

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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## EDITORIAL

### **The perils and promise of mass-scale bird watching**

This is the time of the year when millions of migratory birds visit the country from the much colder climes of the northern hemisphere. It is also the time when individual birders gear up enthusiastically for the birding season, popular media takes note of prominent winged visitors, and wildlife tour companies and NGOs announce birding trips and trails.

There is a paradigm shift now where birding is concerned, both in birder numbers and also in the high tech gadgetry – binoculars, spotting scopes and particularly cameras that are now available. Travel has also become easier and more affordable, allowing for birding trips to distant wildlife habitats including in protected areas. The increased interest and birding activity has also brought about its fair share of unethical practices – incessant playing of recorded calls to attract birds, disturbing birds' nests and young ones for photography and deeper access because of a new generation of all terrain automobiles – and some of these are not restricted to just the amateurs.

Events like birding trails and bird races, which are organized with the claims of helping create interest and awareness, can in fact, turn out to be disastrous for the avifauna and for their habitats if not done with care. A large number of groups of people enthralled with the idea of spotting the maximum numbers of birds in limited time are likely to disturb the birds and their habitats. There have been instances of self-proclaimed serious birdwatchers forcing the staff at the protected areas to break the rules in order to spot a bird, pay handsome amounts to locals for a ride to not-so-easily accessible habitats, and disturbing the regular cycle of bird activity.

Bird photographers had, for instance, come in for serious criticism about a year ago for recklessly driving around the Hesarghatta grasslands outside Bengaluru and causing serious damage to the ecosystem and flora and

fauna here. In another incident, this time from inside a sanctuary in Maharashtra, owls were reported to have been disturbed from their daytime roosts by the birders visiting as part of a bird race. Further evidence that activities of this kind are happening can be inferred from the fact that many social media sites prohibit members from posting pictures of birds at their nests and there is now also a strict official restriction in photographing the Great Indian Bustard in its breeding season

This is not to say that the hobbyists and the amateurs are doing it all wrong – nothing could be further from the truth. Amateur birding has, in fact, made some of the most significant contributions to the scientific knowledge of birds the world over, including in India. Programs like Migrantwatch are good examples of contemporary efforts of involving serious (and not so serious) amateurs in gathering scientific data on birds and there are also instances when new and interesting discoveries have been made by such birders - a geography teacher from Tinsukia recently photographed the Baikal bush warbler in the Dibru-Saikhowa NP in Assam for the first time, adding the species to the list of birds found here.

While the increasing interest in birding is welcome, it would be sad that those who claim to care and admire birds, end up, in their excitement and (over) enthusiasm, to be the biggest threats.

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### **ANDHRA PRADESH**

#### **DRDO Missile Test Range proposed within Krishna WLS**

The Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) 'Missile Test Range Facility Project' is proposed to come up inside the Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary near Gullalamoda of Nagayalanka mandal in Krishna district. The Chief Wildlife Warden and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) A.V. Joseph and his team recently

accompanied the DRDO team recently for the inspection of the proposed site

Apart from the test range, itself, much of the around eight kilometre proposed road connecting the Technical Range to the Test Range is also within the sanctuary.

The AP Forest Department is expected to give its opinion on the project in the coming days.

Source: T. Appala Naidu. 'Proposed DRDO Missile Test Range project falls under Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 04/01/14.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Krishna WLS, Dist. Krishna, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

## ARUNACHAL PRADESH

### Tiger photographed in Dibang WLS

In a first for the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary, a camera trap picture of a tiger was obtained in the first week of January. This is believed to be the first photographic evidence of the tiger here and confirms the long-standing claims of presence of tigers by members of the Idu Mishmi community that lives here. The photograph was taken as part of a project being executed by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) with support from the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department. Tiger pugmarks and scat samples have also been collected.

A systematic effort to find tigers here was initiated here following the rescue in December 2012 of two tiger cubs found trapped in a dried well at Angrim valley outside the sanctuary. The cubs are now in Itanagar zoo. A possibility had been expressed earlier that the tigers in Dibang could be a sub-species of the Northern Indo-Chinese tigers, considering the altitude of the place (1765 m above sea level) and its location along the Indo-Chinese border. Genetic analysis of the blood samples from the two tiger cubs however confirmed that these were indeed Royal Bengal tigers.

The research team had placed nine automatic infrared cameras at strategic locations in the sanctuary as part of the research effort.

Wildlife biologists along with members of the local community walked nearly 120km, collected 11 samples of tiger scat and documented nine tiger pug marks. The scat samples have been sent to for analysis that will help understand the diet of tigers in the sanctuary.

Source: GS Mudur. 'Tiger hint in Dibang sanctuary', *The Telegraph*, 13/01/14.

## ASSAM

### Three rhino poachers held at Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park



An attempt to kill rhinos in the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park was foiled in the month of November 2013. A team of police and forest guards apprehended three poachers from a sandbar near the park. Two .303 rifles and 52 rounds of ammunition were recovered from them. According to the park authorities, the three have been involved in killing rhinos here in the past as well.

The national park, which has about 100 rhinos, witnessed the killing of three rhinos in 2013. While two rhinos - a mother and her calf - were shot dead on November 10, another rhino was killed on November 3. A rhino each had been killed in the park in 2011 and 2012 (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 5 and Vol. XVII, No. 2).

Forest officials claim to have identified at least two poachers who were involved in the killing of the two rhinos on November 10, but say they have fled to Dimapur in Nagaland.

Source: '3 poachers held at Orang', *The Telegraph*, 01/12/13.

Contact: **DFO**, Orang NP, Mangaldoi Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Darrang - 784 125, Tel: 0914-22065(O), 22349(R)

## FD dismisses NFR's proposal for iron pillars inside Gibbon WLS to prevent accidents with elephants



The Jorhat Forest Department (FD) has rejected a proposal by the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) to install iron pillars inside the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The NFR suggested that tall iron pillars with narrow gaps, on both sides of the track would prevent trains from mowing down the elephants. It had also requested the FD to fund their installation. The forest here is divided into four compartments and about 1.5 km of track passes through the third and fourth compartments where elephants often cross the railway line.

The Divisional Forest Officer at Jorhat has said that blocking the movement of the elephants may lead to the animals becoming more aggressive. They might change their route, thus increasing the frequency of straying out. The FD, instead, has suggested curbs on the speed limit of trains while passing through the sanctuary.

Railway sources say that trains adhere to the speed limit of 50 km per hour while passing through certain stretches in Upper Assam, which are elephant habitat; however, other factors involved such as the railway timetable may be affected if the speeds are reduced any further.

In the meanwhile, Forest Minister Rockybul Hussain has said that his department was in touch with the Railway Ministry seeking reduction in speed of trains while passing through elephant corridors.

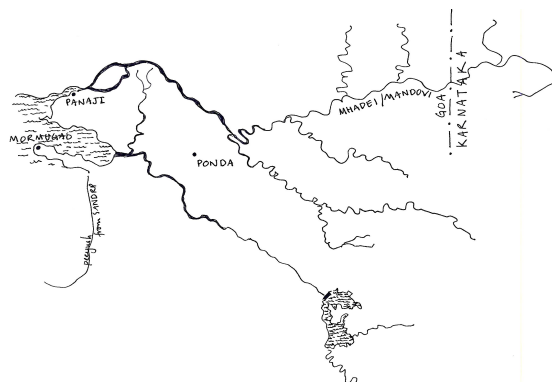
The sanctuary, with an area of 20.48 sq km, is used by about 40 elephants. (also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, No. 1).

Source: Wasim Rahman. 'NFR's pillar plan in Gibbon binned - Proposal to curb train hits at sanctuary', *The Telegraph*, 14/12/13.

