

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XX, No. 6

December 2014 (No. 112)

LIST OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Two falcons and a bustard

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

Assam

High court constitutes committee to check identity of
Kaziranga encroachers

IUCN lists Kaziranga in 'significant concern'
category for the first time

IUCN lists 'significant concerns' for Manas NP
Funds for Gangetic Dolphin conservation initiative

Gujarat

FD suspects fluorosis in lions
Barda Dungar suitable for lion translocation: WII
study

Karnataka

Unchecked sand extraction near Nagarhole NP
Rail tracks to fence Bandipur, Nagarhole and
Bannerghatta NPs
Mundargi residents seek wildlife sanctuary status for
Kappatagudda
Workshops on 'Community Based Human Elephant
Conflict Management' in North Kanara

Kerala

Periyar trout facing extinction

Madhya Pradesh

High Court issues notices to the Centre and State
over notification of Ratapani TR
Three tigers to be translocated from Bandhavgarh
Tiger Reserve

Maharashtra

Initiative for protection of grasslands and wolves in
Pune forest division
PMO seeks report on Vidarbha tiger poaching cases
Three tigers, two leopards to be radio-collared at
Tadoba Andhari TR

Nagaland

3 Nagaland CCAs seek a common forum for exchange
of ideas

Odisha

10 CB to probe elephant poaching cases in Sambalpur

Uttarakhand

11 Forest helpline garners 250-odd complaints
Inquiry against senior forest official in anti-poaching
cases

Uttar Pradesh

11 Tigers spotted in Pilibhit suspected to be the family
that disappeared two years ago

West Bengal

12 Two elephants electrocuted near Indo-Nepal border
NGT seeks explanation on management of the
Sunderbans

NATIONAL NEWS

12 'App' to help people report wildlife crimes
Zoos, rescue centres to be brought under the Wildlife
Protection Act
73 districts in the country are danger zones for tigers:
Study
Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh account for half
the tiger deaths in the country this year

SOUTH & SOUTH EAST ASIA

Bangladesh

14 Sloth bear extinct in Bangladesh

Maldives

Auditor appointed for certification of Maldives
fisheries

Nepal

Human-tiger conflict on the rise in Chitwan NP
51 snow leopards in Nepal

Thailand

Tiger recorded in Salakpra WLS

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE 17

Assam

Hundreds of Amur falcons killed in Assam, Manipur

Gujarat

Great Indian Bustard electrocuted near the Kutch
Bustard Sanctuary

NBWL clears road inside Kachchh Desert WLS

Karnataka

Locals nab culprits trying to poison vultures in the
Ramadevarabetta Vulture Sanctuary

Nagaland

Two satellite-tagged Amur falcons return to
Nagaland

Pangti village awarded for Amur falcon conservation
initiative

Rajasthan

Workshop and seminar on Birds of Rajasthan

Tamil Nadu

No crackers during Diwali so that birds, bats are not
disturbed

PIL filed seeking revival of Chitrakudi Bird
Sanctuary

Uttar Pradesh

Draft notification issued for eco-sensitive zone
around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary

NGT stays construction inside Soor Sarovar Bird
Sanctuary

The FRA, Protected Areas and Wildlife Conservation

21

National News

Two national consultations on the FRA

Kerala

Rights under the FRA granted in Vaazhachal area

Uttarakhand

MoTA writes to NTCA on relocation of gujjars from
Corbett TR

A DECADE AGO

23

PERSPECTIVE

24

Dogs: friend or foe of biodiversity?

Protected Area Update

Vol. XX, No. 6, December 2014 (No. 112)

Editor: **Pankaj Sekhsaria**

Editorial Assistance: **Reshma Jathar, Anuradha Arjunwadkar**

Illustrations: **Madhuvanti Anantharajan and Peeyush Sekhsaria**

Produced by

The Documentation and Outreach Centre

KALPAVRIKSH

Apartment 5, Shri Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004, Maharashtra, India.

Tel/Fax: 020 – 25654239

Email: psekhsaria@gmail.com

Website: <http://kalpavriksh.org/protected-area-update>



Publication of the PA Update has been supported by

Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) <http://fes.org.in/>

Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust, C/o FES

World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - India

Bombay Natural History Society

Action Aid India

Donations from a number of individual supporters

EDITORIAL

Two falcons and a bustard

The Amur falcons have returned to Nagaland and by the time this issue of the *PA Update* is in the hands of its readers, they might all well be on the African continent. It is a timeless journey of epic proportions with the birds travelling nearly 20,000 kms, as they fly annually from their breeding grounds in Inner Mongolia to Africa via Nagaland (and other places) and then back again a few months later. We know this much better than we ever did, thanks to Naga and Pangti, two falcons, who've been carrying satellite transmitters on their backs for more than a year and providing us with regular and specific details of where they are on this planet.

The Amur falcon conservation initiative in Nagaland (*PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 6) is undoubtedly one of the most successful ones in recent times and has rightly been lauded all over the world. One of the reasons for its success here has been the convergence of interests and collaboration between all those who mattered – local communities, the administrative and political system, the media, researchers and national and international NGOs. While local action on the ground has ensured that the killing of the birds has all but stopped in Nagaland (it continues in parts of Assam and Manipur, however), international collaboration and the deployment of modern technology has allowed us never before insights into the migratory trajectory of the birds.

As Naga and Pangti fly on, the sense of achievement and celebration can only be tempered when we look at what else is happening in bird-world around us. And there is one news item from Gujarat this time that hits harder than any other. As the two falcons soar the mighty skies, one reads of a lifeless bundle of bones and feathers - a Great Indian bustard lying electrocuted and scorched on the great plains of Kutch. While the loss of even one individual of a critically endangered species is of serious concern, the matter here is doubly worrying because of the manner of its death.

This is one of the rarest birds on this planet, one that almost became the national bird of India – now one less because a high-tension electricity cables had to pass over its habitat. We don't know how many such individuals across species are being lost as habitats and nature's infrastructure are modified, transformed and ripped apart as we humans seek more electricity and energy, faster roads, more entertainment and deeper access.

The two soaring falcons are just as emblematic of our capacities as is the wasted bundle of an electrocuted bustard. There are choices that have to be made and in the current balance, one might argue, we aren't making all the right ones!

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ASSAM

High court constitutes committee to check identity of Kaziranga encroachers

The Gauhati High Court has constituted a high-power committee to verify the allegation that the Assam government is trying to settle illegal migrants in the Kaziranga National Park (KNP). A division bench of the high court, comprising Chief Justice K. Sreedhar Rao and Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, constituted the committee after a group of more than 20 advocates filed a miscellaneous application alleging that the state government, in the garb of relocating people from the proposed additional areas to the KNP, was actually trying to legalise a section of illegal migrants.

The petitioners alleged that illegal immigrants from Bangladesh too had taken refuge here and were helping poachers in killing rhinos. According to the government records, over 1,200 families have settled illegally on the parkland, and, maximum numbers of encroachers are settled in the sixth addition of the KNP. The court admitted the application during the hearing of a PIL, which was filed in 2012 against the state government's failure to

curb rhino poaching and other wildlife crimes in the KNP.

The government has opposed the contention of the group of advocates and has said to the court that there was no encroachment in the core areas of Kaziranga. The government told the court that those living in the proposed additional areas to the KNP were indigenous people and thus the question of settling illegal migrants did not arise at all.

Considering these contradictory opinions, the high court felt the necessity of constituting a high-power committee to verify the identities on the basis of Citizens' Act and Assam Accord which have set the cut-off date of March 25, 1971 to detect an illegal migrant in Assam. The committee is likely to have at least five to six members including officials from the Assam Police, forest officials representing both the Centre and state, revenue department and one from among the petitioners.

The court also inquired about the status of immediate and short-term plans of the KNP authorities to protect and preserve Kaziranga and asked the state government to submit the status report by December 18. Kaziranga authorities have already told the high court that expansion of the KNP's area needs serious consideration because the number of one-horned rhinos in the park had increased to 2,325 in 2013 from 2,048 in 2009.

