conservation discussions revolve around the fishermen – the people who do the finning. The question ‘whom is it being finned for?’ is seldom, if ever asked. It is only the lower end of the chain that is targeted, be it poaching tigers or

rhinos or be it finning sharks alive. The consumers, those for whom sharks are being finned alive in millions are hardly ever targeted.

Today, shark fins are sold worldwide at a staggering price USD 400/kg. In such a scenario, can we completely depend on policies that target minimal catch of sharks per boat? The government should put pressure internationally on countries like China, the United States of America and Singapore to regulate the import of shark fins. For, as long as the demand for shark fins exists, there will be exploitation of shark populations. High end customers should be targeted in legal frameworks. We need to ask ourselves whether today’s philosophy of “I buy because I can afford” is sustainable or not? Can we actually afford’ to consume shark fin soup ‘ecologically’?

There is no denying that shark populations are being adversely affected. In Maharashtra alone for instance, this can be seen in the fact that shark catches have reduced by more than half in the last decade. We have little time to act, but targeting those who catch and fin sharks is only a small part of a much larger challenge!

- **Tiasa Adhya** is a postgraduate student in Wildlife Biology and Conservation, WCS-India Program, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bangalore.  
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