Contact: **DFO**, I/c Gibbon WLS, Jorhat Division, P.O. Jorhat, Dist. Jorhat – 785001, Assam. Tel: 0376-32008(O), 320456(R)  
**Chief Wildlife Warden** – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam. Tel: 0361-2566064. Fax 2547386.

## GOA

### Mhadei Water Dispute Tribunal visits the Mhadei WLS



Justice J M Panchal, Chairman of the Mhadei Water Dispute Tribunal, and Justice Vinay Mittal and Justice P S Narayan, its members, recently visited those areas of the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary in Surla and Chorla ghat that are dependent on the flow of rivers Surla and Kalasa, which eventually join the River Mhadei at Uste. There has been a huge controversy over the damming of the Mhadei River with Karnataka supporting the proposal and Goa opposing it vehemently, including on grounds that it will negatively impact the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Goa, said that a team of forest officials have made sincere attempts to highlight the wildlife, biodiversity and ecology of this region and how all these rely on water of the River Kalasa and the Haltara nullah; and hence how damming and diverting these main feeders of the Mhadei river will result in heavy losses.

The water resources department has also raised objections to the proposed dams on the Kalasa, the Bhandura and the Haltara tributaries along with the work of diversion channels and canals that is currently in progress at Kankumbi as it will affect water flows.

Source: Rajendra P Kerkar, 'MWDT visits Mhadei WLS, Anjunem dam', *The Times of India*, 18/12/13.

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

## HIMACHAL PRADESH

### Villagers inside GHNP surrender guns, promise to protect wildlife

Residents of the villages of Shakti, Manor and Shagwar, located deep inside the Great Himalayan National Park recently came forward to surrender their guns and also promised to protect wildlife here as well as in the adjoining Sainj Wildlife Sanctuary. The surrender was reportedly made in response to a request made by the Kullu deputy commissioner, Rakesh Kanwar. An oath to protect wildlife was taken by the villagers in the presence of the palanquin of their local deity, Brahma Devta.

Although the department has not disclosed the number of guns surrendered, sources said the officials were surprised to see the guns coming out from almost every second house.

Source: Suresh Sharma. 'Villagers surrender guns, promise to protect wildlife', *The Times of India*, 17/01/14.

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

## KARNATAKA

### Proposal for Wesley Bird Sanctuary

A proposal has been sent to the Karnataka State Government for the declaration of the riverine area around Sattigala Bridge, Bharachukki and Gaganachukki falls, as the Wesley Bird Sanctuary. The sanctuary will be located across the boundaries of the districts of Mandya and Chamrajnagar and will cover a stretch of four to five kilometers of the River Cauvery.

The Revenue department has already handed over one kilometer of the stretch along

the river to the forest department. Some private land will also need to be acquired and it has been suggested this could delay the process of the declaration of the sanctuary.

A preliminary survey has identified the presence of about 60 species of birds here and it is expected that the number will rise once a more detailed investigation is carried out. This stretch of the river is also the habitat of the Mahseer and it is hoped that conservation measures for the proposed sanctuary will help the fish species as well.

Source: Akram Mohammed. 'Wesley Bird Sanctuary proposed in the region', *Deccan Herald*, 09/01/14.

### FD needs veterinarians with expertise in handling wild animals



Experts and Forest Department (FD) officers in Karnataka have expressed the urgent need for the FD to have veterinarians exclusively for

dealing with situations arising from man-animal conflicts in the forest areas of Mysore region. At present, there is no separate cadre of veterinarians in the FD, and veterinarians from the Animal Husbandry Department help them in operations. These veterinarians also help the FD when there is an outbreak of diseases like anthrax and foot-and-mouth disease. Veterinarians on deputation cannot continue in the FD and they go back to their parent department once they get a promotion or their deputation period is over.

Recently, the FD faced serious difficulty in capturing a tiger at Chikka Baragi village, which had allegedly killed three people. The lack of expert veterinarians to tranquilise the tiger infuriated the villagers who set fire to a FD vehicle after the repeated failure of darts to tranquilise the animal.

Veterinarians working in different wildlife ranges say that the issue needs to be addressed at a higher



level, and the FD must appoint its own veterinarians who are experts in handling man-animal conflict and conducting forensic tests. It also needs experts in wildlife anatomy and pathology to perform postmortems.

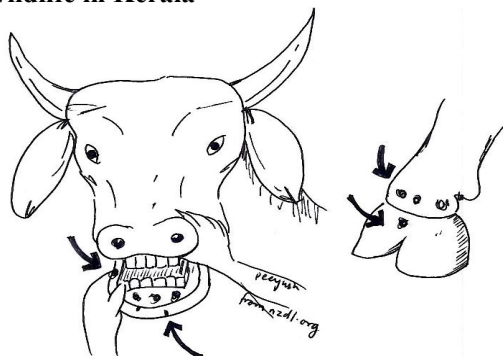
It is reported that a vision document on the issue had been submitted to the FD in the past but no action has been initiated.

Source: 'Forest Dept Battles Scars With Borrowed Vets', *The New Indian Express*, 09/12/13.

Contact: **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

### Fear of foot-and-mouth disease epidemic in wildlife in Kerala



Serious fear has been expressed that wildlife in Kerala could experience an epidemic of the foot-and-mouth (FMD) disease. Two instances of gaur deaths owing to acute FMD infection were reported from the Kottayam region in December, while two cases of captive elephants contracting the disease from cattle were reported from Thrissur and Kottayam. No instances of carnivores falling prey to the disease have been reported yet, but animal experts have said that the disease has most likely spread to wild populations as well.

According to the Wildlife Division of the Kerala Agricultural University, two-hoofed herbivorous mammals such as wild boar, mouse deer, spotted deer, sambar, barking deer, gaur, and Nilgiri tahr were particularly at risk.

Experts have suggested that bio-safety measures such as vaccination of cattle in human habitations bordering the forest areas and restrictions on movement of cattle and human beings were the only options available for containing the spread of the disease. It is estimated that over 10,000 head of cattle graze in the forest areas of Wayanad alone.

The disposal of carcasses would be another major challenge awaiting wildlife managers following the disease outbreak. The absence of scavenger species such as vultures and hyenas in the forests of the state could aggravate the situation.

Source: K. S. Sudhi, 'Wildlife in Kerala at risk of contracting FMD', *The Hindu*, 19/12/13.

## MADHYA PRADESH

### FD alleges that villagers nearly killed two tigers when Pench TR staff was away on election duty

M P 2013 ELECTION RESULTS		
DETAILS	NO.	NOTES
TIGER	2	DEAD
	2	DEAD

The Forest Department has alleged that villagers of the Chaurai village nearly killed two tigers that had strayed into their village in the month of November. The incident occurred when the forest staff were away on election

duty in spite of a circular issued by concerned authorities in 1998 directing all state governments and chief electoral officers to exempt officials from wildlife parks and sanctuaries from election duty.

The concerned forest officer had, in September, refused to spare Pench staff for election duty since their absence could have put the lives of tigers at risk. The District Collector had responded, however, by serving a show-cause notice seeking an explanation.

Source: P Naveen, 'With forest staff on poll duty, villagers attack tigers', *The Times of India*, 25/11/13.

Contact: **Field Director**, Pench Tiger Reserve,  
P.O. Barapathar, Dist. Seoni - 480 661.  
Tel: 07692-250794/250594. Fax:  
250794/221180. Email:  
root@trpench.ren.nic.in

## MAHARASHTRA

### **Tadoba Andhari TR leopards to be radio-collared to track them, prevent human-animal conflict**

Officials in the Tadoba Andhari TR have decided to radio-collar leopards that have attacked villages in order to track their movement once they are released back into the forest. It is hoped that this will help in ensuring that conflict is avoided. Two such leopards were recently radio-collared in the tiger reserve.

It is likely that the initiative might be repeated in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, in Mumbai, as well.