Source: Daulat Rahman. 'HC forms panel on Kaziranga - Court seeks report on 'illegal migrants'', *The Telegraph*, 04/11/14.
'HC tells govt to check identity of Kaziranga park encroachers', *The Times of India*, 04/11/14.

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

IUCN lists Kaziranga in 'significant concern' category for the first time

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has listed the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) in its 'significant concern' category for the first time. The IUCN, in its World Heritage Outlook report on KNP released recently, noted the spurt in rhino poaching since

2012 (*PA Updates* Vol. XX, No. 4; Vol. XIX, No. 5 and Vol. VIII, No. 6) as a cause for concern.

On protection and management, the report says the site benefits from government support at both national and regional levels as well as involvement of national and international conservation organisations. However, there remain some issues of concern particularly in the matter of developing a more cooperative and economically beneficial relationship for the local communities. The report also noted that the management of the park needs a long-term strategy for dealing with tourism-related issues, research and monitoring for habitat and wildlife, human-wildlife conflicts and boundary issues.

Source: Roopak Goswami, 'Kaziranga on downslide: Report', *The Telegraph*, 06/10/14.

IUCN lists 'significant concerns' for Manas National Park



The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) World Heritage Outlook has said in its latest report that there are 'significant concerns' regarding the Manas National Park (NP). It notes that continued effort is required to avoid a return to insurgency and insecurity that prevailed in the early nineties, leading then to the site's inclusion in the Danger List. The report did acknowledge, however, that management actions had been slowly improved through sustained efforts backed by significant international expertise, including 44 decisions by the World Heritage Committee and six IUCN/UNESCO monitoring missions. Park officials too have said that there has been no

rhino poaching here this year, that collaboration with Bhutan has been going on and the second trans-boundary survey on tigers has reported an increase in big cat population in this area. Manas was on the Danger List for 19 years and was removed only in 2011 (*PA Update* Vol. XVII, No. 4).

The report has noted the proposed Mangdechhu hydroelectric plant in neighbouring Bhutan as a serious threat to the park. The project will be 12-times bigger than the existing Kurichu hydroelectric dam and concern has been expressed over the apparent lack of an environmental assessment for the project. The report also noted that the project is likely to affect the forests and water-bodies in the region, thus reducing the ecosystems' ability to support wildlife. It notes further that the impact of water released from the Kurichu hydroelectric project since 2004 is an indicator of the impact that this could have. The report also says that the newly formulated tourism strategy needs effective implementation and monitoring to ensure that the overall number of tourists is capped to prevent damage in key areas.

Source: Roopak Goswami, 'Report calls for peace in Manas - IUCN study says park still has 'serious concerns' about security', *The Telegraph*, 08/10/14.

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

Funds for Gangetic Dolphin conservation initiative



A conservation project mooted by the NGO, Aaranyak, for restoring important habitats of the endangered Gangetic Dolphin in river Brahmaputra has won an international online

public voting competition organised by the Switzerland based European Outdoor Conservation Association. Aaranyak will get a grant of 30,000 Euros for its project.

The project aims at habitat restoration activities in 30 important dolphin habitats covering a total length of 100 km of the Brahmaputra in association with local communities. The restoration activities will include prevention of domestic garbage from being dumped into the river, cleaning of the river, prevention of oil and grease dump in the river by motor boats and ferries, prevention of riparian vegetation destruction and regular cleanliness monitoring by local communities.

As per the survey conducted by the Aaranyak's Gangetic Dolphin Research and Conservation Initiative in 2005, the number of Gangetic Dolphin in Brahmaputra was found to be 250. This increased to 635 in the last survey carried out in 2012. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XV, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol. XIII, No. 2; Vol. XII, No. 31 Vol. XI, No. 5 and No. 46).

Source: Sushanta Talukdar, 'Dolphin project wins votes, gets Swiss funds', *The Hindu*, 11/10/14.

GUJARAT

FD suspects fluorosis in lions

The Gujarat Forest Department (FD) has entrusted the Anand Veterinary Institute with a study on fluorosis among lions in the Lathi Liliya area. This follows a report 'Ecology of Lions in Greater Gir Landscape', by doctors, which revealed that in Amreli, a region with contaminated ground water, both humans and lions seem to be victims of the disease which is characterized by tooth decay and deterioration of bones and joints due to high content of fluoride in ground water.

The doctors had undertaken the study over an area of 250 sq km in Lathi Liliya that has a population of 40 lions. Of the eight lions studied, tooth decay was found in three. One lion had lost all but two of the 26 teeth, the second had lost four and third three. These lions were not reported to have met with any

accidents. Minor deformities in bones were also recorded.

The FD is now examining post-mortem reports of the deaths from the area, monitoring the decaying of bones and scrutinizing the number of teeth of dead lions. Forest officials said that the lions are being supplied with water through tankers and no underground water is being used. If the study does conclude that the lions are suffering from fluorosis, the FD has said that a management plan will be drawn up to deal with the situation.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik, 'Forest department orders study of fluorosis among lions', *The Times of India*, 20/10/14.

Barda Dungar suitable for lion translocation: WII study



A recent report of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has suggested that Barda Dungar is a suitable site for the translocation of lions from Gir. Barda had been proposed as an alternative site for reintroduction of Asiatic Lions by the Gujarat Forest Department when Kuno Palpur was being proposed by wildlife biologists in the 1990s. It was only after the Supreme Court's order directing the translocation of lions to Kuno Palpur in 2013 (*PA Updates* Vol. XIX, Nos. 6, 5, 4 & 3), however, that the State Forest Department decided to put the project on fast track. The WII was asked by the Gujarat government in October 2013 to prepare a report in the matter.

The WII report recommends that Barda should have a separate, free ranging lion population so as to mitigate the threat of a catastrophe on an isolated single population on which debates and discussions are going on for the last two decades. It says further that the lion population in Barda needs to be managed artificially as a meta-population, where lion movement between populations is human

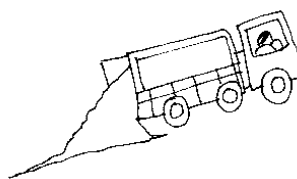
controlled with appropriate checks to avoid epidemic induced catastrophic mortality.

The report also recommends that the Barda Wildlife Sanctuary should be made free from human habitations to create habitats for the lions and for biodiversity conservation and that wild prey populations should be restored through a continued restocking programme. The report notes that almost 98% Maldharis here were ready for resettlement, with better livelihood options, better amenities and human safety being the primary reasons for their willingness to leave the sanctuary.

Source: 'Barda suitable site for lion translocation: WII study', *The Times of India*, 07/10/14.
Contact: CF (Wildlife) Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/630051. Fax: 631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in

KARNATAKA

Unchecked sand extraction near Nagarhole National Park



Reports suggest that sand extraction is continuing unchecked on the fringes of Nagarhole forests in Hunsur taluk. The extraction was halted for a while when the issue was reported in October. However, it is reported that not less than 60 to 80 truckloads of sand are being extracted daily and this is going on in the Koanahosahalli, Koluvige, Chikkahejjuru, Udagnuru, Megathuru, Sindinahalli, Abburu, and Billenahosahalli villages in the area.

Source: R. Krishna Kumar, 'Sand extraction near Nagarhole', *The Hindu*, 05/11/14.
Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests**, Nagarhole NP, Wildlife Division, Hunsur, Dist. Mysore, Karnataka. Tel: 08222-252041(O), 252070(R)

Rail tracks to fence Bandipur, Nagarhole and Bannerghatta NPs

The Karnataka Forest Department (FD) is finalizing a project for fencing the Bandipur, Nagarhole and Bannerghatta National Parks by using rail tracks procured from the Indian Railways. It is hoped this will prevent elephants from straying into human habitation and reduce human-elephant conflict. Unlike the conventional elephant proof trenches, which require maintenance, the rail track fence is claimed to be a one-time investment devoid of any maintenance. Though the idea was mooted last year and the state government had earmarked nearly Rs. 212 crore, no funds have been released so far for the same. The FD plans to approach the Indian Railways with the detailed project report, place a one-time order and take up work simultaneously.

