

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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**Protected Area Update**

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## EDITORIAL

### Sansar Chand – The end of an era?

Sansar Chand, known as the most notorious wildlife poacher and smuggler in the country, died recently in Jaipur due to lung cancer and related ailments. He had been taken to Alwar from Delhi in connection with a case related to the killing of tigers in Sariska TR and was shifted to Jaipur when he developed some health complications.

He was, perhaps, the most hated and despised man in India's wildlife and conservation community and understandably, there is a collective feeling of relief and even jubilation. It's been very visible, for instance, in the world of social media. While the strong emotion might be understandable it is a moot point whether we fully understood Sansar Chand's larger connections and contexts. While there may be no doubt that he operated with unmatched audacity and impunity, little is known or understood of the larger eco-system that he worked within.

It is obvious that he could not have operated if he did not have support from multiple sources – a network of people in the communities in and around forests; those in positions of authority and power who were willing to co-operate (perhaps for money) and a legal system that is slow and inefficient. But this is not all – there are also issues of the history and cultures of communities that continue hunting in the wild; issues of society, politics and attitudes in relation to many of these communities that are branded criminal communities; issues related to the overall socio-economic agendas of the country and its policies; the criminal justice system and the unabated demand for wildlife goods in national and international markets.

These, obviously, are much easier to write about, than to actually deal with in the field and that is precisely the point. Any individual will have to take responsibility and be accountable for the choices he or she makes but we cannot stop just there. Unless we get a

better handle on the larger dynamics, our focus will remain on the individuals who are the tips of the iceberg - the symptoms and not the cause of the issues that we seek to address. An efficient legal system could have kept Sansar Chand in jail for longer or he might have been felled, much earlier, by a forester's (or a policeman's) bullet. He was eventually taken away by cancer because like any other individual, he was mortal. He had to go - this way or that.

The same, however, cannot be said of the challenges that Sansar Chand came to epitomize – these are more than evident to anyone who cares about wildlife conservation in this country. They are all around us and these are certainly not the creation of one single Sansar Chand.

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### Excess deer population from Hyderabad's Nehru Zoological Park to be moved to the Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem TR



Authorities at the Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad have proposed to move excess deer from here to the forests of the Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR). The number of deer could be about 300 and the move is subject to the approval of the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state.

A relocation exercise such as this is being taken up after a span of five years as the population of free ranging deer, which is not a part of zoo exhibits, has gone up way beyond its handling capacity. If the proposal is approved, the herbivores would be sent to the forests in batches during the next three months after

studying the areas where they have to be released.

Besides the zoo, excess deer populations can be found in a number of places in and around Hyderabad. These include the Vanasthalipuram Deer Park in the city, in Shamirpet, in the Mrugavani National Park in Chilkur, and in the neighbouring districts of Medak and Karimnagar as well.

Source: 'Excess deer population from zoo to be shifted to Nallamala', *The Times of India*, 28/02/14

### **Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve may have 75 tigers**

A census carried out using camera traps has revealed that there are 46 adult tigers in the Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve. The figure excludes the large Amrabad block that spreads over 1,000 sq km, where the survey is yet to be done. According to the forest officials, the total number of tigers in the reserve, including cubs, would cross 75 in the final count.

Source: 'U. Sudhakar Reddy, Sagar reserve may have 75 tigers', *Deccan Chronicle*, 24/02/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Nagarjunsagar - Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Srisailem Dam (East) – 512103, Andhra Pradesh, Tel: 08524-286089 / 286140(R). Fax: 08524-286071

### **Forest officials cannot adjudicate WLPA violations: high court**

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has held that forest authorities cannot adjudicate cases pertaining to violations of the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WLPA) - 1972 and made it clear that they have to necessarily refer such cases to the relevant magistrate court. Justice A Ramalingeswara Rao issued this order while dealing with a recent case of the illegal transportation of fresh water turtles.

The matter is related to an incident in 2010 when the tehsildar of Mudinepalli Mandal in Krishna district intercepted a mini lorry

carrying water turtles and fish in the month of February that year. He seized 50 crates filled with 1,168 turtles and 18 crates of fish along with the lorry and three persons including the driver, and handed them over to the Mudinepalli police. All the live turtles were then released into the Krishna river at Prakasam barrage.

The next day, the police transferred the case to the forest section officer, special duty, Machilipatnam, and after investigation, the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Krishna division, imposed a fine of Rs 25,000 on each of those accused. The DFO also issued a show-cause notice to the owner of the lorry, but the latter pleaded innocence. Not satisfied with the reply, the Chief Conservator of Forests ordered seizure of the lorry and plastic crates used to keep the turtles. Aggrieved by the order, the lorry owner moved the high court.

Justice Rao pointed out that the competent authority to determine forfeiture or release of seized property was the magistrate under Section 50 (4) of the WLPA and officers are not empowered to seize property or compound offences. The judge directed the authorities to refer the case to the concerned magistrate.

Source: 'Forest officials cannot be judges', *The Times of India*, 02/02/14.

Contact: **CWLW**, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhavan, Saifabad, Hyderabad - 500004, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 040-23230561 / 23232668. Fax: 337889

## **ASSAM**

### **Anti-poaching camp-cum-office at Kokilamukh in Jorhat**

A permanent beat office-cum-anti-poaching camp is being constructed at Kokilamukh in Jorhat district, on the banks of the Brahmaputra. The state forest department has released Rs 10 lakh for the office that is being constructed on a raised platform, like a *chang ghar* of the *Mising* community.

Forest officials said that the entire northwest Jorhat area along the Brahmaputra can be better managed from Kokilamukh as it takes longer for forest guards to reach the

riverine areas from the Jorhat range office in town. According to them, the anti-poaching camp would also be of use in chasing back rhinos straying out of the Kaziranga National Park. Several rhinos stray out, moving eastwards to enter the Jorhat forest division. It is necessary to track these rhinos to protect them from poachers. Another benefit of having a camp at Kokilamukh is related to the monitoring and protection of a large number of water bodies – *beels* – in the area that attract a large diversity and number of waterfowl.

Source: Wasim Rahman. 'Office for Jorhat forest staff', *The Telegraph*, 17/02/14.

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

## BIHAR

### Tiger count rises at the Valmiki TR

The number of tigers in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR) has gone up from eight in 2010 to 22 in 2013. Chief Minister of Bihar, Mr Nitish Kumar, recently released a report on the tiger census done by the state environment and forest department in 2013.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had conducted the survey in 2010 while the latest census was conducted by using 210 camera traps over a period of six months, beginning from January 15, 2013. The camera traps were installed in pairs over an area of 899 sq km in the reserve. The findings were sent to Wildlife Institute of India (WII). As the VTR shares boundaries with the Chitwan reserve of Nepal, the WII, which has a detailed report of Chitwan tigers with it, matched the VTR pictures with that of Chitwan to rule out duplication while counting the tigers.

It is said to be the first time in the history of the VTR that the tiger count has witnessed such a surge. While the officials have attributed the surge in the number to improved administration and development of favourable habitat, some experts claim that the 2010 census was done in a faulty way due to which very few tigers were documented then.

A senior official at the VTR said three tigresses were recently spotted at Manguraha with three cubs. These six tigers were not documented during the census, thus the number of tigers at the reserve is expected to be 28 now.

Source: Piyush Kumar Tripathi. 'Thrice grow tigers in three years - Camera trap enumeration helps VTR achieve perfection, experts differ', *The Telegraph*, 10/02/14.

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

## GUJARAT

### 83 lion deaths in Gir in last two years

83 lions including 37 cubs were reported to have died in the Gir forests in the last two years. The information was provided recently in the state assembly in a written reply by the State forest and environment minister. All except one of these deaths were due to natural causes.

24 lions and 10 cubs died in 2012 while the number for 2013 was 22 lions and 27 cubs died.