Source: Mustafa Plumber. 'Leopards being radio-collared to avoid man-animal conflict', *DNA*, 06/01/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Project, Mul Road, In front of Sanchiti Chamber, Chandrapur – 442401, Maharashtra. Tel: 07172-251414(O), 256382(R)

### **Increased camera fees raise over Rs. 6 lakh for Tadoba Andhari TR**

The decision of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) authorities to levy a fee of Rs. 500 for cameras with a lens of 250mm or above has helped the reserve raise Rs. 6.82 lakhs for the period October-December 2013. Another Rs. 2.76 lakh was earned from private tourists cars and unregistered Gypsies entering the park. These figures were for receipts at the reserve's Moharli gate alone and park authorities have said that the figure will rise once the collections made at other gates like Khutwanda, Kolara, Navegaon, Pangdi and Zari are also taken into account.

A total of Rs. 56 lakh have been earned by the reserve since launch, in October 2013, of an online booking facility for jungle safaris.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'High-end cameras rake in moolah for Tadoba tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 10/01/14.

### **Cattle grazing poses threat to newly notified Navegaon-Nagzira TR: FD**



The Forest Department has said that cattle grazing poses one of the most significant threats to the recently notified Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (NNTR). The 655 sq km NNTR was notified in November 2013 and comprises of the New Nagzira, Koka, and Navegaon Wildlife Sanctuaries and the Navegaon National Park. The government excluded the 17.60 hectare Nagzira administrative and tourism complex in compartment numbers 97 and 125 of Nagzira WLS as well as 251.46 hectares of protected forest in Koka WLS from the core of the reserve.

The FD has noted that the small Koka WLS of about 100 sq km alone has 39 villages within one km of the park boundary and all these villages exert grazing pressure on the sanctuary forests.

The Nagzira divisional forest officer (DFO) had said that the villagers had been granted grazing rights in one of the protected forest compartments but the practice needs to be stopped as the area has now been declared a tiger reserve. In 1977, when revenue department officials conducted an inquiry, they kept six compartments - around 4,000 hectares - from Pitezari for cattle grazing. 80% of this has been incorporated into the New Nagzira sanctuary now; and villagers graze cattle in the remaining 20% area.

Villagers from six villages in Pitezari, on the fringes of Nagzira, had collected Rs 20,000 each last year to replace cattle. The



matching grant from the government never came and hence the cattle could not be phased out. The eco-development committee here has also informed that at least 35 families have not received LPG connections and pressure for fuel wood on the forest, therefore, continues.

According to the DFO, on the other hand, Rs 10 lakh grant was received out of which Rs 7 lakh was spent to distribute LPG connections in Pitezari. The FD was left with Rs 3 lakh, but villagers were not ready to replace their cattle as they wanted an 100% grant.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Grazing poses biggest threat to Navegaon-Nagzira tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 06/12/13.  
'Govt notifies Navegaon-Nagzira as 5th tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 13/12/13.

Contact: **Director**, Navegaon NP, ITI Road, Fulchua, Gondia – 441601, Maharashtra.  
**Chief Wildlife Warden** – Maharashtra, Jaika Building, Civil Lines, Nagpur – 440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 – 526758 / 530126.

## ODISHA

### **Fisherman gunned down in a mid sea gun battle at Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary**

A fisherman identified as SK Akbar (Age 21) of Sailendranagar village under Dangamala Gram Panchayat was killed by forest guards in a mid-sea gun battle in the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary in the month of January. The incident occurred about five nautical miles from the Talachua coast within the sanctuary limits in the Kendrapada district. The crew of around 15 fishing trawlers attacked forest guards in retaliation and took possession of one of their patrol vessels in the 'fishing ban' area on the sea. They reportedly also took hostage around 10 forest guards for over three hours and sank one of the patrol boats.

According to police reports, both the forest vessels had been on patrol and had rushed to nab crew members of fishing trawlers that had entered the prohibited area. They were attacked by the fisherfolk and it was when they fired in self-defence that the fisherman was shot.

According to the fisherfolk, however, they were returning from the sea after fishing in an area beyond the marine sanctuary and yet the forest guards had tried to apprehend them and also opened fire.

A large number of fisherfolk subsequently demonstrated in front of the office of the divisional forest officer (DFO) at Rajnagar and demanded stern action against the guilty forest guards. They also filed an FIR in the marine police station at Jamboo on Monday, alleging that some of the armed security forces had gunned down one of their crew. The forest range officer (FRO) of Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary has also filed an FIR stating that around 50 crew members of 12 trawlers attacked them and sank one of their patrol boats forcing them to open fire in self defence.

Fishing is banned from 1st November to 31st May within 20 km from the coast in the sanctuary area to protect the large number of turtles that come to nest here every year. It has been reported that 138 marine fishermen have been taken into custody and 26 fishing crafts have been seized for unlawful fishing activity within the jurisdiction of the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary since November 1, 2013.

Similar incidents have occurred here in the past. In 2006, Bikash Das, a fisherman of Kharinashi village, had been killed in the sanctuary when he was allegedly fishing in prohibited waters. In 2005, the forest guards had shot dead a fisherman from West Bengal, and in 2002 a forest guard, Shyamasundar Singh was killed by some fishermen within the sanctuary limits. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, No. 6; Vol. XV, Nos. 2 & 1 and Vol. XIII, Nos. 2 & 1).

Source: Email from Ashis Senapati

Contact: **Ashis Senapati**.

Email: ashissenapati3@gmail.com

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

### **Villagers from the Sunabeda WLS take stand against Maoists**

A section of villagers inhabiting the Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary has decided to prevent the Maoists from interfering in matters of

development of the area. The sanctuary, spread over 640 sq km, has 52 villages with a population of 12,000. The latest development follows an incident on November 11, 2013, when Maoists kidnapped two villagers of Godbhata village under Sunabeda gram panchayat. Villagers went to the Maoist camp and secured the release of the two. On return they convened a meeting of the villagers where they protested the mindless violence and terror unleashed by the Maoists. The villagers resolved not to allow the Maoists to enter their villages.

Apprehending reprisal by the Maoists in the region, troops of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were sent in to intensify vigil. The youth of the village have also been keeping a vigil. The villagers have demanded that a permanent camp of the CRPF and a police station should be set up in Sunabeda. The officials told the villagers that they would apprise the state government of their demand and impressed upon them that the present temporary CRPF camp in Sunabeda would continue for now.

The Union Rural Development Ministry had recently announced a Rs. 100 crore package for development of villages in the region including those inside the Sunabeda WLS. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 6)

Source: 'Villagers Rise against Maoists', *The New Indian Express*, 03/12/13.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Sunabeda  
Wildlife Division, At/P.O./Dist. Nuapada  
– 766105, Orissa. Tel: 06678 - 23372(O),  
23401(R)

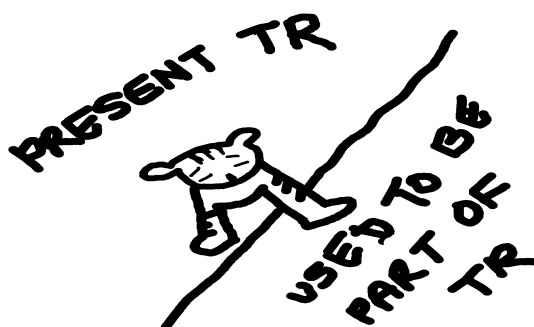
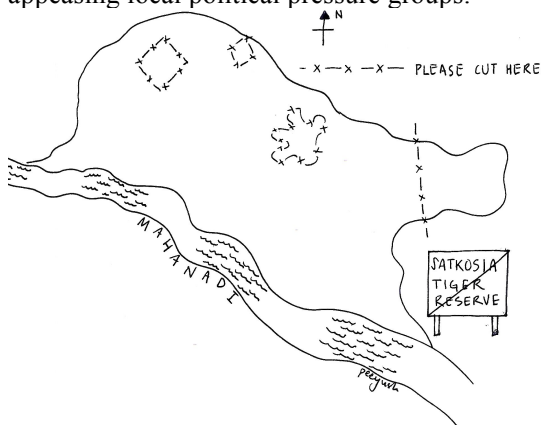
### Odisha proposes to shrink Satkosia TR

The Odisha government has proposed to de-notify at least 159 sq km from the Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary, which forms part of the Satkosia Tiger Reserve. The move would result in reducing the area of the sanctuary from the present 795.52 sq km to 636.495 sq km.