The first phase of the project entails laying a 65-km fence using these rails along the boundaries of the three parks at an estimated cost of Rs. 50 crore. Since the tracks will be procured from the Railways, no tender is required, it being a transaction between government departments.

There is reported to be a precedence for such an exercise: the FD had used 180 tonnes of rail tracks sometime back to fence 2-km of a boundary along Bandipur and Nagarhole.

Source: 'Forest fencing: project report being finalised', *The Hindu*, 04/11/14.

Mundargi residents seek wildlife sanctuary status for Kappatagudda

Residents of Mundargi town and the villages in the tablelands of Kappatagudda hill ranges of Karnataka's Gadag district have extended their support to the 'Save Kappatagudda' campaign that is urging the state government to declare Kappatagudda a wildlife sanctuary. In a meeting recently convened by the Kappatagudda Parisara Samrakshana Vedike at Mundaragi in Gadag district, people urged the government not to allow any development activity, which would harm the ecology of the region.

The campaign is also being supported by Annadaneshwara Swami of the Mundaragi Math and the MLA of the region, Ramakrishna Dodmani. The MLA said he would support the movement if there were no plans to evacuate the

people once Kappatagudda was declared a wildlife sanctuary. Former chairperson of the Western Ghats Task Force, Anant Hegde Asisar, said that the proposal submitted to the government for declaring Kappatagudda as a wildlife sanctuary when he was the task force chairman, had no provisions to evacuate the families in the hill areas.

Source: N. Dinesh Nayak, 'Save Kappatagudda' campaign gains pace', *The Hindu*, 07/10/14.

Workshops on 'Community Based Human Elephant Conflict Management' in North Kanara

Two workshops, one each on September 22 and September 23 on 'Community Based Human Elephant Conflict Management' were held in North Kanara. The first workshop was held at the Forest Training Institute, Gungargatti, while the second one was held at the Kulgi Nature Camp, Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary.

The workshops were organized by the Wildlife Research & Conservation Society (WRCS) and were attended by about 190 participants representing the Forest Department, media, affected farmer communities, researchers and NGOs. A 23-minute film and an illustrated flipbook, both tools being used in the field, were also released on the occasion. The English version of the film can be seen at <http://youtu.be/nBWPTevjyeo>, while the Kannada version can be accessed at <http://youtu.be/xpjy86e4JAY>

Contact: **Prachi Mehta**, WRCS, Tel: 9011052193.
Email: prachimehta1@gmail.com or mail@wrscindia.org
Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993 Email: pccfwl@vsnl.com

KERALA

Periyar trout facing extinction

Brahmanakendai *Lepidopygopsis typus*, a freshwater fish species endemic to the Mullayar

tributaries in the Western Ghats, is under threat of extinction due to habitat disturbance and introduction of hybrid varieties such as tilapia and common carp in the Thekkady lake. The fish is one of the 63 species endemic to the Western Ghats' southern region and is also known as the Periyar trout as it is endemic to the waters here. It is already on the red category list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and could be in more danger as nearly 80 per cent of its total population is endemic to the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) where the African Catfish is a serious threat to its existence.

The species is found in flowing waters and lays eggs in deep waters. It was once part of the main diet of the Mannan tribe. Studies by the Kerala Forest Research Institute in 1999 and individual studies later pointed to high level of survival threat on the species in its natural habitat.

Source: Giji R. Raman. 'Periyar trout facing extinction', *The Hindu*, 17/09/14.

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

MADHYA PRADESH

High Court issues notices to the Centre and State over notification of Ratapani TR

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has sought an explanation from the concerned central and state authorities over why the proposed Ratapani Tiger Reserve (RTR) had not been notified till date despite 'in principle approval' granted by the Centre. The court has issued notices to the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the State Forest Department, State Chief Wildlife Warden, State Wildlife Board (SWB) and National Tiger Conservation Authority, asking them to reply within three weeks.

A wildlife activist had filed a petition pointing out the inordinate delay of more than six years in the notification of the RTR covering Ratapani and Singhori Wildlife Sanctuaries. Counsel for the petitioner said that while on the

one hand the notification of the tiger reserve was being delayed inordinately, on the other hand, the State government had, through the SWB, granted in-principle approval to various projects within the proposed boundaries of the reserve. The petitioner alleged that the notification of the tiger reserve was being delayed so that the status of the landholdings of many influential people which may come under buffer area of the tiger reserve or near it would not be affected.

Source: 'MP High Court notice to forest ministry, others over Ratapani reserve', *Hindustan Times*, 15/10/14.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Ratapani WLS, P.O. Obeidullaganj, Dist. Raisen, Madhya Pradesh, Tel: 07480-24062

Three tigers to be translocated from Bandhavgarh TR

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has proposed to translocate three tigers from the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (TR) to other parts of the state. The move is a response to the increased instances of tigers attacking human beings as well as tigers entering into territorial fights. Ten people have been killed by tigers in Bandhavgarh in the last seven years with the most recent being a youth near Khitauli in May 2014. Almost half a dozen incidents of infighting among tigers have been also reported here in the last one year.

The tigers will be moved to the Sanjay TR and the Satpura National Park — reserves that are large in area but with relatively lower tiger densities. Bandhavgarh has about 60 tigers in its 446 sq km core area while the Satpura National Park has about 43 tigers in its 1,400 sq km core area and the Sanjay TR five tigers in its 1,471 sq km area.

It has been reported, however, that while the tiger density in Sanjay TR is low, the prey base is low as well and protection measures are also a cause for concern.

Source: Rahul Noronha. 'MP forest department to shift three tigers from Bandhavgarh', *Hindustan Times*, 29/09/14.

Contact: **Director**, Bandavgarh TR, Umaria –
484661, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07653-
22214(O), Fax: 07653-22214/22648

MAHARASHTRA

Initiative for protection of grasslands and wolves in Pune forest division

The Pune forest division has taken up an initiative to protect the grassland habitat in its jurisdiction, with special focus on the Indian Wolf. The project will be conducted under the guidance of Assistant Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Dr. Vinay Sinha and Chief Conservator of Forests Jeet Singh.

The first of the training programmes for forest staff under the project was conducted at Baramati on November 1, 2014. The training broadly covered topics such as the grassland habitat and the mammals dwelling in it with specific focus on the wolf. Experiences were shared on matters relating to mammal identification, animal behavior, how the grassland ecosystem works, the role of each carnivore in the grassland, threats to these animals, specific encounters, as well as techniques to be used in field.

Source: 'Wolf conservation program by Pune forest division', Facebook post by Mihir Godbole, Pune.

PMO seeks report on Vidarbha tiger poaching cases

Almost 16 months after large-scale poaching of tigers in Vidarbha (*PA Updates* Vol. XX, Nos. 3, 2) was exposed, the Prime Minister's office (PMO) has sought a report in the matter from the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD). The report has been sought following complaints from local NGOs demanding action against the Nagpur wildlife wing and territorial forest officials, who, they alleged, were not taking steps to nab those who are guilty. They have also alleged a lack of seriousness in pursuing some of the poaching cases whose preliminary offence reports have been filed but no investigations are being done by the officials concerned.

After the letter from the PMO, a closed-door meeting of the steering committee headed by Assistant PCCF for wildlife and investigating officials from Nagpur and Amravati was held. An official however, said that it was a pre-decided meeting, and nothing to do with the PMO's letter.

At least 25 tigers were poached in 2012-13 from Vidarbha by groups involving members of the Baheliya community. The FD has arrested at least 26 poachers and 15 offences of tiger poaching have been registered. 30 others are said to be still absconding.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'PMO seeks report on tiger poaching in Vidarbha', *The Times of India*, 18/10/14.

Three tigers, two leopards to be radio-collared at Tadoba Andhari TR



The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has initiated an exercise to radio collar three tigers in the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) as part of the research project titled 'Long-term monitoring of tigers, co-predators and prey species in TATR and adjoining landscapes'. The State government had, last year, cleared the Rs. 1.64 crore project that is to be implemented by the WII on a 70:30 cost sharing basis between the State government and the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

The project is aimed at studying the population density in addition to the abundance and demographic structure of tigers. It will be conducted in two phases and also includes capacity building of local staff for managing man-animal conflict.