Source: '46 Lions, 37 Cubs died in Gir Forest Area in last 2 years', [www.outlookindia.com](http://www.outlookindia.com), 26/02/14.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/630051. Fax: 631211. Email: [cfwildlife\\_ad1@sancharnet.in](mailto:cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in)

## JHARKHAND

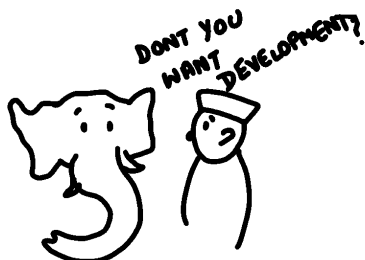
### MoEF allows mining in the Singhbhum Elephant Reserve

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has given a 'go ahead' to the Steel Authority of India's Durgaburu iron-ore mine in Saranda forest division. The mine will get 635 hectares of forestland in the middle of the Singhbhum Elephant Reserve.

MoEF's statutory Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) had earlier cleared transfer of 274 hectares for the project and made the

diversion of the rest conditional on approval to a wildlife management plan. The Cabinet Committee on Investments had, in April 2013, however, asked the MoEF not to link the approval with the management plan. The MoEF obliged and assured a special meeting of the FAC within a month. This didn't happen till January this year.

Soon after Mr Veerappa Moily took over at the MoEF, Steel Minister Beni Prasad Verma sought his intervention for clearing the project, and the MoEF promptly removed the conservation plan rider. In doing so, however, the MoEF has put itself in a spot because it will have to approve Arcelor Mittal's 1.6 million tonne iron ore project in the same reserve if it applies the same rule.



Source: Chetan Chauhan. 'Govt. okays mining project in elephant reserve', *Hindustan Times*, 07/02/14.

Contact: PCCF, Jharkhand, At- Doranda, P.O. Doranda, Ranchi. Tel: 0651-2500455(O), 2500413(R) Fax: 0651-500413

## KARNATAKA

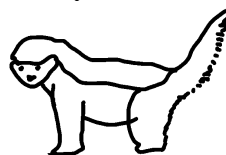
### State signs MoU to study the condition of elephant habitats

The Karnataka state government recently signed an MoU with the Asian Nature Conservation Foundation (ANCF) for conducting a study of the habitat of elephants in the state. The study will focus on how to improve the present condition of their habitat. It will also look at the availability of food, shelter, water-bodies and elephant corridors in the existing sanctuaries.

282 elephants were reportedly killed in the state in the last four years. 16 elephants were killed in the state in 2011-12 due to electrocution and 12 were killed in train accidents in the two year period from 2011 2013.

Source: 'Govt ropes in agency to study jumbo habitat', *The Times of India*, 24/02/14.

### Ratel photographed for the first time in the Cauvery WLS



A ratel (*Mellivora capensis*) was recently photographed in the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS),

making it the first such instance for a ratel in the wild in the state of Karnataka. The animal was photographed during a camera-trapping exercise being carried out by Nature Conservation Foundation, Panthera and the Karnataka Forest Department to estimate leopard density in the Habur and Halagur ranges of the sanctuary.

Ratels are found in parts of Africa, Arabia, western Asia, and the Indian peninsula. Their density is very low in most of the places they are found and sightings in India have been extremely rare. A ratel was reportedly found in a well, near Doddalahalli, in Kanakapura taluk in 2003. It was shifted to Mysore zoo but died in a few days.

Source: 'They went to document leopards but found a ratel', *The Hindu*, 09/02/14.

Contact: DCF, Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary Kanakapura, Dist. Bangalore, Karnataka. Tel: 08117-22536(O), 22537(R)

### Rains in early March bring relief to Bandipur, BRT TRs

Rains in early March brought much sought after relief to the Bandipur and Biligiri Ranganathaswamy Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserves (TR) in the state. The preceding weeks of hot and dry weather had forced authorities here to step up vigil against the occurrence of forest fires.

Good rainfall was received in the K Gudi, Pujanapur and some other areas of BRT TR and of the Bandipur, Maddur and Omkar ranges in the Bandipur TR. The forest department (FD) reported that there had been no forest fires despite the threats and that it was prepared for the situation even if the rain did not sustain. It was also decided to permit safaris in

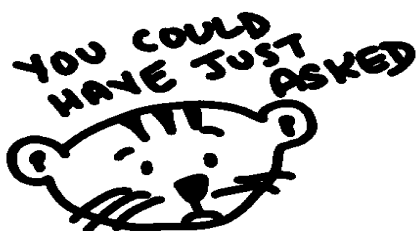
the reserves for a period of three weeks on account of water availability following the rains.

In another related development the FD has started cautioning the public against smoking and throwing inflammable material in the reserves and the usage of fireworks during celebrations and visits to temples in and around Cauvery wildlife sanctuary, MM Hills and Bandipur and BRT reserves.

Source: K Shiva Kumar. 'Rain brings relief to tiger reserves', *The New Indian Express*, 03/03/14.

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

### Tests reveal that the tiger captured near Bandipur is not a maneater



The tiger captured in the Chikkaburghi forest near the Bandipur Tiger Reserve had, apparently, killed three people in November-December last year (see *PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 1), and was believed to have been a maneater. However, two months after capturing it from the wild, a scat analysis by the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad, has revealed that the big cat was not the maneater it was supposed to be. After initial tests revealed the absence of human DNA in its scat, samples were sent to the CCMB, which has now confirmed this. While the bodies of the first two victims were intact, the head of the third was severed. This had led to the forensic examinations.

The Chief Conservator of Forests and Executive Director of Mysore zoo, B.P. Ravi said that when it was captured on December 5, the animal was weak and bore quill wounds on its chest and mouth. It was initially believed that

the tiger had turned a maneater after it became weak from the porcupine attack. Now an inmate of the Mysore zoo, it will not be released in the wild and will be used in the zoo for breeding.

The people of the HD Kote taluka near the Chikkaburghi forest had mounted a major campaign to eliminate the animal. They had even attacked a forest camp and set fire to vehicles parked there. A shoot-at-sight order was issued but the animal was finally darted.

Source: K.M. Rakesh, 'Maneater' error cages tiger - No hope of return to jungle', *The Telegraph*, 07/02/14.

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

## MADHYA PRADESH

### WII suggests Nauradehi WLS suitable for reintroducing the cheetah

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has found Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary, spread over an area of 1,200 sq km, to be suitable for reintroduction of the cheetah.

The Madhya Pradesh Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) has written to the Centre to fund the Rs. 260 crore project as nearly 20-22 villages need to be shifted for the purpose. The state government is of the view that since the project was of the Centre, the Ministry of Environment and Forest and the National Tiger Conservation Authority should bear its entire cost.

The cheetah was supposed to be translocated to the state's Palpur Kuno WLS, but the search for a new place is now said to have been initiated because the Supreme Court directed relocation of lions from Gir WLS to Palpur Kuno.

(Also see *PA Update* Vol. XV, No. 5).

Source: 'WII Plans Rs 260 Crore Project for Reintroducing Cheetah in India', *The New Indian Express*, 22/02/14.

## MAHARASHTRA

### Decisions at recent meeting of the State Board for Wildlife

A meeting of the Maharashtra State Board of Wildlife (SBWL) was held recently. Some of the decisions taken in the meeting were the following:

- 1) The creation of the sixth tiger reserve in the country that will include the forests of the Bor Wildlife Sanctuary.
- 2) Creation of a Great Indian Bustard (GIB) breeding centre at Nanaj in Solapur, for which Rs. 20 crore will be used for a period of 10 years. This proposal will be sent to the Centre for approval on the condition that the government of Rajasthan, which has the highest population of GIBs, provides eggs or chicks for the conservation programme.
- 3) All major on-going irrigation projects, including the Gosikhurd irrigation project in Vidarbha, will have to set aside Rs. 110 crore for mitigation measures. Most of the canals cross wildlife corridors and the money will be used to build overpasses to allow wildlife to cross over as well as for catchment area treatment. A small percentage of water released from dams will be set aside for use by wildlife.
- 4) Approval for the Nardave irrigation project and the Solapur to Hyderabad and Bijapur to Nagpur national highway projects. Projects close to the Karnala WLS such as the four-lane widening of NH-17 and a 30-km underground gas pipeline from Mumbai to Pune were also approved. The underground pipeline that will provide water to Manpada adivasis living inside the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) was also approved.
- 5) A proposal to build a cement factory in the eco-sensitive zone of SGNP and a manganese mining project close to Pench Tiger Reserve were rejected.