The State wildlife wing's proposal takes note of 11 revenue villages within the sanctuary limits which are due for relocation as part of the sanctuary - one in Angul, four in Boudh and six in Nayagarh district, their

combined area being 4.96 sq km. The sanctuary management plan for Satkosia, however, mentions 99 revenue villages - 32 in Angul, 21 in Cuttack, 26 in Nayagarh and 20 in Boudh district - within the Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary.

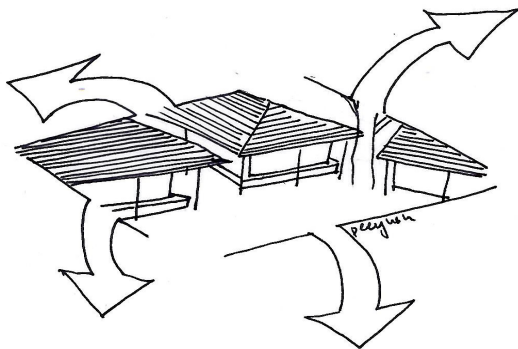
Experts opposing the move have pointed out that de-notifying these villages from the sanctuary will create non-protected 'islands' where the norms of the sanctuary will not apply. They say this will encourage illegal activities such as poaching and timber felling and will compound the already acute anthropogenic pressure on the reserve. Wildlife conservationists said that the wildlife wing's proposal of denotification is directed at appeasing local political pressure groups.



Source: Siba Mohanty. 'Is Odisha Government dismantling Satkosia Tiger Reserve?' *The New Indian Express*, 05/12/13.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Satkosia  
Wildlife Division, at/P.O./Dist. Angul –  
759143, Odisha. Tel: 0674-230218(O),  
230219 (R).

### 32 families relocated from the core zone of Similipal TR



22 families of Upper Barahkamuda and 10 families of the Balnagar tribal settlements, from the core of the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR), have been shifted to Asankudar village under Thakurmunda tehsil.

The shifted villagers will be put up in temporary sheds erected by the district administration till the construction of the houses for them has been completed. Tube-wells have been sunk and medical facilities are being provided to the settlers by anganwadi officials. Rations will also be supplied till each family is shifted to its newly constructed house.

These families had given their consent for relocation in Asankudar village and avail the package as stipulated by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) where each family gets Rs. 10 lakh. Apart from the package, each family is also allotted 10 decimal homestead land and a house under the state government's Mo Kudia scheme at the relocation site.

Three years back, the STR management had managed to relocate 61 families from Jenabil. There are still three more villages - Kabataghai, Bakua and Jamuna - inside the core area of the tiger reserve. Kabataghai and Jamuna have a total of 61 families, while a survey is still to be carried out in Bakua as the inhabitants are not ready to move out. The state government has not been able to issue the final notification of Similipal National Park yet because of presence of these villages within its proposed boundary.

Source: '32 Families from Core Area of Tiger Reserve Relocated', *The New Indian Express*, 09/12/13.

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

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

### UTTARAKHAND

#### Fossil National Park proposed in Lapthal in Pithoragarh district

The management plan of the Pithoragarh Forest Division for 2011 to 2021 has proposed that the Lapthal region be declared a Fossil National Park. The region is close to the Indo-Tibetan border. Some part of it lies in Pithoragarh district and the rest in Chamoli district. It is hoped that this will help conserve fossils, rare and endangered flora and fauna and also prevent cross-border illegal trade and poaching.

The area has sparse vegetation and several swamps, and pools here are home to various species of flora and fauna. Snow leopard, musk deer, Tibetan wild ass, woolly hare, and Tibetan wolf are among the species found in the region. The region being close to the Chinese border is currently guarded by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve administration. An 18 kilometre trek from Sumna in Chamoli district or a longer trek from Munsiyari in Pithoragarh district are the only ways to reach the area now. However, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has proposed a new route from Sumna to Lapthal.

The park could be spread across an area measuring 500 to 1,000 sq km, most of which lies 4,500 metres above mean sea level. A detailed proposal is reportedly being prepared by the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve officials.

Source: Kavita Upadhyay. 'Region near Indo-Tibetan border to be declared Fossil National Park', *The Hindu*, 06/01/14.

Contact: **DFO**, Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve  
Joshimath, Dist. Chamoli, Uttarakhand.  
Tel: 01389-22179  
**CWLW**, 5, Chandrabani, Mohobewala,  
Dehradun, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-  
2644691

## UTTAR PRADESH

### **Centre releases first ever financial sanction of Rs. 24 lakh for Amangarh TR**

The centre recently released the first ever sanction of Rs. 24 lakh to the Amangarh Tiger Reserve (TR) in the Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh. The money will be used for training and equipping forest staff.

Amangarh in Bijnor formed the buffer of the Corbett TR. However, after Uttarakhand was carved out, Amangarh remained in UP and 80 sq km were notified as the Amangarh Tiger Reserve (TR) in October 2012.

The region is believed to harbor a dispersing population of tigers from Corbett and it is estimated that eight to ten tigers might be present here. Tiger poaching incidents are reported from here occasionally and six persons have also been killed in the area adjoining the reserve since December 29, allegedly in attacks by a feline. The cat is said to have moved on to Corbett as is hinted at by another killing that was reported from Kotdwar about two weeks later.

Source: Neha Shukla. 'Centre releases fund for Amangarh tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 15/01/14.

Contact: **Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden**, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow - 226 001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-206584(O), 237715 & 223015(R); Fax: 0522-222061/ 206188

## WEST BENGAL

### **Authorities arrest 45 involved in wildlife smuggling in border areas of West Bengal**

The Forest Department, Border Security Force (BSF), Kolkata Police and the Customs raided at

least 29 places in West Bengal and arrested more than 45 people for smuggling rare and endangered species in a three month period from September to December 2013. Most of the raids have been made in the areas near the border. The seizure includes birds like the Hill myna, reptiles like Tokay geckos, turtles and meat and skin of animals like tiger and gaur.

On November 21, BSF officials seized 10 Tokay geckos from Haridaspur at the Bangaon border and arrested two persons. These reptiles are reportedly sold for approximately Rs 20 lakh each in the international market. The 40th battalion of BSF also seized several star tortoises worth more than Rs Four crore. Later in November, the Bidhanagar police arrested three persons and seized 70 sacks of turtles and star tortoises from a truck coming from Uttar Pradesh (UP).

Indian flapshell turtles are regularly smuggled to West Bengal from Uttar Pradesh before being sent to international markets. Nearly 5000 turtles have reportedly been smuggled out in the last couple of years. The operation was exposed when the Railway Police Force (RPF), acting on a tip off, arrested seven women from West Bengal at Kanpur Central railway station and seized 400 live turtles. The turtles are mostly brought in from areas like Etawah, Oria, Manpura, Sikurabad, Farukabad and Jaunpur districts of UP. People, particularly women from South and North 24 Parganas are reportedly involved in the smuggling.



Source: Saibal Gupta. 'Bengal, a transit route for wildlife trafficking', *The Times of India*, 09/12/13.

## READERS WRITE

### Useful and informative newsletter...

I am a Protected Area Manager with the US National Park Service and am in India on a Fulbright Fellowship looking at protected area management issues in your country. I'm affiliated with ATREE during my six month fellowship. I have found the PA Update to be very informative and helpful in learning about Indian protected area challenges, opportunities, and accomplishments.