A couple of leopards will also be radio-collared as a part of the project.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar & Mazhar Ali. 'WII experts radio-collar tiger in Tadoba', *The Times of India*, 19/10/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Project, Mul Road, In front of Sanchiti Chamber, Chandrapur – 442401,

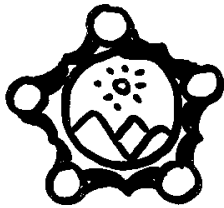
Maharashtra. Tel: 07172-51414(O),
56382(R)

Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra
State, Dr. Ambedkar Bhawan, 4 & 5th
Floor, M.E.C.L. Building Seminary
Hills & Campus, Nagpur – 440001,
Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-2526758 /
2530126. Fax –2510671. Email:
cfwl@nagpur.dot.net.in

NAGALAND

Nagaland CCAs seek a common forum for exchange of ideas

A consultation meeting of Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) of Nagaland was held on September 23 in Kohima. Representatives of 11 CCAs from seven districts discussed, among other things, the need of having a common platform for all CCAs of the state.



The participants expressed the need for a common forum for exchange

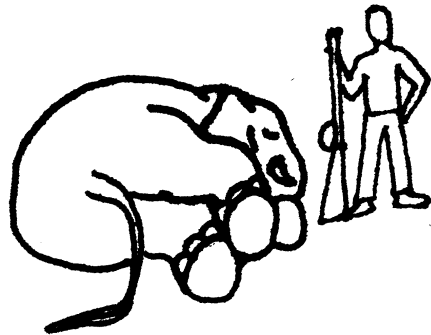
of ideas and knowledge, mobilization of support for awareness programme, biodiversity assessment and skill building. A consultative committee of the participating CCAs that was formed at the consultation decided to discuss the need of a state level forum with their respective village councils and also encourage other existing CCAs to be part of it.

They decided to meet again in the third week of November to formalize the forum with the consent of their village councils. The meeting was jointly organized by Nagaland Empowerment of People through Economic Development (NEPED) and Foundation for Ecological Security (FES).

Source: www.nagalandpost.com, 27/09/14.

ODISHA

CB to probe elephant poaching cases in Sambalpur



The Odisha State government has handed over investigation of two more recent cases of elephant poaching to the Crime Branch (CB). Both the cases were reported from the Padiabahal forest range in Sambalpur district. Though the Sambalpur (South) forest division had nabbed six of the accused, it was unable to trace the buyer(s).

This year, the CB has been handed over at least five cases of elephant poaching which were reported from Sambalpur district alone. After Similipal, Kuldiha, Satkosia and Athagarh, the poachers are believed to have now shifted focus to this western district of the state where contiguity to Jharkhand makes the job of patrolling and protection of the elephants even more difficult. The CB has been assigned at least 12 cases in last three years, including three in January, early this year.

With the rising incidents of poaching, the CB had proposed a Wildlife Crime Cell with officers from the Wildlife Wing. The proposed unit will be placed with the CB where an Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) ranked officer could be posted, said an official. The proposal is under active consideration of the State government.

A major constraint in wildlife crime investigation in the state has been weak prosecution. While police can book the culprits and record their statements, it is not admissible in the court of law whereas a statement before an ACF ranked officer is. A multi-disciplinary approach, it has been argued, will help in gathering of intelligence, investigation as well

as monitoring of prosecution leading to convictions.

Source: 'CB to Track Elephant Poachers', *The New Indian Express*, 30/09/14.

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

UTTARAKHAND

Forest helpline garners 250-odd complaints

The Van Mitra initiative, India's first forest helpline, launched in July to help people report crime in the jungles of Kumaon, has garnered more than 250 complaints related to poaching, illegal felling of trees and encroachment, and allowed prompt corrective action by the forest department (FD) on the ground. Any caller can call Van Mitra on 9208008000 and have the complaint recorded. The complaint is then forwarded via voice mail to the phones of officers concerned as well as senior forest officials.

Encouraged by the response, the FD is now planning to launch an interactive website to allow common people to upload and share photo and video evidence with the FD.

Source: Vineet Upadhyay. 'Website to follow India first forest helpline's success', *The Times of India*, 02/11/14.

Inquiry against senior forest official in anti-poaching cases

The Uttarakhand government has set up an inquiry against Mr SS Sharma, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, on the allegations that he did not take action on nearly 100 letters sent to him on poaching activities in the state at various places between 2011 and 2013. The charges have been leveled by former head of forest department's anti-poaching cell, Mr SK Dutt.

Dutt, in his letter written to senior officials in December 2013, had also alleged that owing to Sharma's neglect, poachers were

on a rampage in both Garhwal and Kumaon regions, killing many species of endangered wildlife. Sharma was also accused of harassing Dutt and not providing him the required manpower and resources to counter poaching. Sharma has also been accused of wrongdoings by Gauri Maulekhi, member-secretary People for Animals and Ajay Bhatt, leader of opposition in the state assembly. Maulekhi had complained to the National Tiger Conservation Authority and Ministry of Environment and Forests citing Sharma's lackluster attitude in containing poaching.

The directions to conduct the inquiry were issued recently by the Chief Minister of the state, Mr Harish Rawat and senior IAS officer, Mr. S Raju has been entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the probe.

Mr Sharma, on his part, has welcomed the development and said the probe will give him an opportunity to clear his position.

Source: Seema Sharma. 'Probe against senior forest officer for 'allowing poaching'', *The Times of India*, 05/11/14.

Contact: **CWLW**, 5, Chandrabani, Mohobewala, Dehradun, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-2644691

UTTAR PRADESH

Tigers spotted in Pilibhit suspected to be the family that disappeared two years ago

A tigress and her two cubs, which had mysteriously gone off the radar of forest officials in 2012, are believed to have been spotted again in the Deuni dam area of Pilibhit. Though it is yet to be established that the present group is the same family lost in 2012, forest and wildlife officials say it is rare but not unprecedented to have cubs stick to their mothers even after two years.

The tigress went off the radar in November 2012 after she ventured into human settlements in the Mahauf forest area of Pilibhit. Her presence was again felt recently following a spate of six incidents of tiger attacks on humans in the area in the past eight months. Officials have said that they will try now to send the family back into the wild as their roaming

around human habitation puts both them and people at risk.

Source: Keshav Agrawal, 'Missing tigress, cubs reappear after 2 years', *The Times of India*, 29/09/14.

WEST BENGAL

Two elephants electrocuted near Indo-Nepal border



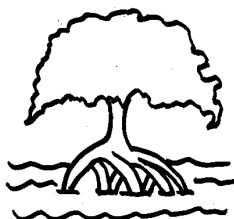
Two adult elephants, a tusker and a female, were found electrocuted in North Bengal in the month of October. The bodies were found by a patrolling team of foresters in a paddy field at Rakamjot Bustee near Naxalbari's Kolabari forest, some five km from the Indo-Nepal border. A herd of elephants was also seen roaming around the Panighatta beat area.

Locals said the herd had damaged crop fields and that some villagers may have, in retaliation, tapped power and laid the open wire in the field that led to the electrocution of the elephants. The Forest Department has lodged an FIR against two villagers, but both are absconding.

Tapping of electricity is an old practice in the villages in the region. Over the past few years, the practice has also gained popularity among villagers in the Bamandanga area of Nepal's Kakarvitta, a place which is often raided by elephants that cross over the Mechi river on the Indo-Nepal border and enter that village. Several elephants have died in Bamandanga over the past couple of years. In Bengal too, as many as 18 elephants have died of electrocution in the Dooars and Terai regions over the past decade.

Source: Pinak Priya Bhattacharya. 'Two jumbos electrocuted in North Bengal', *The Times of India*, 19/10/14.

NGT seeks explanation on the management of the Sunderbans



The National Green Tribunal's (NGT) Eastern Zone Bench has taken *suo motu* cognizance of research papers and recent news reports on the degradation of the Sunderbans and directed the Central and the State governments to explain why it shouldn't order all development work to stop within the buffer zone here. The bench of Justice Dr P Jyothimani and Prof P C Mishra observed that the loss of mangroves and their degradation on account of their exploitation as fodder, fuel and timber, conversion of areas for aquaculture, intensive agriculture practices, and water pollution were a serious matter.