Source: 'State set to get 6th tiger reserve', *The Indian Express*, 22/02/14.

### Special Tiger Protection Force proposal for Melghat TR

A proposal was sent to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in the month of February for the formation of a Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) for the Melghat Tiger Reserve (TR). This is believed to be an immediate fall-out of the recent spate of incidents of tiger poaching here (see accompanying story).

One STPF platoon consists of 112 men that comprises an Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) as the person in charge, three Range Forest Officers (RFOs), 81 forest guards and 27 forest watchers. STPF will exercise policing powers to use firearms to combat tiger poaching and related offences in the tiger habitat. The state will be required to confer these powers on personnel under subsection (3) of Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974).

The STPF will be used only for tiger protection and under no circumstances would be requisitioned in aid of civil authority for any other work. The STPF will receive special training from state police and paramilitary forces. In 2012, STPF platoons were constituted in Pench and Tadoba-Andhari TRs as well. Owing to a funds crunch, however, staff salaries were paid only in 2013.

Source: 'Stung by tiger poaching, Special Tiger Protection Force proposed for Melghat', *The Times of India*, 26/02/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Melghat Tiger Reserve  
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0721 – 2662792 / 2551766. 07223 –  
220214 / 222643. Fax: 0721 – 2662792.  
Email: ati\_meltiger@sancharnet.in

### At least four tigers were poached in Masondi, Melghat in 2013: CCMB

A January 2, 2014 report from Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad has said that DNA samples of bloodstained soil, decomposed flesh pieces, intestinal parts collected from compartment No. 51 - Masondi in Melghat and a metal trap with blood stain and hair samples, collected half a

km away from the crime spot, have tested positive and belong to four different tigers. This is apart from one tiger poached in Dhakna - Melghat in March 2013.

The CCMB report has brought a sensational twist to the tiger poaching incidents in Melghat because till now poachers had revealed (and the officials had believed) that only one tiger had been killed here. The number could, in fact, be much higher. Arrested poachers are reported to have said that one individual known to them had alone trafficked 11 tiger skins between April and June 2013 but only five have been brought on record and offences have been registered in four cases. Offences have still not been registered in the Katol, Khumari and Sevagram poaching cases.

The official tally of tigers poached last year stands at 12. It includes only one from Masondi and not the remaining three revealed by CCMB. It also doesn't include poacher Ranjit Bawaria's confession that he trafficked two tiger skins from Katol and more from Sevagram. Apart from this, poachers also killed two leopards and two sloth bears at the same spot in Masondi. Yet, no one has been held accountable.

Melghat officials claimed they have nabbed over 20 poachers on the basis of call-details records (CDRs) of March 4, 2013, when the Dhakna tiger was killed. Wildlife experts have, however, pointed out that if officials had indeed been working on CDRs of March, they could have saved those four tigers that were killed later. Officials are, reportedly, continuing to resist putting higher figures on record for poaching cases. Trafficking of six tiger skins from Bhandarbodi in Ramtek has also not been put on record, for instance, even though the accused have admitted doing it.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Poachers killed four tigers together at Melghat', *The Times of India*, 08/02/14.

### **Tourism earns over Rs. 1.5 crores for villages around TATR in the last three years**

The Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation (TATRCF) has over the last three years distributed over Rs. 1.5 crore

to Eco-Development Committees (EDCs) in buffer villages for individual and community development. This is money that has all come in in the form of tourism receipts. In 2011-12, 52 EDCs were given Rs. 26.52 lakh from the Tiger Conservation Fund while 12 EDCs were given a total amount of Rs. 14.72 lakh for the year 2012-13. One EDC in the core area was given Rs. 90,000 and Rs. 9.84 lakh for LPG distribution.

Reserve officials said that the EDCs that did not get funds from CAMPA, the 13th Finance Commission, and from other sources would be supported through these funds. The villages that have benefitted include Alizanja, Malbamni, Nimdhela, Mohbodi, Katval, Khatera, Gonmohadi, Vihirgaon, Mamla, Sitarampeth, Madanapur, Vasera, Bembala, Katvan, Petgaon, Maroda, Kitali and Kolara.

Kolara village was recently given Rs. 1.95 lakh for solar lights. Rs. 20 lakhs were provided for solar fencing in Ghosri, Khutwanda, Kolara and Wadala on the TATR fringes and Rs. 5 lakh was also given for eco-friendly chulhas in some of the villages.

A plan has been finalized to start an *agarbatti* project in Kolara and the rehabilitated village of Navegaon Ramdegi at a total cost of around Rs. 20 lakh. Around Rs. 16 lakh had been set aside for toilets for 128 families in Bhagwanpur in Mul, where two Tadoba villages have been resettled. Meadow development at Navegaon will be done with Rs. 10 lakh and Rs. 25 lakh will be used for creation of water bodies in the buffer zone. Another project being implemented is to construct parapet walls for open wells in vulnerable villages. The department also felicitates outstanding SSC and HSC students in villages with the help of these funds.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tigers bring money to Tadoba buffer villages', *The Times of India*, 07/02/14.

### **MoEF approves ESZ proposal for TATR**

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has given its approval to the proposal for an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) around the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). The ESZ will

cover an area of about 1,347 sq km, which is more than double the area of TATR (625 sq km) itself. Nearly half of this ESZ area is constituted of reserve forests. The physical boundary of Tadoba ESZ will be made up of the Chandrapur and Nagpur forest circles in the north, and the railway line between Gondia and Chanda Fort in the south. It will share a boundary with Chandrapur and Brahmapuri division in the east and Irai dam and its backwaters in the west.

Apart from entire notified buffer zone of TATR, the additional area that forms the corridor to Umred forest region and another patch that goes towards Chaprala Wildlife Sanctuary near Tadoba has also been included in the ESZ.

The creation of the ESZ will result in the prohibition of polluting units such as mines, crushers, power plants and saw mills in the vicinity of the protected area. It will now also not allow controversial mines like those at Bandar and Lohara.

Source: 'Environment Min okays ESZ around Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve', *The Pioneer*, 07/02/14.

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

## ODISHA

### Proposal to shrink Satkosia TR; NGO expresses concerns

The Odisha State Board of Wildlife (SBWL) has approved the proposal for reducing the Satkosia Gorge sanctuary area from 795.52 sq km to 636.495 sq km. The proposal was discussed in the recent meeting of the SBWL that was chaired by the Chief Minister, Mr Naveen Patnaik. As many as 104 villages which are located in the 159 sq km area will be de-notified if the National Board of Wildlife, National Tiger Conservation Authority and Central Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court ratify the SBWL's approval.

The NGO, Wild Orissa, has expressed concern over the de-notification, arguing that it

would adversely impact the future prospects of the tiger in the whole state. That is because the Satkosia-Baisipalli forests are part of a very large forest patch covering 13,459 km in Phulbani, Ganjam, and Kalahandi districts with several pockets reporting tiger presence. The organization has demanded that the resolution for the de-notification be withdrawn immediately. There are five villages, having a total population of 200 people, inside the core area and the organization has suggested that the government take priority measures to voluntarily relocate these. It has also asked for priority steps to be taken for notifying the two reserved forest blocks, Hatidhara (63.89 sq km) in Boudh District and Makarprasad (10.54 sq km) in Nayagarh District, as part of the Satkosia TR.