- **David Manski**, Director of Conservation and Cultural Heritage, US National Park Service, Acadia National Park, Bar Harbor, Maine, USA.  
Email: [davidshirajoy@gmail.com](mailto:davidshirajoy@gmail.com)

### Elephant deaths in train accidents...



The editorial (A falcon and an elephant, *Protected Area Update*, Vol. XIX, No. 6, December 2013) only mentions the PIL submitted in the Supreme Court (Shakti Naik vs Union of India) regarding elephant deaths all over India.

It, however, does not mention the PIL submitted by me & five others against the Railways for regularly mowing down elephants in North Bengal in the Calcutta High Court (Shakti Banerjee & others vs Union of India, Case no WP 3470W of 2013). In 2000 when I was the State Director of West Bengal State

Office of WWF-India, I had filed, on behalf of WWF-India, a PIL in the Calcutta High Court against the conversion of the metre gauge to broad gauge in the Siliguri - Alipurduar sector. My view was that accident rates will go up if the conversion is done.

My fears have come true as the accident rate has gone up after the track was converted. Whereas in 29 years of the existence of metre gauge track, there were 27 deaths, the death toll has been 52 since the conversion in 2004. Is it not shocking?

Please raise your voice at the national level as we need the support of all.

- **Lt. Col. (Retd) Shakti Ranjan Banerjee**,  
Hony Director Wildlife Protection Society of India. Email: [banshakti@gmail.com](mailto:banshakti@gmail.com)

### The South Asian challenge...

I liked the editorial (The South Asian Challenge, *Protected Area Update*, Vol. XIX, No. 5, October 2013) where you have raised important inter-SAARC issues that are waiting to be looked at. Maybe the PA Update could take some initiative?

1. Include news about individual PAs in other South Asian countries? I am sure many would be interested.
2. You could have news about their Conservation/Species Programmes; their wildlife set-ups etc.
3. Their policies and laws on wildlife & its conservation could be reported on.
4. Also report wildlife / conservation NGOs active in neighbouring countries?
5. Interest of their authorities and/or research bodies to look at Threat Assessment of Species that are common in South Asian countries, for e.g. Snow Leopard, Western Tragopan and many others could be included.

- **Vinay Tandon**. Email: [vtandy@gmail.com](mailto:vtandy@gmail.com)

**The PA Update is now on facebook**

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

# *Important Bird Areas Update*

## ANDHRA PRADESH

### NATIONAL NEWS

#### **MoEF directs GIB range states to have recovery plan; Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat ready with the draft**

Following guidelines issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for conservation of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB), Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have prepared a plan that aims at long-term conservation of both the bustard species found in these states. All bustard range states are expected to prepare state-level recovery plans to save the species from extinction.

A state-level workshop was organised in December by the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department for the preparation of the plan. Government officials and scientists from organisations such as Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and World Wide Fund for Nature - India participated. According to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests – Gujarat, they too have prepared a draft plan for bustard conservation.

The GIB is facing threats due to shrinking habitat, hunting, lack of protection to traditional nesting sites and lack of policies for management of natural grasslands. There are also other issues such as lack of cooperation between departments and stakeholders in GIB habitats, overgrazing and disturbances caused by tourists and photographers, especially during the breeding season.

Source: V. Rishi Kumar. 'State-level plans envisaged to save the Great Indian Bustard', *Business Line*, 09/12/13. Himanshu Kaushik. 'MoEF direct recovery plan for GIB', *The Times of India*, 11/12/13.

#### **Dugarajapatnam port threat to the Pulicat lake**

Concern has been expressed over the possibility of the construction of the Dugarajapatnam port near the Pulicat lake in the Nellore district. The port is proposed to come up at a distance of about two km from the lake and project authorities are concerned that this will cause problems in getting environmental and wildlife clearances. There is some suggestion that the eco-sensitive zone around the sanctuary would be reduced from 10 km to two km to accommodate the port project.

Wildlife officials and experts have expressed concern over the port construction saying that there is already a lot of possible damage on account of proliferating industries and special economic zones on either side of National Highway 5 in the vicinity of the lake.

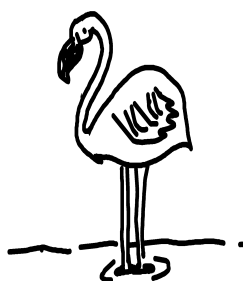
The selection of Dugarajapatnam as a site for a major port had itself come as a surprise as central officials had initially indicated a preference for Ramayapatnam in the neighbouring Prakasam district. Nakkapalli in Visakhapatnam was also considered for the port.

A difficulty had also arisen when the Sriharikota space centre located nearby had raised objections to the location of the new port in its neighbourhood. The government, reportedly, prevailed upon the space centre with the assurance that the port activities would be designed in such a manner that there would be no disturbance to the launch of any space mission from Sriharikota.

Source: G Ravikiran. 'Pulicat hurdle for Dugarajapatnam port', *The Hindu*, 10/01/14.

Contact: **DFO Wildlife**, Pulicat Lake WLS, Sullurpet, Dist. Nellore, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08623-262158

## Flamingo festival at Pulicat



The annual 'Flamingo Festival' was inaugurated at Sullurpet near the Pulicat lake bird sanctuary in Nellore district in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of January. The District Collector N. Srikanth, Sullurpet MLA Parasa Ratnam and a host of people's representatives and district officials took part in the inaugural function. People from the surrounding mandals and fisherfolk families attended in large numbers.

Various departments like Tourism, Animal Husbandry and Agriculture put up their stalls featuring their respective activities. The venue at Sullurpet Boys High School was also decorated for the festival.

**Source:** 'Flamingo festival takes off at Pulicat', *The Hindu*, 11/01/14.

## GOA

### Flamingoes at Carambolim lake after five years

21 Lesser Flamingoes were recently sighted in Carambolim lake after a gap of five years. The flock was seen in the open paddy fields just outside the southern boundary of the lake in the month of December.

In recent years, bird arrivals at Carambolim lake have dwindled and the birds are seen in the nearby Dhado wetland in the central part of Goa and also the Maina lake in south Goa. Construction activity and human intervention has reportedly affected the Carambolim lake but no study has been conducted so far to assess the conditions here.

**Source:** Paul Fernandes. 'Lesser flamingoes sighted at Carambolim lake', *The Times of India*, 13/12/13.

## GUJARAT

### No Greater Flamingos in the Great Rann of Kutch this season

This is the second consecutive year that the Greater flamingo has given a miss to Greater Rann of Kutch (GRK). Flocks of Greater flamingos start descending on Anda Bet, in the GRK from October onwards. In 2011, around 10 lakh flamingos were recorded there.

Field biologist Nita Shah, who is working on habitat occupancy and distribution of the flamingos, visited the island in early December. She confirmed that the birds were not seen there, and believes that since it is already late for nesting, the reason for their not arriving this season is a matter of research.

**Source:** Gopal Kateshiya, 'Greater flamingos miss a date with Rann', *The Indian Express*, 19/12/13.

## MADHYA PRADESH

### Farmers around Bhoj wetlands give up chemical agriculture

Farmers around the Bhoj wetlands are shifting to organic farming to save Sarus cranes from harmful effects of pesticides. A watch group 'Sarus Mitra' has also been created to keep the cranes safe from other anthropogenic threats. Once seen in hundreds, the Sarus crane population has experienced a drastic decline here - from around 160 individuals in 2001 to 24 in 2008 and to only 10 now.

Alarmed by the drastic decline, Bhopal Birds - a local organisation supported by the Wildlife Trust of India and CAF-India, carried out a Rapid Action Project (RAP) to save these birds. The RAP began with determining the population of Sarus cranes in the area, monitoring their populations, holding consultative meetings with locals and developing a systematic strategy for their conservation. It was found out that one of the biggest threats to the wetlands and the birds here was the uncontrolled use of pesticide by the farmers, especially on their vegetable crops that the birds feed on.