The NGT has named the chief secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the chief secretary of West Bengal, the environment secretary of West Bengal, the forest secretary of West Bengal, the West Bengal Pollution Control Board and the Sunderbans Area Development Authority as the respondents in this matter.

Source: Jayanta Gupta. 'NGT takes cognizance of TOI reports on Sunderbans', *The Times of India*, 01/10/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, PO Canning, Dist. South 24 Parganas 743329, West Bengal

CWLW, Government of West Bengal, Vikas Bhawan, North Block, Salt Lake, Calcutta 700 091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3346900/3583208. Fax: 3345946. Email: wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

'App' to help people report wildlife crimes

An app that allows users to report wildlife crimes across India has been developed by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB). It allows an

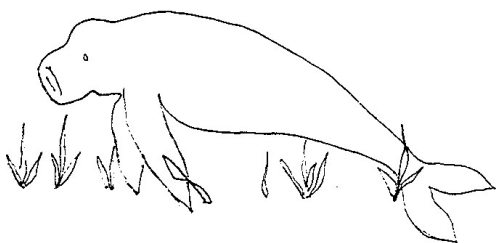
individual to report a wildlife crime through a lead that will be automatically delivered to a designated email id of the WCCB. The user can, crucially, choose to remain anonymous.

According to the officials of WCCB and WTI, the application provides a secure platform for real time exchange of wildlife crime related information between WCCB and relevant stakeholders. It will also be a handy reference tool on the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act for field level officers.

The app is compatible with devices running on Android Jelly Bean (ver 4.3) or higher and the minimum space requirement is 10 MB and 512 MB of free RAM with a screen size of 4.5" or higher. Users can download updated versions from www.wccb.gov.in and www.wti.org.in

Source: New app helps people across India report wildlife crimes, www.wildlifeextra.com, ??date??

Zoos, rescue centres to be brought under the WLPA



The government is looking to amend the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) to bring under its purview conservation breeding centers (CBCs) like zoos and rescue centers. An announcement that this proposal has been placed before the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) was made by officials of the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) at the 69th World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) conference that was held in the first week of November.

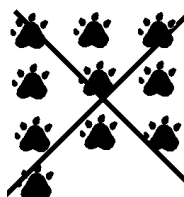
Conservation breeding programmes are already being run in some Indian zoos. The CZA, for instance is breeding Pygmy hogs in captivity in Assam in association with other scientists. The Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park in Darjeeling too has been

breeding Red pandas in captivity. Other ongoing breeding programs include those for vultures in Pinjore, the Cheer pheasant in Himachal Pradesh and the Mouse deer in Andhra Pradesh. The MoEFCC also has species recovery programmes for other species such as the Snow leopard, dugong and the Great Indian bustard.

The CZA has said that CBCs will be set up for all these species as well.

Source: Jayashree Nandi. 'Breeding centres may fall under wildlife Act', *The Times of India*, 04/11/14.

73 districts in the country are danger zones for tigers: Study



A study conducted by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) and the Snow Leopard Trust has identified 73 districts in central and southern India as tiger poaching hot spots. Most of these 73 hotspots have an interesting connection — they are on the Indian Railways network.

The study – 'Tiger poaching and trafficking in India: Estimating rates of occurrence and detection over four decades' - attempts to ascertain the probability of occurrence of tiger crime and detection between 1972 and 2012 in 605 districts of India. Of the 73 districts identified, at least 17 show high probability of tiger crime occurrence despite being far from known tiger habitats. This points to the inability of local enforcement agencies to effectively curb tiger crime where it seems to be taking place through an organized network.

The illegal trafficking of tiger parts has two components - that of poaching tigers and that of selling, buying and smuggling out of the country. Between 82 and 88 districts have been identified as traditional and new trade hubs based on the number and kind of confiscations over the years and reliable intelligence inputs. New wildlife trade centres have emerged in the southern Indian cities of Coimbatore, Chikmagalur, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Idukki and Mysore. Poaching incidents fell in northern India between 2005 and 2012 and increased in the central and southern states. A large number

of districts along India's border with Nepal are at high risk of tiger crime, and the region is considered as the main international hub for trafficking of tiger parts into China.

The report tested the hypotheses that tiger crime is influenced by the presence of tiger trade hubs, proximity to a number of tiger habitats, and that tiger poachers prefer to use rail routes over highways. It hypothesized that these tiger trade hubs underwent a change around 1999-2000 when tiger trade became more organized. Some hubs were abandoned and new districts became trade hubs, though many old ones continued to be active too.

The study is based on WPSI's data on poaching cases and confiscations from 1972 onwards and recorded information for confirmed incidents of illegal killing or trafficking of wildlife. This information was collated, categorized and stored in a database on wildlife crime. The total database consists of more than 25,000 entries on poaching, confiscations, raids, retaliatory killings and accidents involving nearly 400 wildlife species.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Study lists 73 districts as tiger poaching hotspots', *The Times of India*, 26/09/14;
Chetan Chauhan. 'Poacher menace shadow on tiger conservation', *Hindustan Times*, 19/10/14.

Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh account for half the tiger deaths in the country this year

Half the tiger deaths reported in the country this year have occurred in the states of Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh. 47 tigers in the wild have died so far and of these the numbers in Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh are 11 and 13 respectively. The numbers from Tamil Nadu are particularly striking considering the fact that there were only two deaths here in 2013 of the total of 63 recorded nationally that year. In 2012, Tamil Nadu had reported just one tiger death. Tamil Nadu also accounts for 50% of tiger deaths in the southern zone of National Tiger Conservation Authority, comprising Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka.

Forest authorities have also noted that the tiger population in the state is going up. In the Sathyamangalam forest division, for instance, the tiger population has increased from 28 to 60 in the last seven years. There are an estimated 163 tigers in the four tiger reserves of Tamil Nadu — the Anaimalai Tiger Reserve (TR), Mudumalai TR, Kalakkad-Mundanthurai TR and Sathyamangalam, while the total tiger population in the four southern states is about 400.

Source: [V Mayilvaganan](#), 'Tamil Nadu accounts for 1 in 4 tiger deaths this year', *The Times of India*, 10/10/14.

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

SOUTH & SOUTH EAST ASIA

BANGLADESH

Sloth bear extinct in Bangladesh

According to a presentation given at the first meeting of the project to update Bangladesh's Red List of threatened species, the Sloth bear (*Melursus ursinus*) is now extinct in Bangladesh. Sloth bears were last seen in central Bangladesh in the early 1970s according to an International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) sloth bear conservation plan published in 1999.

Extensive hunting during the British colonial rule followed by deforestation in the mid-20th century in the subcontinent have together affected all populations of the animal in the region. The habitat is fragmented and all remaining sloth bear populations are isolated from one another. Poaching remains a threat for the bears, as does the capture of cubs.

The IUCN estimates that sloth bear populations have declined between 30 and 49 percent over the past 30 years and expects that decline to continue. Due to the species' fragmented distribution, solid information on their populations and general health remains

difficult to gather. The Red List project aims to assess 1,700 species, and is being funded by the World Bank and conducted by the IUCN and the Bangladesh Forest Department.

Source: John R. Platt. 'Sloth Bears Confirmed Extinct in Bangladesh', www.blogs.scientificamerican.com, 04/10/14.

MALDIVES

Auditor appointed for certification of Maldives fisheries

Sustainable fisheries consultants MacAlister Elliott & Partners have trained and appointed a Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) auditor in the Maldives. The individual, Seema Ali, will specialise in MSC assessment programmes and awarding sustainable fisheries certification to local companies in a move aimed at supporting employment in the Maldives. She will also take on new and existing MSC assessments in other parts of the Indian Ocean such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The Maldives' skipjack tuna fishery was the first Indian Ocean tuna fishery to receive the MSC certification in 2012 for its low-impact technique where each wild fish is caught individually to reduce by-catch. The volume of fish catch in the country has been steadily declining for the past seven years. While approximately 1,85,000 tonnes of fish were caught in 2006, the catch dropped to about 70,000 tonnes in 2011. During the past five years, the value of the nation's fisheries industry declined from US\$31.7 million to US\$20.8 million with a corresponding fall of 3.3% of the economy to 1.1% in 2012. Recent statistics released by the Maldives Monetary Authority showed that fish purchases declined by 44% to 2,124.7 metric tonnes between July 2013 and July 2014.