A number of other issues were also discussed in this meeting of the SBWL. These included, among others, the growing human-elephant conflict, the menace of poaching, matters relating to tiger corridors and those of arms and ammunition for forest field staff. The issue of the eco sensitive zones for 16 PAs and wildlife clearance for four industrial and infrastructure projects - Bangur underground chromite mines, Phase II expansion of Dhamra Port Company Ltd., thermal power project by KVK Neelachal and a 1.5 million tonnes per annum capacity cement grinding project were also discussed.

Source: Siba Mohanty, 'Odisha Okays Smaller Satkosia', *The New Indian Express*, 13/02/14.

'Don't denotify land from Satkosia Tiger Reserve', *The Pioneer*, 18/02/14.

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

### Crime Branch takes over the investigation of elephant poaching cases in Sambalpur

The Crime Branch (CB) of Odisha Police has taken over the investigation into the recent incidents of elephant poaching in Sambalpur district. It has constituted a seven-member special investigation team (SIT) comprising

three inspector-ranked officers. The SIT would camp at Sambalpur to conduct investigations into the three incidents of poaching in the Bamra and Sambalpur forest divisions. The CB has registered four cases in this connection – three for the poachings in Bamra and Sambalpur and a fourth in the matter of the huge amount of ammunition that were seized by the Sambalpur forest officials during the subsequent raids. Two persons were also arrested during the crackdown.

Since most of the traditional poaching pockets in Odisha were earlier confined to Similipal, Kuldiha and Southern Odisha, the CB plans to look into the surfacing of organised poaching in Sambalpur. When the Sambalpur officials arrested the two poachers they had also seized a Jeep that had three step-ins and four fuel tanks to carry reserves in the jungle terrain. Besides, the vehicle had several pockets to carry essential articles. The Jeep was customised to facilitate poachers to shoot from inside the vehicle, which had cushioned points where firearms could be placed. They had also seized a huge volume of .303 mm, .22 mm bullets and 12 bore cartridges. Since one of the poachers arrested was from Jharkhand, the CB is trying to establish the inter-state linkages. The CB has also sought the information from Wildlife Crime Control Bureau on network of smugglers in Jharkhand.

Source: 'CB Forms SIT to Probe Elephant Poaching', *The New Indian Express*, 21/02/14.

#### No Olive ridley mass nesting at Gahirmatha as of the first week of March

**TURTLE CALENDAR**

MARCH						
						XX
XX	XX	XX	XX	XX		

Though nearly 25000 Olive ridley turtles were reported to have nested at Rushikulya in the 2<sup>nd</sup>

week of February, no nesting was reported from Gahirmatha even in the first week of March. The nesting at Gahirmatha is normally seen a couple of weeks after that at Rushikulya but it had not happened even though the turtles were seen to be congregating in the seas off Gahirmatha.

Researchers and officials have said that the nesting pattern cannot be predicted with certainty but they were hopeful that there would be nesting this season. Mass nesting in Gahirmatha in 2013 had been seen on March 18 and it did not happen at all in 1997, 1998 and 2002.

A six-month fishing ban from November 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014 has been in place to ensure the protection of the turtles and the forest department (FD) has set up 15 turtle protection camps including three that are offshore at Agaranashi, Barunei and Babubali islands. The personnel of marine police stations at Kharinashi and Paradip besides the Coast Guard is also helping the forest officials prevent illegal fishing in the demarcated area. About 150 fishermen have been arrested and 35 boats and trawlers seized for illegal fishing in Gahirmatha sanctuary since November 1, 2013. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 1).

Source: Ashis Senapati. 'Olive Ridleys yet to arrive at Gahirmatha', *The New Indian Express*, 04/03/14.

Contact: **Ashis Senapati.**

Email: [ashissenapati3@gmail.com](mailto:ashissenapati3@gmail.com)

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

#### Similipal TR expected to record highest number of tourists this year

Nearly 20,000 tourists have visited the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in the two and a half months since the reserve opened to tourists in mid-November. Officials say that they expect to receive a total of 40,000 tourists by the end of June when it will be closed for visitors. This would be the highest number of tourists at Similipal in a season.

About 10 foreign nationals have visited the STR this year. The authorities were not

hopeful of attracting foreign tourists because of the restriction put on their visiting tribal pockets in February last year following concern over voyeurism. The online registration process for tourists has reportedly made it easy for both foreigners and domestic tourists to visit STR. Introduction of an elephant ride in the reserve this year has also attracted domestic tourists.



Source: Riyan Ramanath V. 'Similipal Tiger Reserve registers record footfall', *The Times of India*, 02/02/14.

Contact: **Director**, Simlipal Tiger Reserve, P.O. Baripada, Dist. Mayurbhanj – 757002, Odisha. Tel: 06792-252593(O), 252773(R) Fax: 256705  
**CWLW– Odisha**, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Odisha. Tel: 0674- 2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840. Fax: 512502

## SIKKIM

### Sikkim to notify ESZs; criticism over the size of the ESZs

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has notified areas up to 200 meters from the Khangchendzonga National Park and four wildlife sanctuaries in Sikkim as an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ). The four wildlife sanctuaries are Fambonglho, Kyongnosla Alpine, Pangolakha and Shingba Rhododendron. The extent of the ESZ, under the notification, varies from 25 to 200 meters from the existing boundary of the protected areas, depending on topography of the region and its proximity to international boundaries of Nepal and China. Issuing the notification on February 21, the MoEF has sought public opinion within 60 days so that it can look into

suggestions and complaints, if any. The decision will come into force after expiry of the 60-day deadline.

Human activities including mining, quarrying or setting up new major hydro-electric power projects will not be allowed in ESZs. However, micro hydel power projects up to 100kw or mini hydel projects - from 101 to 2000kw - would be allowed subject to consent of the concerned gram sabhas and all other requisite clearances. The ongoing agriculture and horticulture practices, organic farming and cottage industries including those of village artisans would not be affected.

The decision is being criticized as a move to get a mandatory clearance from the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) for a slew of dams being developed in the state. Under the orders of the Supreme Court, any project falling within 10 km of a national park and sanctuary has to be whetted by the standing committee of the NBWL unless a different site-specific protection ring is declared for each of these national parks and sanctuaries. And, hence the limit of 25 to 200 meters has been decided for the ESZs.

The standing committee of the NBWL had earlier submitted a report to the MoEF warning that several dams in the state were coming up without the mandatory clearances. These include, for the instance, the proposed Teesta V, Teesta III, Dik Chu, Panan, Tashiding and Ting Ting hydroelectric power projects.

Source: Vishwa Mohan. 'Mining, quarrying banned near Sikkim wildlife sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 24/02/14.

Nitin Sethi. 'New guidelines help bypass NBW nod for dams in Sikkim', *The Hindu*, 20/02/14.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Government of Sikkim, Forest Secretariat, Deorali, Gangtok, - 737 102, Sikkim. Tel: 03592-281240 Fax: 281778

## TRIPURA

### Sepahijala WLS and Zoo offers animals for adoption

In an initiative aimed at increasing people's participation in wildlife conservation, it is now possible to adopt an animal and pay for its upkeep at the Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary and Zoo. People as well as institutions can adopt an animal of their choice by contributing amounts ranging from Rs. 5,020 to Rs. 2, 81 000 per year for its upkeep. In return, the zoo and sanctuary authorities would offer certificates of adoption, complimentary passes to visit the zoo, publication of names in leading newspapers, besides income-tax exemptions on the amount contributed. The name of individual and the institutions would also be displayed at the enclosure of the adopted animal.