Awareness camps were accordingly carried out in Goragaon and Bishenkhedhi villages wherein agricultural scientists from the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and other agriculture research organisations spoke to the farmers, students and locals about the ill-effects of chemical fertilisers. They also recommended organic farming. The efforts led to the farmers eventually moving away from using chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

Besides this, a group of village youth from Goragaon have formed the Sarus Mitra, to monitor the birds throughout the year. The volunteers not only keep a watch over the cranes and their nests but also carry out rescue of individuals in distress.

Source: [www.wti.org.in](http://www.wti.org.in)

## MAHARASHTRA

### **Opposition to research project on forest owlets near Melghat TR; other researchers back the project**

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF)'s decision to allow capture of 20 forest owlets in east and west Melghat divisions outside Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) has been opposed by some former forest officials and conservationists.

The MoEF, in February 2012, had recommended the research project titled 'Study of ecology, distribution and population of critically endangered forest owl (*Heteroglaux blewitti*) in Melghat Tiger Reserve', proposed by Wildlife Research and Conservation Society (WRCS), Pune. (*PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 3). The WRCS team which has studied the bird in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh, wanted to capture another 50 birds in collaboration with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). The field director of MTR did not support the project, but Chief Conservator of Forests (Territorial), Amravati, granted permission for research in the buffer area of the reserve.

The technical committee for wildlife research under the then Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) (wildlife) had recommended capture of 20 birds. The MoEF permitted the capture of the owlets by using non-

invasive methods and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) also approved the project in the buffer area while seeking comments on exclusion of research in the core area of MTR. The WRCS is reported to have said that it wants to conduct studies in the core area of the tiger reserve as well.

Kishore Rithe, a former member of National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) while opposing the research request has pointed out that a lot of research has already been done on owlets. He also noted that the bird has in fact gone extinct in places other than Melghat where research to study the bird was carried out. The retired PCCF of Madhya Pradesh, PM Lad, too pointed out that the research work in Toranmal was responsible for near disappearance of forest owl from there.

Prachi Mehta of WRCS said that the loss of habitat was one of the most important causes for the decline of the bird and that it was important to get scientific information including that related to the habitat needs, and breeding and nesting requirements for conservation efforts of the species. She also added that an unscientific approach to conservation and not research is responsible for extinction. Other researchers including Girish Jathar of the BNHS, Farah Ishtiaq who was among the first to research the birds after they were re-discovered in 1997 and Shomita Mukherjee of the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Nature (SACON), Coimbatore, have expressed their support for the research project. Evidence, according to Jathar, suggests that the bird has not disappeared from Toranmal as claimed.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Research project on forest owl in Melghat opposed', *The Times of India*, 02/12/13.

Ananya Dutta. 'Experts studying forest owl back efficacy', *The Times of India*, 05/12/13.

Contact: **Field Director**, Melghat Tiger Reserve  
Amravati- 444 602 Maharashtra . Tel:  
0721 – 2662792 / 2551766. 07223 –  
220214 / 222643. Fax: 0721 – 2662792.  
Email: [ati\\_meltiger@sancharnet.in](mailto:ati_meltiger@sancharnet.in)  
**Prachi Mehta**, WRCS. Email:  
[prachimehta1@gmail.com](mailto:prachimehta1@gmail.com)



## Three month bird survey in Sanjay Gandhi National Park

The authorities of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) have initiated a three month bird survey in the park. A 10-km stretch from Hathi Gate at Film City to Kanheri caves has been chosen for the survey which will be conducted every weekend with the help of teams that will be made up of an expert birder, a forest guard and two volunteers. Each team will be allotted a two-km stretch for the purpose of the survey.

It is hoped that the survey will generate interesting and useful data on the birdlife in the park and will help eventually in protection and conservation activities.

Source: Virat Singh. 'Expert birders to conduct 3-month survey at SGNP', *Mumbai Mirror*, 11/01/14.

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

## ODISHA

### Poaching incidents in Chilika

At least four incidents of waterfowl poaching in the Chilika lake were reported in the first two weeks of January 2014. 25 dead birds of five different species were seized by the authorities on January 16 near the Nalabana Bird Sanctuary. Two poachers were arrested at Majhiera and a country-made boat and a bag containing the dead birds were seized from them. The dead birds include 16 northern pintails, four large whistling teals, three northern shovelers and two common teals.

In an incident a few days earlier, another 25 dead birds were seized and six alleged poachers arrested from different spots in the Tangi wildlife range. An estimated four – seven lakh migratory birds are reported to be wintering in Chilika this season.

Source: 'Poacher duo held in Chilika', *The Times of India*, 18/01/14.

## UTTAR PRADESH

### NGT asks Uttar Pradesh to fix ESZ around Okhla Bird Sanctuary

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Uttar Pradesh government to take immediate steps to fix the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary. Relevant steps had to be taken by January 3, 2014, but it is not known what action has been taken by the state government.

The order was passed after stakeholders in the case, including the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and builders contended that the state government has not done anything till date after the NGT had directed it on October 28, 2013 to send to the MoEF its proposal on the ESZ.

Action had been sought to prevent the alleged illegal and unauthorised construction being undertaken by builders within a 10-km radius of the sanctuary. The builders have contended that since the sanctuary has no notified ESZ nor is it notified as a protected area, no clearance is needed from the NBWL for any project coming up within 10 kilometers of it. Meanwhile, the NGT has also issued fresh notices to the Haryana and Delhi governments and sought their replies in the matter.

Source: 'Okhla bird sanctuary: UP's conduct unfortunate, NGT says', *The Times of India*, 16/12/13.

Contact: **DFO**, WL, National Chambal Wildlife Division (I/c Okhla WLS), Mau Van Block, Agra, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0562-2320091

**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

### Official circulars/ guidelines related to applicability of Forest Rights Act in PAs

Date Issued	Issued by	Circular regarding	Mention of FRA-PA
16.11.07	Rajesh Gopal, NTCA	Identification and notification of core or critical habitats in tiger reserves	The expert committee after consulting respective field directors shall delineate and finalise the core within 10 days of receipt of this letter using the said criteria (minimum 800-1000 square kilometers)
20.02.08	NTCA, MoEF	Revised guidelines for the ongoing centrally sponsored scheme of project tiger	(Mainly about relocation package, provisions for relocated villagers and relocation monitoring committees)
19.03.08	Rajesh Gopal, NTCA	Revised guidelines of the ongoing centrally sponsored scheme of project tiger	Definition of family in accordance with 2007 R&R policy
08.09.08	NTCA	Identification/ notification of CTH, relocation from such areas and identification/ notification of buffers	Relocation from core/Critical Tiger Habitat may be carried out keeping in view the overall interest of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act. Further identification of core/ critical tiger habitats in new tiger reserves after the coming into force of the (Act) would involve action as contained in section 38(v) of the WLPA read with the provisions contained in the (FRA) (Also asked for notification of buffers)
31.03.09	NTCA	Constitution of buffer/peripheral area around the core/critical tiger habitat.	Notification of delineated buffer can start with notification of forest areas and be followed by non- forest areas under WLPA
26.05.09	NTCA	Creation of buffer area	Collection of MFP should not be allowed from the core area of the tiger reserves. Collection of MFPs like bidi leaf (tendu patta) and other forestry operations may be allowed in the buffer area of a tiger reserve which may comprise of forest, non-forest areas not having the status of a national park/ sanctuary
21.06.10	Mohan Lal, AIG (FC), MoEF (FP Section)	Compelling the Scheduled Tribes in NPs and WLSs to leave the premises of NPs and WLS without settling the rights under the provisions of the FRA	Before any displacement from NPs and WLSs it must be ensured that provisions of FRA are complied with