Fishing has traditionally been the primary and largest industry in Maldives but has now fallen behind tourism and construction. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs has recently started awarding halal certification to local fisheries companies in order to open up Islamic markets for export. The move followed notification from

the European Union that extension of the duty-free status of imported fish from the Maldives would be rejected due to the country's failure to comply with international conventions concerning freedom of religion.

Source: Daniel Bosley. 'Local sustainable fisheries auditor appointed in Maldives', www.minivannews.com, 25/09/14.

NEPAL

Human-tiger conflict on the rise in Chitwan National Park

Incidents of human-tiger conflict have been on the rise in the buffer zone of the Chitwan National Park (CNP). On October 11, Gopi Tamang, a forest caretaker in the Majuwa community forest of Gunjanagar in West Chitwan, was killed in a tiger attack. Three days later, a local fisherman was apparently killed in another tiger attack and officials suspect that the same tiger was involved in the attack.

On July 14, earlier this year, a tiger that had killed a local villager in Tribeni of Nawalparasi district had been captured and caged. It managed to escape, however, and killed a CNP employee before getting back into the forests. Earlier, on June 25, a woman had been killed by a tiger in Ayodhyapuri of Chitwan district.

In the last five years, after the government launched a campaign in 2009 to double Nepal's tiger population by 2022, as many as 21 people have lost their lives in various tiger attacks. As per the 2013 report, altogether 198 adult tigers were spotted in Nepal, 120 of which were in Chitwan.

Source: Ramesh Kumar Poudel, 'Five killed in tiger attacks in three months', www.Myrepublica.com, 13/10/14.

51 snow leopards in Nepal



A recent study conducted by the Center for Molecular Dynamics, Nepal, has revealed that there are 51 Snow leopards in two national parks and three other conservation areas

in Nepal. The study was carried out with financial support from the Hario Ban program of WWF - Nepal and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation.

Out of 279 faeces samples collected from five different conservation areas for the survey, lab tests showed that 198 samples were of snow leopards. Nine of these samples were collected from Langtang National Park (NP), nine from Sagarmatha NP, 85 from the Kanchanjunga Conservation Area (CA), 62 from Annapurna CA and 34 from Manaslu CA.

One pair of snow leopards each was found in the Langtang NP and the Sagarmatha NP, seven in Manaslu CA, 17 in Annapurna CA and 23 in Kanchanjunga CA.

Source: Nirajan Poudel, 51 snow leopards in Nepal wild: Study, www.Myrepublica.com, 23/09/14.

THAILAND

Tiger recorded in Salakpra WLS

Conservationists from the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) have for the first time captured images of a tiger in Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary of Thailand. Salakpra is part of the Western

Forest Conservation Complex (WEFCOM), a priority tiger area located close to the Myanmar border. Although tigers have been known to live and breed in the Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary in the northern part of WEFCOM, no tiger has been recorded as far south as Salakpra until now. The two sanctuaries are connected through the Srisawat Forest Corridor.

For years, rangers, villagers and hill tribes people in the area have maintained that they have seen tigers and signs of tigers south of Huai Kha Khaeng. This prompted ZSL to undertake the first comprehensive survey here and camera traps were set up in 2013 along known wildlife pathways. Two images of the same tiger were obtained in different parts of the sanctuary at an interval of three years confirming the presence of the tiger here.

The next stage of ZSL work will be continued camera trapping to build a picture of prey availability in Salakpra and determine whether other nearby areas are also being used by tigers.

Source: 'Tigers recorded in Thailand's Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary for the first time', www.wildlifeextra.com, 26/09/14.

The State of Wildlife in North-East India – 1996-2011

A compilation of news from the *Protected Area Update*

Edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria

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

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

Annexures

- 295 pp, 100 line drawings

- Price: Rs. 250+ postage

To procure a copy write to the editor at psekhsaria@gmail.com



Important Bird Areas Update

ASSAM

Hundreds of Amur falcons killed in Assam, Manipur

Large numbers of Amur falcons have been killed in the Umranso area of Assam and in the Tamenglong district of Manipur, according to recent reports.

In one incident in the end of October, over 100 Amur falcons were killed at New Tumbung village near Umranso area of Dima Hasao district. Forest officials and volunteers of a local NGO, Blue Hills Society, nabbed over 10 children with snares and catapults. They also recovered a few birds from the children. The elders, who were guiding the children in the hunting immediately fled the spot, however.

Though full details are not available, thousands of the falcons have also reportedly been killed in Tamenglong district in Manipur.

Source: 'Rampant killing of Amur falcons raises concern in Assam', *The Times of India*, 24/10/14.

Salome Phelamei. 'Migratory Amur Falcons massacred in Manipur: Report', www.zeenews.india.com, 03/11/14.

GUJARAT

Great Indian Bustard electrocuted near the Kutch Bustard Sanctuary

On 12th September 2014, an adult female Great Indian Bustard collided with high-tension electric powerlines near the Kutch Bustard Sanctuary (KBS) in the Abdasa taluka of Kutch district, Gujarat. The bird was found dead just below the powerlines and had electrocution

marks. The incident happened a few hundred meters from the boundary of KBS. There are three powerlines passing by the Lala-Jakhau main road, two lines on one side and one on the other. The bird was found lying dead below these two lines. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX. No. 4; Vol. XVIII, Nos. 6 & 1)

Source: Devesh Gadhavi,
www.conservationindia.org

NBWL clears road inside Kachchh Desert WLS

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has cleared the diversion of 79.474 hectare of forest land for construction of a road through the Kachchh Desert Wildlife Sanctuary. The project had been unanimously rejected by the previous board (*PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 5).



The earlier board, based on a site inspection by three expert members, had recommended that the road should not be constructed because there were strong chances that it would result in the abandonment of the breeding site by the flamingoes, and India would lose her only breeding site of these birds. The expert panel had also recommended an alternate alignment which it said was more feasible, cost-effective and easier to build.

It is feared that the road will change the hydrology of the region and prevent the creation of conditions that are suited for breeding by the flamingoes. It will also affect the food availability for the other species of birds found here besides posing a serious threat to the sacred grove of Shravan Kavadia, a unique mangrove system, found nowhere else in the world.

Source: Akash Vashishtha. 'Road in Kutch sanctuary gets wildlife board nod', *Mail Today*, 21/09/14.

Contact: DCF, Kutch Desert Sanctuary, Kutch (East) Division, Old Remand Home, Building No.39/1, Bhuj - 370 001, Gujarat. Tel: 02832-250227; Fax: 02832-250236

KARNATAKA

Locals nab culprits trying to poison vultures in the Ramadevarabetta Vulture Sanctuary



Five of a group of miscreants were caught inside the Ramadevarabetta Vulture sanctuary by members of the local Iruliga tribe while they were trying, allegedly, to poison vultures using chicken meat. An insecticide called Phorate was applied to the chicken meat that was found dispersed near the vultures' nests. The motive behind this act is not clear, though those arrested said they were trying to lure the vultures to click photographs using their cell phones.

Local people had been noticing suspicious deaths of dogs and monkeys around the village with chicken and fish meat lying around. On a couple of earlier occasions, a few local kids had seen these individuals in a rickshaw and also resting in the nearby hills. When they arrived on this particular occasion, members of the tribe along with the head of the community, nabbed them and found them carrying fresh chicken meat and insecticide. They informed forest department officials who arrived immediately and took control of the situation.

According to the locals, similar incidents had occurred in the past but had gone un-reported.

Source: Girish Gowda C. 'Miscreants Caught Trying to Poison Vultures', www.conservationindia.org, 03/11/14.