Animals listed as available for adoption include the tiger, lion, Clouded leopard, rhinoceros, Himalayan black bear, hornbill, peacock, crocodile, leopard, Hoolock gibbon, Slow loris, Pig-tailed macaque, pelican, Capped langur, Leopard cat, and a vulture. So far the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and a 23-year old engineering student have adopted a tiger and a python respectively for six months. Another businessman adopted a Himalayan black bear for six months.

The Tripura government has also finalised an ambitious master plan for the development of the Sepahijala WLS and Zoo and has sought financial assistance from the union Ministry of Environment and Forests for the same.

Source: 'Now, adopt a crocodile or a tiger in Tripura zoo', *The Sentinel*, 11/02/14.

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

## UTTARAKHAND

### Rajaji National Park needs more elephants for patrolling

Officials at the Rajaji National Park (RNP) are concerned that they have only two domestic

elephants to patrol the sanctuary against the requirement of eight. The RNP, spread across 820 sq km, requires constant vigilance from poachers and elephants are considered to be an excellent option for patrolling the park since they create minimum disturbance in the forest and wild animals also do not shy away from them.

Officials fear that the shortage would be felt the most during the monsoons because motor vehicles that are used inside the park become unwieldy during the rainy season. The director of the park is said to have requested the government to procure more elephants to deal with the situation.

Source: Seema Sharma, 'Scarcity of domestic elephants in Rajaji National Park poses security hazard', *The Economic Times*, 22/02/14.

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

## UTTAR PRADESH

### Excess water in rivers washes away nesting sites of turtles and birds

Release of water from various dams and barrages for bathing during *Magh Mela* at Allahabad and unseasonal rainfall in the region are reported to have adversely affected the nesting of hard and soft-shelled turtles and birds in the Ganga, Yamuna and Chambal rivers. Researchers have noted that though the nesting season of hard-shell turtles usually starts in February, very little nesting activity has been seen this year.

The sandy banks and sand dune islands in the middle of the rivers are considered the favoured nesting areas for these turtles. These were however washed away due to the release of around 2,500 cusecs of water from the Narora dam on the occasion of *Makar Sankranti* and for other ritual bathings.

Source: Faiz Rahman Siddiqui. 'Excess water in rivers washes away nesting sites of turtles, birds', *The Times of India*, 20/02/14

## 100 cameras to track tiger movement in UP forests



Nearly 100 cameras will soon track the movement of tigers in the forests along the UP-Uttarakhand border. The state government has initiated the project near the Corbett Tiger Reserve to bring down human-animal conflict as well as to make an attempt to trace the elusive man-eating tigress of Bijnor (*PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 1) who is reported to have killed at least seven people in western UP in about two months. The process of installing the cameras was started at Nazirabad forest division, which is connected to CTR.

The forest department is also planning to fit GPS-enabled collars to the tigers to make it easy to identify and locate them.

Source: Priyangi Agarwal. '100 cameras to track tiger movement in UP forests', *The Times of India*, 06/03/14.

## Illegal tree felling in the National Chambal Sanctuary

Environmentalists have alleged that no concrete steps have been taken to stop the illegal activities of timber mafias who are active in National Chambal Sanctuary close to Bhareh, Mahua-Sunda, Kasauwa, Bharchauli, Chibrauli, Kutchehry, Bansari, Bhindwa and Sahson. Dozens of tractor-trolleys loaded with firewood are taken to local brick-kiln units every day and a large numbers of trees are also felled in the social forestry division.

While environmentalists have pointed out that felling is going on allegedly with the connivance of a section of the officials of the police and forest departments, the Wildlife Warden of the sanctuary claimed that the department has been taking stern action against such elements on receiving complaints.

Source: Faiz Rahman Siddiqui. 'Timber mafias rob Chambal sanctuary of green cover', *The Times of India*, 07/02/14.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, National Chambal WLS, National Chambal Wildlife Division, Mau Van Block, Agra, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0562-2320091

## Dudhwa authorities propose to shift four rhinos to another range

Authorities of the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve have proposed to shift four male rhinos from the rhino reintroduction area (RRA) of south Sonaripur range to the RRA of Belrayan range. The move came after an 11-year male rhino Sahdev was killed by two other male rhinos, Bheem and Nakul, in mating related conflicts in January, earlier this year.

A letter has been sent to the Chief Wildlife Warden for his approval to shift the rhinos. The South Sonaripur range spans an area of 27 sq km area while the other RRA is spread over 14 sq km at Bhadi Tal in Belrayan range. It is not very far from the existing RRA and the habitat conditions in both are very similar.

Source: 'Four male rhinos to be shifted to another range of Dudhwa', *The Times of India*, 06/02/14.

Contact: **Director**, Dudhwa National Park, Dist. Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 05872-252106. Fax: 05872-252106  
**Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden**, Govt. of Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow - 226 001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-206584(O), Fax: 0522-222061/ 206188

## NATIONAL NEWS

## Five species of tarantulas discovered in and around PAs in the Western Ghats

Researchers have discovered five new species of tarantulas in and around PAs in different parts of the Western Ghats. The species were described in a recent research paper in the journal 'Plos One'.

One of the five species was found at Aarey Milk Colony in Mumbai and has been named as *Heterophriectus aareyensis*. The other four are *Heterophriectus ravenii* from near Bhimashankar, *Neoheterophriectus amboli* from Amboli Ghat (both from Maharashtra); *Neoheterophriectus smithii* from near the Sharavati Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka, and a new genus and a new species from Trissur (Kerala), *Sahydroaraneus hirsti*.

Researchers involved in the discovery are Zeeshan Mirza, a wildlife biology and conservation researcher; Rajesh V Sanap, a post-graduate student in ecology and environment, Indian Institute of Ecology and Environment, New Delhi, and Harshal Bhosale, a post-graduate student in environmental sciences, Fergusson College, Pune.

Source: Vijay Singh. 'New spider species discovered in Aarey', *The Times of India*, 22/02/14.

Contact: **Zeeshan Mirza.**

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

## SOUTH ASIA

### BHUTAN

#### Nation-wide camera trapping exercise to survey tigers

A nation wide camera trapping exercise has been initiated to understand the population, density, distribution and habitat status of tigers in Bhutan. A formal launch of the survey on February 21 saw about 60 inhabitants of Rekhe village attending the program, where they were educated on the importance of tigers in the eco system, and about the cameras.

The country has been divided into three regions for the purpose of the exercise – east, central and south, with the trapping being initiated in the Royal Manas National Park in Sarpang. The survey in the east will be carried out from the Khaling Wildlife Sanctuary while Chukha will be the starting point for the central region. The cameras will be stationed for three months in one region, and a monitoring team is

to collect and observe the findings twice every month. The cameras will be placed in areas visited by tigers as already identified by the department through a sign survey that has already been completed. The area has been divided into numerous grids, with each grid area coming to 4×4 km by aerial survey.

Though the optimum number of cameras required for the exercise is 3000, only 1500 cameras will be used for the exercise because their cost does not permit a larger procurement.

Bhutan is reported to be the only country where tigers are found above an altitude of 4,000 m and the difficult terrain will make the exercise a particularly difficult challenge. It is estimated that the total population of tigers in the country is between 115 and 150.

Source: Tshering Wangdi, Samdrupjongkhar.

'Camera traps for tigers to be set up nationwide', [www.kuenselonline.com](http://www.kuenselonline.com), 26/02/14.

### NEPAL

#### Railway, road projects threaten to cut Chitwan National Park in half



A leaked analysis by the Department of Railways in Nepal has revealed that the government is considering two possible routes for a new railway line, each of which will cut through the Chitwan National Park. It also reveals that other existing solutions, both of which would be less damaging have been dropped. One of these is an alignment of the railway line following an already existing highway that runs east to west so as to skirt the park entirely. This was dropped because it would result in a longer route whereas the other, more dramatic solution - for the railway to run

underneath the park through tunnels has been dropped due to the cost implications. In addition to the railway track, a partnership between the Nepalese and Indian government is working on upgrading and adding eight new feeder roads for the Hulaki highway.