03.09.10	A. K. Chugh, Secretary, MoTA	D.O.No.17011/1/2010-FRA	MoEF requests State Govts to ensure that before any displacement from NPs and WLSs, FRA is followed.
04.03.11	Prakriti Srivastava-Deputy IG (WL)	Withdrawal of revised CWH guidelines for determination of CWHs	After meeting with MoTA, state/ UT government, and representatives of scientific and civil society organizations
11.05.11	Prakriti Srivastava-Deputy IG (WL)	F. No. 1-39/ 2007-WL (Advisory)	Inviting comments on CWH guidelines – Sent to inspector general of forests, additional inspector general of forests and deputy inspector general.
26.05.11	Minister, MoEF		Draft relocation protocol from CTH
24.05.12	MoTA	Letter to Chief Ministers	‘Relocation from tiger reserves and protected areas must follow section 4(2) of the Act; currently some tiger and wildlife habitats are being demarcated in violation of law and people are being asked to move without full compliance with all requirements.’
12.07.12	MoTA	Guidelines	The protective clause of Section 4(5) of FRA is of absolute nature and requires recognition of rights before any eviction ‘even where a forest area is to be declared as inviolate for wildlife conservation’. The rights of the forest dwellers residing in the national parks and sanctuaries are required to be recognized without waiting for notification of critical wildlife habitats in these areas.’ It also mentions the protection under 4(2) against eviction or modification of rights in CWH without recognition under FRA.’
06.09.12	MoTA	Rules Amendment	12 (i) (g) mentions that CFR delineation can include legal boundaries such as National Parks and sanctuaries

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

## MAHARASHTRA

### Community Forest Rights (CFRs) rejected in Melghat TR

The claim for community forest rights (CFRs) under the FRA in the Melghat Tiger Reserve has been rejected by the Sub-divisional level committee (SDLC). In a letter issued on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013, the SDLC Dharni said that the CFR claims were being rejected since the area had been declared a Critical Tiger Habitat. On seeking further clarifications regarding the provisions of the law under which the claim was rejected, the

claimants and the NGO Khoj were sent a letter from the Assistant Conservator of Forest dated 16/12/2011 which mentioned the following objections to the claim:

1. The claimants have not enclosed their Caste Certificate
2. The other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs) have not enclosed the evidence of their stay in forest and their dependence on the forest for their genuine needs
3. They haven't enclosed two evidences in support of their CFR.

Following are the specific objections to the CFR claims in relation to the village Madizhap:

1. The statement of the old person does not have a date
  2. The CFRs claims include nistar, MFP, water bodies, protection, conservation and regeneration and bio-diversity, intellectual rights and traditional knowledge. The compartments claimed under FRA are Reserve Forests and the rights in the said compartment(s) were extinguished. The compartment Nos. 276, 277, 282, 274, 284, 275, 285, 214, 211, 280 had been declared a sanctuary in 1994 and as a Critical Tiger Habitat in 2007.
- The letter also says that the claimants did not have the said area under their use on 13/12/2005 and did not have it under their control on 21/12/2007; hence the said claim of Community Forest Rights cannot be accepted.

Source: Purnima. Email dated 17/11/2013.

Contact: **Purnima**, Khoj, Yashwant Bhavan At.  
Po. Gaurkheda Kumbhi, Tal. Achalpur Dist.  
Amravati - 444806, Maharashtra. Tel-  
07223-277292/9890359154/9422917732.  
Email- [khajmelghat@gmail.com](mailto:khajmelghat@gmail.com)

## WEST BENGAL

### First gram sabhas formed in Sunderbans TR



The forest-dependent people of Kalitola Gram Panchayat area in North 24 Parganas district have formed the first ever Gram Sabhas (GSs) in the Sunderban Tiger Reserve, which the forest department (FD) has claimed is outside the ambit of Forest Rights Act. Formation of Gram Sabhas at Kalitola is also a culmination, of sorts, for the campaign that's been going on for implementing FRA in the Sunderbans for more than a year, mainly by Sunderban Jono Shromojivi Manch, a constituent of the All India Forum of Forest Movements (AIFFM), and also by Sunderban Motsyojivi Joutho Sangram Committee.

The Kalitola Gram Sabhas are all self-initiated, with full cooperation and support from the local panchayat. Four GSs have come up so far: Dakshin Kalitola, Paschim Para, 652 Dakshin Parghumti Dakshinpara, Dakshin Samsernagar 4 No, Sakunkhali Para and Khalpara and Dakshin Samsernagar 3, Kalindi Para. The Sunderban Jono Shromojivi Manch expects that more such Gram Sabhas in other islands of the Sunderbans would come up in the near future.

Source: Email from the AIFFM dated 14/01/14.

Contact: **Tapas Mondal**, Tel: 09433209912;

**Pabitra Mondal**, Tel: 9874771779.

Email: [aiffmsecretariat@gmail.com](mailto:aiffmsecretariat@gmail.com)

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### Gram sabhas stop FD from clear felling forests in vicinity of Jaldapara WLS

A press release issued by the Uttara Banga Ban-Jan Shromojivi Manch has said that hundreds of Gramsabha members of North Khairbari forest village in Madarihat Range of Coochbehar Forest Division have foiled repeated attempts of the forest department (FD) to carry out a clear felling coupe (CFC) in forests which they assert as their Community Forest Resource (CFR) according to provisions of Forest Rights Act 2006.

On December 23, 25 and then again on 7 January, departmental staff and JFMC (Joint Forest Management Committee) members from neighbouring villages, along with police, arrived at the CFR area to fell the trees they had marked earlier. In March-April 2013, Manch members of the area and concerned Gramsabhas had successfully resisted a clear felling coupe attempt at Mantharam as well, braving threats and harassment by police, local political leaders and the FD.

The North Khairbari area adjoins the forests of Chilapata and Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary and forms part of a corridor traditionally used by wild elephants. It is feared that any tampering with the forests here will only aggravate human-elephant conflict in the area.

The Uttar Banga Ban-Jan Shromojivi Manch has issued a set of three demands as follows:

1. The FD must immediately suspend their CFC operations in Khairbari forests and must not start new CFCs in any other forests over which communities have a claim.
2. Government of West Bengal must ensure that community rights of forest-dwelling tribals and other traditional forest dwellers over their forests are duly protected, and initiate due official process to recognize and record forest rights including rights over their community forest resource.
3. That legal proceedings according to Section 7 of FRA are started against all forest department staff and others who tried to cut trees in Khairbari forests.

Source: 'Stop illegal tree felling in community protected wildlife corridor; stop destroying forests in North Bengal; stop violating community rights over forests' Press release by the Uttar Banga Ban-Jan Shromojivi Manch, 08/01/14.

Contact: **NESPON/All India Forum of Forest Movements (AIFFM)**, 5, Krishanu Dey Sarani Babupara, Siliguri-734004, West Bengal. Tel: 0353-2661915/9194347-61915. Email: soumitrag@gmail.com

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**'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.**

## IN THE SUPREME COURT

Matters in the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal related to PAs from September to December 2013:

- the use of 2.83 hectares of forest land in Bahu Conservation Reserve, Jammu district, Jammu & Kashmir, for the construction of the passenger aerial ropeway from Peer Kho (behind Mubarak Mandi) to Mahamaya Park and from Mahamaya Park to Shahbad
- laying of transmission lines through the Wild Ass Sanctuary, Kutch, Gujarat
- regulation of oil and gas wells in and around the Thol Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat
- use by the Border Security Force of 0.6556 ha of land in the Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat
- use of 124.054 ha of land in the Majathal WLS, Himachal Pradesh, by the National Thermal Power Corporation for the construction of the Koldam Hydro-electric project
- use of 11.541 ha of forest in the Tadgarh-Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan, for upgradation and widening of the existing NH-8 between Beawar and Gomtipur Chauraha
- diversion of land in the Kumbalgarh WLS, Rajasthan for the repair of a dam in Latada located at the boundary of the Sadri forest block
- use of forest land in the Desert NP, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan for the laying of gravel roads
- laying of transmission lines and the implementation of the Kalgaon Stage III Phase 2 Scheme in the Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, Rajasthan-Madhya Pradesh-Uttar Pradesh
- use of 63.2485 ha of non-forest land in the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary, Maharashtra for laying of a 220 KV transmission line from Lamboti to Tuljapur.