NAGALAND

Two satellite-tagged Amur falcons return to Nagaland

Naga and Pangti, two Amur falcons have flown back to Doyang in Nagaland almost a year after they were satellite-tagged (*PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 6) here by ornithologists in October 2013. Naga's satellite track showed it flew over Manipur, Mizoram, entered Bangladesh, flew over the Bay of Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Goa before flying over the Arabian Sea and then reached the coast of Somalia. Naga then flew over Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and then entered Botswana. On his return journey, the bird flew over Somalia, the Arabian Sea, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Meghalaya, Manipur, Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam, China, inner Mongolia and finally reached Nagaland again on October 29, earlier this year. Pangti, a female, followed almost the same route as Naga and reached Doyang on the same date. They have returned to Nagaland after almost a year covering a distance of 22,000 km.

While Naga and Pangti were able to make it back to Doyang this year, Wokha, the other female bird, couldn't. Wokha's satellite track record showed she was still in South Africa. It is suspected she may have died or the tag may have fallen off.

The people of the Doyang area stopped hunting the falcons following an intense initiative a year ago that involved the forest department, the local village councils, representatives of local, national and international NGOs, researchers, forest officials, the pastor of Pangti Baptist Church, the local police, the state government and local communities.

Source: 'Satellite-tagged Amur falcons return to Nagaland after a year', *The Times of India*, 04/11/14.

Pullock Dutta. 'Cake, prayers to greet falcons', *The Telegraph*, 05/11/14.

Pangti village awarded for Amur falcon conservation initiative

Pangti village in Nagaland's Wokha district was recently awarded the 'Royal Bank of Scotland Earth Heroes Award 2014' under Save the Species category for its efforts to conserve Amur falcons by curbing rampant hunting since last year. The village council had implemented an innovative initiative to stop the killings and conserve the bird. The council members worked as a team with the forest department, local police and civilians.

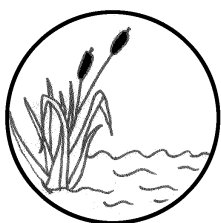
Union Minister of State for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Mr Prakash Javadekar, handed over the award to Pangti village council chairman Ronchamo Shitiri and Nagaland Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and head of the forest force M Lokeswara Rao.

Nagaland had won accolades from the United Nations Environment Programme's Convention on the Migratory Species and Animals for the same initiative in January, earlier this year.

Source: 'Scotland honour for falcon-haven Nagaland', *The Times of India*, 06/11/14.

RAJASTHAN

Workshop and seminar on Birds of Rajasthan



The Society for Research in Ecology and Environment (SREE), Bharatpur, is organizing a workshop and seminar on the Birds of Rajasthan. The workshop will be held on

December 27 & 28, 2014, and the seminar 'Bird Biodiversity of Rajasthan' in the last week of February, 2015. The events are being organized in collaboration with the Rajasthan Forest Department at the Keoladeo National Park.

Contact: **Ashok Verma**, SREE, Rekha Nanaga Gali, Sarafa Bazar, Bharatpur 321001, Rajasthan. Tel: 9460684502. Email: vermaasok@rediffmail.com

TAMIL NADU

No crackers during Diwali so that birds, bats are not disturbed

A number of villages in different parts of Tamil Nadu do not burst crackers during Diwali to ensure that birds and bats that roost and nest there are not disturbed. These include among others, Kollukudipatti in Sivagangai district; Sankarapandiapuram, Virudhnagar district; the Koonthankulam Wildlife Sanctuary, the Vellode Bird Sanctuary and Kittampalayam in Coimbatore district.

A large number of bird species including open-billed stork, ibis, cormorant and egret visit the wetlands in and around Kollukudipatti between October and February. They also breed here and not bursting crackers during Diwali is believed to be a long standing tradition here. Similar protection is provided to the nesting Painted storks in Sankarapandiapuram village in Virudhnagar.

In the case of Kittampalayam, it is an ancient tamarind tree in the village that is protected because it is the roost of hundreds of bats. The bats are part of a bigger roost that inhabited a tree in a nearby village that was cut down in the belief that the bats were inauspicious. The initiative to protect the bats here was led by Joseph Reginald Louis, a PhD student at the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History and the community has now agreed to protect the bats here.

Source: Akila Kannadasan. 'Where birds of a feather matter', *The Hindu*, 17/10/14.

PIL filed seeking revival of Chitrankudi Bird Sanctuary

The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court has issued a notice to officials of the environment and forest departments of the

central and state governments on a public interest litigation (PIL) insisting improvement of the Chitrakudi Bird Sanctuary in Ramanathapuram district. The PIL was filed by P Chellathai of Ramanathapuram's Mudhukulathur taluk in which it was noted that the sanctuary was in a very bad condition, was completely dry and no birds were to be found here.

The court has asked the respondents to take steps to improve the situation by sanctioning necessary funds and by making alternative arrangements for supplying water to the sanctuary.

Source: 'PIL wants government to revive Chitrakudi sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 19/10/14.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Chitrakudi Bird Sanctuary, Wildlife Warden, Collectorate Compound, Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu

UTTAR PRADESH

Draft notification issued for eco-sensitive zone around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary

A draft notification has been issued for the declaration of an eco-sensitive zone around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary. Under the proposal, an area up to 100 meters from the eastern, western and southern boundary of the sanctuary and an area up to 1.27 km from the northern boundary of the sanctuary will be treated as the Eco-sensitive Zone (ESZ).

The notification proposes prohibition of construction activities and commercial establishment of hotels and resorts and all new and existing mining (minor and major minerals), stone quarrying and crushing units except for the domestic needs of 'bona fide' local residents. It has also proposed a ban on polluting industries and establishment of new major hydroelectric projects in the ESZ while proposing regulated movement of vehicular traffic at night, undertaking activities related to tourism like over-flying the sanctuary area by hot-air balloons and discharge of treated

effluents in the water bodies. Comments from the public have been invited on the draft notification before a final decision is taken in the matter.

The notification comes in response to an order of the National Green Tribunal directing the Centre to demarcate the eco-sensitive zone around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary after considering fresh proposals of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana governments. A bench headed by Justice P Jyothimani had issued the direction while dismissing a petition seeking prevention of alleged illegal and unauthorised construction being carried out by builders within the sanctuary's 10-km radius claiming it to be an ESZ. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XX, Nos. 4 & 1).

Source: 'Certain areas around Okhla Sanctuary proposed to be declared eco-sensitive', *The Times of India*, 14/10/14.

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

NGT stays construction inside Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary



The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has stayed all construction in the Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary. A Bench of NGT headed by its chairperson, Justice Swatanter Kumar, issued a direction recently that no further construction

shall be carried out in the sanctuary till November 17. The tribunal was hearing a petition filed by D.K. Joshi, a member of the Monitoring Committee constituted by the Supreme Court in 1999 to supervise and manage drinking water projects, sewerage, drainage, solid waste management and the Yamuna Action Plan within Agra.

Mr Joshi has alleged that large-scale illegal construction was being carried out by the Anand Engineering College in close vicinity of Keetham Lake. The college has, according to him, constructed a structure of over 20,000 sq. metres just 200 meters from the lake, within the wildlife sanctuary, and is also polluting the water in the lake. He also noted that the college was expanding its structure without complying with the conditions of the no-objection certificate granted by the state authorities. He further alleged that the college had not obtained any of the statutory clearances from the National Board for Wildlife and yet construction work had been on in full swing for many years, adding further that the Uttar Pradesh Environment Impact Assessment Authority granted environmental clearance to the college for expansion despite its past illegal conduct.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XX, No. 1 and Vol. XIX, No. 5)

Source: Akanksha Jain. 'NGT stays construction inside bird sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 04/10/14.

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

Two national consultations on the FRA

Two national consultations on the issues related to the Forest Rights Act (FRA) are being organized in Delhi in the month of December:

- 1) 'National Consultation on Community Forest Rights' by the Adivasi Janajati Adhikar Manch (AJAM) - a national level forum of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. The National Consultation will be held on 10th December at the Constitution Club of India, New Delhi, followed by a public meeting at Jantar Mantar on December 11.