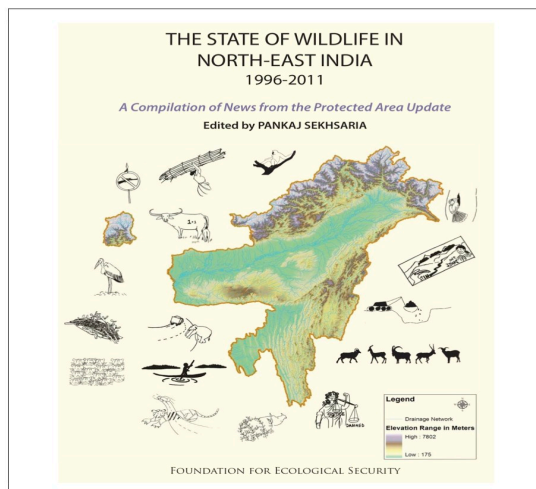
The Nepal government is yet to make a decision regarding the new railway line but wildlife officers and conservationists have expressed concerns. They say that a railway line and a road through the park without a comprehensive environmental and social impact assessment would undo 40 years of investment by the government, private sector, and the local

community in the conservation effort here. International conservationists have also agreed that both the proposed projects could irrevocably change Chitwan for the worse. The Alliance of Leading Environmental Researchers and Thinkers (ALERT) has urged Nepal to avoid high-risk mega-projects that could imperil Chitwan's wildlife and natural values.

Source: Jeremy Hance. 'Proposed rail and road projects could devastate Nepal's tigers and rhinos', <http://news.mongabay.com>, 06/02/14.

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

### A Compilation of news from the Protected Area Update



**List of Contents:** North East India Regional News; News from the States: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura.

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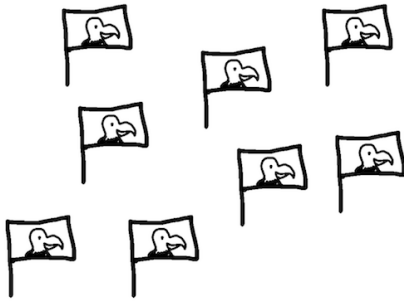
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# Important Bird Areas Update

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Vultures to be bred at eight more centres



The Central Government is expanding its vulture breeding and conservation programme to eight other centres in different parts of the country. The move seeks to emulate the successful vulture breeding and rescue centre in Pinjore and comes ahead of the ambitious plan to release these birds, bred in captivity, into the wild by 2016-17.

Six hundred pairs of each of the three critically endangered species — white backed, long billed and slender billed — will be released. For this purpose, 25 pairs of the three species

will be needed to breed in each of the eight centres.

At a meeting held in February, officials from Central Zoo Authority, zoo directors, chief wildlife wardens and forest officers involved in the Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme, agreed to send captive-bred vultures for the breeding program to Rani in Assam; Rajabhatkhawa in West Bengal; Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad; Van Vihar National Park & Zoo, Bhopal; Sakkarbaug Zoo, Junagarh; Muta Zoo, Ranchi; and Nandankanan Zoo, Bhubaneswar. Vultures in 19 other zoos in India will also soon be shifted out to these centres for the purpose of this program.

Source: Anubhuti Vishnoi. 'Vultures to be bred at 8 more centres', *The Indian Express*, 03/03/14.

### 15 species of birds in India critically endangered: IUCN

Fifteen species of birds seen in India have been declared 'critically endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The bird species are the Great Indian bustard, Siberian crane, White backed vulture, Red-headed vulture. Baer's pochard, Forest owl, Bengal florican, Spoon-billed sandpiper, Sociable lapwing, Jerdon's courser, White-bellied heron, Slender-billed vulture, Indian vulture, Himalayan quail and Pink-headed duck.

The major reasons for the decline in their numbers include loss, modification, fragmentation and degradation of habitat, environmental contaminants, poaching and land use changes, particularly conversion of large areas for crop cultivation. Also, changes in cropping patterns due to various reasons, including implementation of irrigation schemes, increased pesticide usage, livestock-grazing, high levels of disturbance and developmental activities like mining and hydel projects are reported to have caused a fall in population numbers. The IUCN has also identified infrastructure development, resulting in collisions with vehicles, power-lines and wind turbines as a threat.

Studies by Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and similar organisations on what contributes most to the decline of several bird species revealed that just like wetlands, most other habitats such as grasslands and forests also faced severe threat due to development pressures.

Source: B Sivakumar. '15 bird species in India critically endangered: International report', *The Times of India*, 10/02/14.

## Windmills pose threat to bird population: BNHS



A report by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), 'Review of existing global guidelines, policies, and methodologies for the study of impact of windmills on birds and bats: Requirements in India,' has pointed out the danger posed by wind power projects to birds and recommends mitigation measures to curb the damage they might cause to sensitive ecosystems.

Collision, disturbance, displacement, and changes in behavior and migratory patterns are some of the detrimental effects. An avian collision threat assessment carried out by the BNHS in Sangli in Maharashtra with 13 wind turbines revealed the annual collision rate to be 25 birds. Other studies have revealed that the maximum collision risk was during winter, which saw 19 mortalities with the minimum risk being in the monsoon. There have been other instances of death due to wind projects as well - with the Sarus crane in Uttar Pradesh and a White-backed vulture near Pune. The critically endangered Great Indian Bustard is one of the species at risk in Maharashtra.

The study says that the risk is likely to be greater to foraging and roosting sites of birds or to migratory flyways or local flight paths, especially where wind power turbines intercept these paths. Large birds with poor maneuverability are generally at greater risk of collision with structures, while species that habitually fly at dawn and dusk or at night are perhaps least at risk as they are likely to detect and avoid the turbines. Collision risk may also vary for a particular species, depending on age, behaviour, and stage of annual cycle.

In the case of bats, collisions have been reported due to disorientation caused by ultrasound. The study reveals that in some cases,

the number of bat carcasses retrieved considerably outnumber those of birds.

The report recommends identification of eco-sensitive areas, adequate briefing to site personnel, and detailed research in the three phases of construction. These studies should be continued regularly on a comparative basis post-construction.

Source: 'Wind farms may divert migratory birds: Study', *The Times of India*, 06/02/14.

Karishma Goenka, 'Windmills grind bird population to death: BNHS report', *DNA*, 08/02/14.

## ASSAM

### Assam to form a special authority for Deepor Beel

The Assam government is planning to form a Deepor Beel Management and Development Authority for the conservation and management of the water body. The Chief Secretary of the state will head it and the body is expected to be constituted soon. The announcement was made by the State's Principal Chief Conservator (PCCF) of Forests at a day-long workshop on the wetlands of Assam, organised recently in Guwahati by Aaranyak with support from the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The PCCF said that developing sustainable eco-tourism will help tackle the issues related to the livelihoods of the communities which are dependent on the wetlands like the Deepor Beel and the conservation of biodiversity. The participants of the workshop called for steps to frame the State Wetland Rules for Assam under the Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010. They also called for steps to establish a state-level statutory body for protection and management of wetlands in Assam.

The issue of management of wetlands on trans-boundary rivers of India and Bangladesh under the Joint River Commission was also discussed.

Source: 'Deepor Beel management authority on the anvil', *The Assam Tribune*, 05/02/14.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Assam State  
Zoo Division, I/c Deepor Beel WLS R.G.  
Baruah Road, Guwahati - 781 024,  
Assam 0361-261363(O), 263331(R)

## MAHARASHTRA

### Flamingos hunted in Navi Mumbai

Forest officials from Uran and Panvel recently found three broken beaks of flamingos along with feathers and bones near Phunde village in Uran taluka of Navi Mumbai, suggesting that the birds are being hunted here. According to the villagers, a small group of people is catching them with net traps and catapults and selling them locally as 'special chicken meat'.