Source: Forest Case Updates 80 & 81

Contact: Kanchi Kohli and Ritwick Dutta.

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## Remembering 'Sir'

### In memory of Dr. Prakash Gole

An eminent economist and ecologist, an internationally acclaimed ornithologist, a prolific author of environmental books, and a visionary with a passion for conservation of nature is how the world knew Dr. Prakash Gole, our 'Sir' who passed away recently. He edited the Journal of Ecological Society and his extensive work on conservation and restoration of wetlands and wetland birds, especially the Bar-headed goose, Sarus crane, Siberian crane, and the Black necked crane is recognised the world over.

I was fortunate to have gotten the opportunity to attend the one-year course on 'Sustainable Management of Natural Resources and Nature Conservation' run by the Ecological Society, which was established at his initiative in 1982 in Pune. Along with various conservation and restoration projects that the society carried out under his leadership, he constantly emphasised the importance of interdisciplinary learning and developing a holistic view, be it in terms of development, landscape planning or any other facet of conservation. He motivated hundreds of people who came to him from various spheres - students from various faculties, homemakers, and professionals - to study and contribute to the field of environment.

Our classes with him were a mix of many things, all united with one goal - love for the environment. Sir instilled into us that just harbouring a love for nature was not enough and that each of us had to strive for its conservation as well. He made us aware of the rampant destruction of the environment in the name of development, and taught us to observe our consumption levels, both as a society, and as an individual.

A man of few words, and not one to give in to banter or futile 'time-pass', he dedicated most of his time in the pursuit of his varied passions – all through his work. This quality of his was most evident on field trips. After walking in the Himalayan landscapes for hours, he would announce a lunch break of 10 minutes and if we had the energy to protest, he would generously extend it to 15. While most of us utilized that time either eating leisurely or just

lying peacefully under the clear skies, he would be done with his meal of one sandwich in a couple of minutes and set off immediately to wander around with his binoculars waiting for his young students to revive.

Although no one said it in front of him, Sir was not spared the jibes of 'sustainable living' and 'watching his consumption levels' by seeing how little he actually needed even to eat. Even after crossing 65 years, his energy and stamina was commendable. Till date, we cannot discuss or read anything related to Ecology without Sir's memory fleeting by.

- **Sharmila Deo** works with Kalpavriksh.  
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## **A Decade Ago**

### **Protected Area Update 45, October 2003**

#### **ASSAM**

##### **State to declare four new sanctuaries**

The Assam Forest Minister recently announced that four new wildlife sanctuaries would be created in the state. The announcement was made at a function during Wildlife Week. He however did not mention the specific forest areas which be made into sanctuaries. The minister pointed out that there was pressure to declare more areas as sanctuaries, but the state FD was not in a financial position to do so.

Additionally, the State Government has also created five Elephant Reserves and 28 Forest Development Agencies with about 1,000 Joint Forest Management Committees under them. These have been formed to involve the people in conservation of the forests and the wildlife and an amount of Rs. Three crores has been received from the Central Government for seven of such agencies. (Also see *PA Updates* 45, 43, and 41).

Source: 'Wildlife sanctuary status likely for more forest areas', *The Assam Tribune*, 08/10/03.

##### **New 'Nambar Daigrong Wildlife Sanctuary' declared**

The Assam Government has recently issued a notification announcing the declaration of the Nambar Daigrong WLS spread over an area of 97.15 sq. kms. This includes 20.73 sq. kms. from Lower Daigrong Reserve Forest, 21.50 sq. kms. from Upper Daigrong Reserve Forest and 54.92 sq. kms. from the Nambar Reserve Forest.

Source: 'Nambar Reserve Forest now a wild life sanctuary', *The Assam Tribune*, 16/10/03.

#### **HARYANA**

##### **Haryana to get two new wildlife sanctuaries**

The Haryana Chief Minister, Mr. Om Prakash Chautala recently announced that two new wildlife sanctuaries would be created in the state, one each in the Sirsa and Yamunanagar districts. He was speaking at a state-level function the Lal Ottu Weir at Sirsa in connection with the Wildlife Week. Further details are however not available.

Source: 'Haryana to get two new wildlife sanctuaries'

#### **KARNATAKA**

##### **Cauvery catchment forests to be brought under sanctuary cover**

The Karnataka Government has chalked out a plan for the conservation of the catchment areas of the Cauvery River by declaring the forests here as wildlife sanctuaries.

It is estimated that about 810 sq. kms. of forests, which form part of the Cauvery catchment area, will be included in Brahmagiri, Pushpagiri and Talacauvery Wildlife Sanctuaries. Subsequently, these sanctuaries will come under a national park, paving way for stricter enforcement.

The move has been prompted after a recent study that showed a sharp decrease in water inflows into the KRS dam over the last decade. The average inflow was 186.78 tmcft in 1990-95, as against 119.65 tmcft during 1996-2000.

While a shift in the rainfall pattern is said to be one of the reasons for this, other serious reasons include encroachment, exploitation of the forest wealth, human interference, timber-logging, deforestation and land degradation.

Source: Aravind Gowda. 'State moves to save Cauvery', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com) 27/10/03.

## **PERSPECTIVE**

### **Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction**

Fifty delegates from Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) Partnership of four South Asian countries plus Cambodia, and for the first time, Myanmar, met in Alipurduar, West Bengal, for the third annual meeting from 7-9 November 2013. Delegates, including many government representatives, paid a visit to the nearby Bombay Natural History Society/West Bengal Forest Department's Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre at Rajabhat Khawa. An important element of the meeting was the drafting of a 'Blueprint for the Recovery of South Asia's Critically Endangered Gyps Vultures' which details all actions required for each country until 2025, and this will be finalised very shortly.

The meeting reported a huge body of progress in all countries represented, and this has now been compiled into a 101-page report that can be freely downloaded from [www.save-vultures.org](http://www.save-vultures.org). This includes the revised priority actions still required to save these species, agreed by the meeting, calling for.:

- An immediate ban on diclofenac manufactured for human medicine in vials or ampoules larger than 3ml
- An effective system of regulation of veterinary drugs, based upon safety-testing on vultures (protocol already agreed for India) initiated and underway for painkillers (NSAIDs) already in and entering veterinary practice
- Veterinary licenses to be withdrawn for two drugs – ketoprofen and aceclofenac - based on the good existing evidence that they are unsafe for vultures

- Major efforts urgently needed within South Asia to address the immediate and increasing gap in funding for vulture conservation which now jeopardises the programme
- Promotion and expansion of network and approach of 'Vulture Safe Zones' across South Asia
- Maintain and support the existing vulture conservation breeding programmes throughout South Asia
- Prepare for first soft releases of captive bred vultures into Vulture Safe Zones by 2016
- Link SAVE activities and meetings to closely support the 'Regional Steering Committee' in order to facilitate the urgent implementation of the 2012 Delhi Regional Agreement

Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) is a consortium of eleven organisations with agreed shared goals to enhance the conservation status of the four critically endangered Asian vulture species through scientifically justified actions. It is chaired by one of the world's leading raptor experts Professor Ian Newton. BNHS is one of the Core members and the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) has recently become a formal member. There are two sub-committees and the annual meetings generate a summary report.

- **Chris Bowden** is the SAVE Programme Manager.

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