This is the first case of illegal flamingo hunting since 2007, when two men were arrested for shooting these birds in Uran. The main threat to the birds and the mudflats here comes from infrastructure and industrial destruction.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, No. 1 & Vol. XVIII. No. 4).

Source: Vijay Singh, 'Flamingos hunted for meat in Navi Mumbai's mudflats', *The Economic Times*, 21/02/14.

### Protected area status proposed for part of the Thane Creek

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) is said to be working on a proposal for the notification of a seven-eight kilometres stretch of mangrove forests and adjoining mudflats along the western part of the Thane creek as a protected area. The stretch falls between Vashi and Airoli bridges and will exclude the main creek. The area is rich in mangroves and is also host to a number of bird species including the flamingo, painted stork, osprey, tern, heron, ibis, white-bellied sea eagle and plover.

Officials said that the declaration will not impact traditional fishing and related activities because the main creek area where the fishing takes place will not be included in the PA. It was also noted that notifying this stretch as a protected area was an environmental impact mitigation condition for the Navi Mumbai

International Airport and Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link projects.

The FD plans to start educational boat tours from the Gateway of India to this area once the notification has been made. The tour would include a stop at Elephanta Island, where the FD guesthouse will be converted into a nature interpretation centre that will have information regarding coastal biodiversity. The FD proposes to rope in local fishermen and boat operators for the tours and will also involve local fishermen in crab farming and creek cleaning activities within the protected area.

The area is already an Important Bird Area and the state wildlife board which met recently recommended that this stretch also be declared a Ramsar site.

Source: Anjali Lukose. 'Forest Dept proposes 'protected area' along Thane Creek', *The Indian Express*, 04/03/14.

## MANIPUR

### Nearly 33,000 birds counted at Loktak lake in January

A total of 32,835 birds of 60 different species including 18 migratory species were sighted during a bird count conducted around the Loktak lake on January 18, earlier this year. A report with the details was released by the wildlife wing of state forest department in the month of February. As per the report the bird count was conducted from 50 vantage points of Loktak and surrounding lakes. The count is slightly less than the number of 34,000 birds from the previous year.

Of the species sighted, the Whistling teal locally known as *Tingri* was seen most commonly, and the maximum number of birds were seen in the northern part of the lake's Ningthoukhong sector. The Common crane was reportedly sighted for the first time in Manipur while the Common Shelduck (local name *Thangong Arangba*), Glossy ibis (*Kakshu*), Greylag geese (*Kanga*) and Mandarin duck (*Sana Nganu*) were seen after a gap of many years.

Source: '32,000 Migratory birds visit Loktak lake',  
*The New Indian Express*, 16/02/14.  
Contact: DCF, Keibul Lamjao NP, Sanjenthong,  
Imphal - 795 001

Contact: **Monalisa Bhujbal**, Wild Orissa.  
Email: wildorissa@hotmail.com

## ODISHA

### Concern over growing impact of tourism in Mangalajodi

Wildlife organisations, conservationists and bird protection groups met recently and urged the administration of Khurda and Ganjam to restrict tourist movements in certain areas of Mangalajodi, particularly those that are important for birds. The organisations that were represented in the meeting called by Wild Orissa included Sri Sri Mahavir Pakshi Surakhya Samiti (SSMPSS), Kalpavriksh, Kolkata Trekkers, WWF-India, Godwit Eco Cottage, Bakul Foundation and Kalinga Birds.

A need was expressed for measures to adopt ecologically sustainable tourism practices, to issue a set of do's and don'ts for tourists before they go in for bird watching and for the plantation of fruit-bearing trees of local species for benefit of the birds.

Mangalajodi, which was once notorious for poaching of migratory birds, saw a complete turnaround after local hunters were counseled and persuaded to give up hunting. Wild Orissa, which played a key role in bringing this change, helped in the formation of the SSMPSS in the year 2000. Tourism activities were initiated here in 2002 as an alternative source of income for local businesses, individuals were trained as eco-guides and bird protection committees were formed.

The increase in tourist footfalls has now raised concerns regarding the impact of this on the birds and the habitat here.

Source: 'Eco-tourism: Cry to Safeguard Mangalajodi Grows Louder', *The New Indian Express*, 04/03/14.

## TAMIL NADU

### Three vulture species sighted in Nilgiris

Three species of vultures have been sighted in the Nilgiris north forest division and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR). This includes the Long-billed, White-backed and King vultures. The sightings were made during a habitat identification and population estimation exercise that was conducted recently in Segur, Singara, North eastern slopes of the Nilgiris, Ebbanadu, Sholur and Kodanadu in the Nilgiris north division and Koolithuraipatti, Geddesal, Kothadai, Kettavadi, Bellathur, Malliamman Durgam, Thimbam and Hasanur in the STR.

As many as 100 White-backed vultures were sighted in Ebbanadu while 15 Long-billed vultures were sighted along the North eastern slopes and Jagulikadavu in Segur range. Nests of the Long-billed and White-backed vulture were also recorded in the STR along the Moyar gorge. Additionally the three species were also seen feeding on a tiger kill in the STR.

Source: P. Oppili, 'Vultures sighted in the Nilgiris', *The Hindu*, 25/02/14.

**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

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Over 85% claims under FRA disposed of

In a recently issued press release, the Central Government has said that by the end of December 2013, 31,06,690 claims filed under the FRA had been disposed of. This is over 85% of the total of 36,54,420 claims filed.

Of the claims disposed of, 14,18,078 titles (13,95,647 individual titles and 22,431 community titles) have been distributed and 15,867 titles are ready for distribution. The highest number of 3,28,580 titles have been issued in Odisha and titles for largest forest area of 10,81,426.65 acres have been issued in Madhya Pradesh.

The release notes that some of the major concerns regarding implementation of the Act were related to non-recognition of unhindered absolute rights over the minor forest produce (MFP) to forest dwellers; imposition of several restrictions, like transit permit for transportation of MFPs, levy of fees, charges, royalties on sale of MFPs, exclusion of certain types of MFPs in contravention of the definition of MFP given in the Act; continuance of a monopoly of the state agency in the trade of MFP, especially in the case of high value MFPs such as tendu patta; non-recognition of some community rights, such as nistar rights; conversion of all forest villages, old habitation, unsurveyed villages and other villages in forest areas, whether recorded, notified or not, into revenue villages; and non-recognition of community forest resource rights relating to protection, regeneration or conservation, or management of any community forest resource.

It notes that a number of steps have been taken to ensure that the said challenges are dealt with effectively.

Source: 'Over 85% claims have been disposed of under Forest Rights Act', Press Release, Press Information bureau' Govt. Of India, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=103784>, 18/02/14

## KERALA

### Community forest rights awarded to nine tribal communities in Vazhachal forests

Community forests rights (CFRs) under the provisions of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) have been awarded to nine tribal communities in the Vazhachal forests of the Anaimalai part of the Western Ghats. Eight of these are for the Kadar community while the ninth was for a Malayar settlement. The rights have been granted over an area of 40000 hectares in Thrissur District and includes areas adjoining the Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary as well.

Three of these nine titles were distributed recently while the remaining six will only be distributed after the completion of the Lok Sabha elections. The initiative for the grant of these rights was taken up by the Western Ghats Hornbill Foundation (WGHF) along with the Kadar community of Malakkappara settlement and the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature – India, with support from the ATREE-Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). This process itself is the result of a 10 year long community based resource monitoring, especially hornbill nest tree monitoring programme, run in the Vazhachal Forest Division by the WGHF in association with the local communities.

Source: Dr KH Amitha Bachan. Email dated 12/03/14.

Contact: **Dr KH Amitha Bachan**, WGHF. Tel: 09497627870, Email: [amithab@poetic.com](mailto:amithab@poetic.com); Web: [www.hornbillfoundation.org](http://www.hornbillfoundation.org)

## GUJARAT

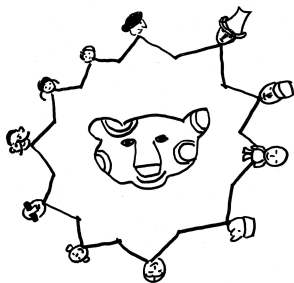
### Pastoralists claim community forest rights over entire Banni grassland

A *mahasabha* was organized recently by the Banni Pashu Uchchherak Maldhari Sangathan (BPUMS) for developing a consensus among Maldharis on the single claim of the entire Banni grassland (over 2400 sq km) as a community forest right (CFR) area under the provisions of the Forest Rights Act. 550 Maldhari representatives, forest rights committee members and Sarpanchs participated in this meeting and unanimously voted for the claim for the entire Banni grassland for their rights on habitation, grazing, water resources, non-timber forest produce, traditional and intellectual knowledge, developmental needs like school, road, and medical facilities as well as their rights of management and conservation of the Banni grassland. Following this, gram sabhas were conducted in all the 53 villages of the 19 panchayats of the Banni where the decision was then finalized.

It is yet to be seen, however, how the government will respond to the claims made.

Source: Vijaysinh Parmar. 'Kutch pastoralists claim grassland community rights under Forest Dwellers Act', *The Times of India*, 24/02/14

Contact: **Ramesh Bhatti**, Sahjeevan 175, Jalaram Society, Bhuj, Kutch, Gujarat. Tel: 02832-251814 / 09978220515. Email: rkb335@gmail.com. Web: www.sahjeevan.org



## WEST BENGAL

### Forest Corporation seeks Gram sabha permission to log forests adjoining Jaldapara WLS

The West Bengal Forest Corporation has recently written to the North Khairbari Gram Sabha seeking its permission for a Clear Felling Coupe in the forests here. These forests adjoin those of the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary and have been claimed by the local communities under provisions of the Forest Rights Act.

In the month of January, earlier this year, the local villagers had prevented the forest department from carrying out logging operations here, claiming that these were part of their community resources under the FRA (*PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 1).

Source: Soumitro Ghosh. Email dated 07/03/14.

**Letter from the Range Officer,**  
Moraghat (L) Range to the Secretary and President, North Khairbari Gram Sabha, 06/03/14.

Contact: **Soumitro Ghosh**, NESPON/All India Forum of Forest Movements(AIFFM) 5,Krishanu Dey Sarani Babupara,Siliguri-734004 Siliguri,West Bengal, India 91-353-2661915/9194347-61915, Email: soumitrag@gmail.com  
**DFO**, Jaldapara WLS, Cooch Behar, Division, P.O. & Dist. Cooch Behar, West Bengal. Tel: 03582-227185. Fax: 227185. Email: dfocob@dte.vsnl.net.in

**'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.**

## **A Decade Ago**

### **Protected Area Update 47 & 48, April 2004**

#### **ASSAM**

##### **356 hectares of Gibbon WLS handed over to army**

There has been widespread concern over the decision of the Forest Department to permanently hand over 356 hectares of land of the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary to the army. Individuals and organisations like the Hulongapar Nature's Society have urged the Chief Minister to intervene in the matter.

The land in question was given to the Army's 2nd Mount Brigade of the Eastern Command on lease in 1965. The army constructed a residential colony and other necessary infrastructure at a cost of Rs 3 crore. The lease expired recently and the FD agreed to the army's request to permanently hand over the land to them.

The Hulongapar Reserve Forest, with a total area of 2,098 hectares, was declared the Gibbon WLS in 1997. The area will now be about 1700 hectares.

Source: 'Forest Dept's lack of foresight ruined Gibbon Sanctuary', *The Sentinel*, 11/01/04.

#### **HIMACHAL PRADESH**

##### **Pong Dam oustees not rehabilitated till today**

The Himachal Pradesh Government recently admitted that a large number of families displaced by the Pong Dam more than three decades ago were still to be rehabilitated. Of the 20,772 families that were displaced by the dam 16,352 families were to be given land in the state of Rajasthan, while the rest were to be resettled in HP itself.

In a report submitted to the Supreme Court, the HP government has said that only 9,196 families of the total 16,352 to be settled in Rajasthan had been yet given the Eligibility Certificate (EC). Thousands of families thus

continue to remain without the land that had been promised to them.

The status reports had been sought by the Supreme Court after the Pong Bandh Visthapit Samiti (PBVS) and the Himachal Pong Dam Ousteas Welfare Committee (HPDOWC) had moved the apex court alleging that a committee set up on the court's order in 1996 by the Centre to resolve the problem had failed to do its duty.

The Pong Dam Reservoir was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in the year 1983.

Source: SS Negi. 'SC seeks status reports on Pong Dam oustees', *The Tribune*, 09/11/03.

SS Negi. 'All Pong Dam oustees not issued ECs, admits HP', *The Tribune*, 26/11/03.

#### **KARNATAKA**

##### **Fires affect large parts of Nagarhole**

Forest fires in February are reported to have destroyed large areas of two ranges in the Rajiv Gandhi (Nagarhole) National Park. The affected areas include Wadakana Mala, Ane Mala, Hannina Thota and Chikabyrana Kuppe in the DB Kuppe Range and the Sarathi beat in the Metikuppa Range.

Fire control work was severely hampered due to the absence of fire watchers. The Chief Wildlife Warden was quoted as saying that there was a severe shortage of financial resources. Money from the World Bank was no longer available and that which was available with the Forest Development Agencies could not be diverted for fire control.

Source: 'Forest Dept watches as fire burns hole in Nagarhole', *The New Indian Express*, 15/02/04.

## PERSPECTIVE

### **Protecting hornbill homes around the Pakke TR**

Protection efforts by the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department (FD) have ensured that the Pakke Tiger Reserve continues to be a haven for hornbills (the Great hornbill *Buceros bicornis*, Wreathed hornbill *Rhyticeros undulatus* Rufous-necked hornbill *Aceros nipalensis* and the Oriental Pied hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*) in a region where hunting for various body parts, along with habitat loss, seriously threaten these birds.

The Papum Reserve Forest (1000 km<sup>2</sup>) is one such large forest area adjoining Pakke, which has, over the years, seen loss of forest. Northern parts of Papum, however, still harbor dense forests and are important for hornbills that range over large forested landscapes for patchily distributed fruit resources and for breeding. This led us in 2011 to expand our program of hornbill nest monitoring and protection to Papum and for this we sought the participation of the Nyishi community around Pakke who had banned hornbill hunting.

A three-way agreement between the Ghora-Aabhe (a council of village headmen), the FD and the Nature Conservation Foundation led to the creation of a **Hornbill Nest Adoption Program**. Nine villages along the southern boundary of Pakke are currently participating with 12 nest protectors, who find, monitor and protect nests of four hornbill species. Some of them are village headmen and former hunters.

A unique aspect of this program is that financial support is coming from urban citizens in different parts of India. They act as foster

parents by adopting hornbill nests, while local people look after the nests to ensure they are not disturbed and that nest trees are not cut down. About 100 people have adopted nests, with most continuing their support every year. In 2013, 26 nests were found in the Papum RF. Of these 12 were active (five Great, six Oriental Pied, and one Wreathed) and 11 successful, resulting in a nesting success rate here of 91%.

The money generated is used to sustain the program and pay the salaries of nest protectors, as well as provide some funds for community development and welfare. Members of the Nyishi community have set up a community-owned tourism enterprise (Pakke Jungle Camp) in partnership with Help Tourism, in which local guides have been trained.

The learnings from the program suggest that while protected areas will remain the strongholds for hornbill conservation, we should not consider wildlife populations outside as doomed. Conservation success can be ensured if local communities are made an integral part of the conservation initiative.

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