Contact: **Ms Harabati Gond**, President, Adivasi Janajati Adhikar Mancha, At/Po-Mendhasal, Dist, Khurda- 752054, Odisha. Tel: 09668033308; 09938255328. Email: ajam.india2006@gmail.com

- 2) 'National Convention on Community Forest Rights' by the Community Forest Rights – Learning and Advocacy Initiative (CFR-LA) on December 16 at the Indian Social Institute, Lodhi Road, New Delhi. The convention will be followed by a CFR-LA meeting on 17th December at the same venue.

Contact: Meenal Tatpati. Email: meenaltatpati@gmail.com; Tushar Dash. Email: tushardash01@gmail.com

KERALA

Rights under the FRA granted in Vaazhachal area

The Thrissur District-Level Committee of FRA recently vested all 52 tribal settlements in Vaazhachal area with title rights, including community forest rights, under provision of the

Forest Rights Act (FRA). The matter was presented and discussed during the workshop on 'Forest Rights Act and Community Forest Rights as well as post-FRA governance in Kerala' held in Thiruvananthapuram in the first week of November.

The workshop that was held at the Centre for Environment and Development (CED) was organised jointly by the CED and the Western Ghats Hornbill Foundation. At the workshop, officials from forest and scheduled tribe department, academics and NGO activists discussed about the implementation of forest rights across the state.

Source: 'Workshop on FRA conducted', *The New Indian Express*, 07/11/14.

Contact: **Dr. K.H. Amitha Bachan**, Western Ghats Hornbill Foundation, Email: amithab@poetic.com Web: www.hornbillfoundation.org

UTTARAKHAND

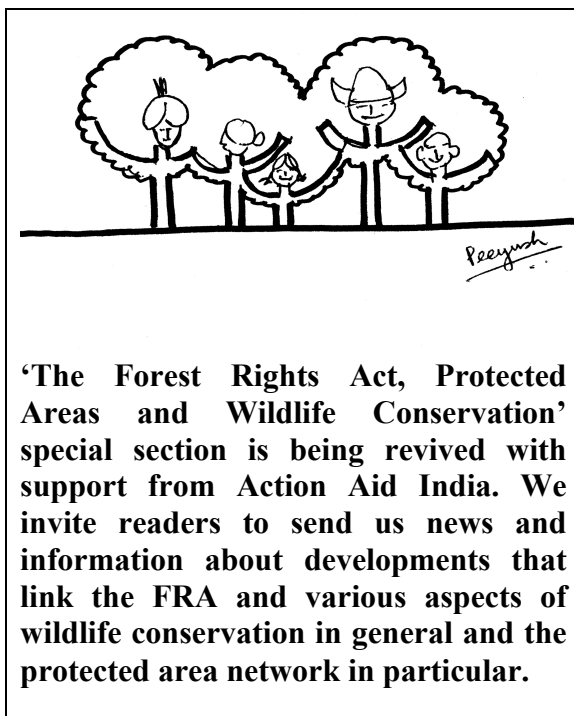
MoTA writes to NTCA on relocation of Gujjars from Corbett TR

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has recently written a letter to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in the matter of the relocation of the Gujjar community from the Corbett Tiger Reserve. The letter was written in response to agenda items 16 & 18 – 'Supporting Gujjar relocation from Corbett' and 'Removing the encroachment from Sunderkhal (near

Corbett) - of the 10th meeting of the NTCA held in New Delhi in August 2014 .

The MoTA has noted in its letter that no person should be displaced unless funds for rehabilitation are available and that the displacement and the rehabilitation will also require FRA clearance from the concerned gram sabhas as is mandated in cases of relocation from tiger reserves.

Source: Letter to the NTCA from MoTA, No. 23011/22/2014-FRA, dated 16/09/14.



Seeking your urgent support

The *Protected Area Update* urgently needs your financial support for the current year. We've raised about 60% of the resources we need. We're still looking for the rest. Write to the editor at psekharia@gmail.com for details of how you can help us sail through.

A Decade Ago

Protected Area Update 52, December 2004

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Car rally through Ladakh's wetland areas prevented

'Raid de Himalayas 2004', a car rally proposed to pass through Tsokar, Staklung and other important wetlands in Ladakh in October was forced to change its route due to efforts of NGOs, the Indian Army and the government.

Those involved in the effort included World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-India's Leh Field Office, tour operators, the Forest and Tourism Department, the Leh District Administration, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council and the Indian Army.

The first major opposition to this rally was expressed during the Army Officers Ecology workshop, jointly organised by the WWF-India, the Field Research Laboratory and the Department of Wildlife Protection (J&K) in September. A motion opposing the route of the rally around Tsokar, Staklung and Chushul was passed and this was also circulated to all concerned, including the organisers.

There was, however, no positive response from the organisers. Following this State Cabinet Minister, Nawang Rigzin Johra; the regional wildlife warden of Ladakh, Jigmett Takpa; the district administration of Leh and the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council sent out letters to the organisers informing their decision on preventing the rally from passing through the wetlands.

Subsequently a team comprising WWF-India, the Department of Wildlife Protection and the tour operators of Ladakh, along with the local media, decided to be present at the entry point at Tsokar to make sure that the rally did not enter the area and instead took the Leh-Manali Road.

As the rally reached the entry point on October 10, it faced a massive demonstration. The participants assured the demonstrators that

they would change the route, keep to the tarred road and also that the wetland areas would never be used for rallies in the future.

The General Secretary of the Himalayan Motor Sports Association, Atul Honda, later said that it was sheer ignorance on their part that made them pick the rally route through the wetlands.

Source: 'Rallying to save the Himalayas', www.thehindu.com/2004/10/19/stories/2004101901912000.htm

KARNATAKA

SC upholds order to close Kudremukh mining by 2005

The Supreme Court has reiterated that mining operations in Kudremukh would be permitted only till the end of 2005. The court was responding to an Interlocutory Application filed in the matter earlier this year by the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd. (KIOCL).

The company had requested for a review of the court's earlier order in the wake of the amendments to the Mineral Conservation and Development (Amendment) Rules under a notification dated April 10, 2003 and in particular to Rule 23-C relating to submission of the final mine closure plan.

The apex court also upheld its earlier ruling that its order and the recommendations of the CEC be worked out by the MoEF, the state government and the KIOCL under the supervision of the CEC.

(Also see *PA Updates* 34, 30 - 25, & 23-20).

Source: 'End Kudremukh mining by '05: SC', *The New Indian Express*, 24/08/04.

PERSPECTIVE

Dogs: friend or foe of biodiversity?

Of all the different kinds of threats to biodiversity and to wildlife, introduced species have become one of the most prominent in recent years. When these introductions consist of domesticated animals, the conservation challenge posed is even greater. The domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*) is the world's most common carnivore. Despite their strong human association, a significant proportion of domestic dogs engage in free-ranging behaviour, bringing them into multiple interactions with both wildlife and humans.

The problem of free-ranging dogs has been increasing across the globe and a few recent scientific publications have documented this across a range of ecological and human dimensions. Although India has 59 million dogs (~ 6% of the global dog population), most of which are free-ranging, very few attempts have been made to understand their impacts on native wildlife. Much of the information that exists is in the form of anecdotal information and is spread across the populace involved in wildlife research, animal welfare, wildlife and environment management and a large group of people who have a keen interest in nature and wildlife. Thus putting this information together would be of great value.

In order to assess the impacts of free-roaming dogs on native wildlife in India, an online survey has been initiated as part of an ongoing doctoral research project at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) in affiliation with Manipal University. The aim of this survey is to collate information from people who have observed interactions of free-roaming dogs with wildlife: with respect to dogs as predators and competitors in urban, semi-urban, rural and natural habitats. The survey seeks to understand:

1. The extent of the problem of free roaming dogs in the Indian perspective.

2. The perception of change in terms of dog impacts on wildlife.

The survey, it is hoped, will help inform future research and policies for dog population control and management, particularly in and around wilderness areas. Readers are invited to join the survey and can contact the undersigned for the same.

- **Chandrima Home** is a PhD scholar at ATREE.

Email: chandrima.home@atree.org

-**Shiva Subramanya** is the Web and Database Coordinator at ATREE.

Email: shiv@atree.org



For private circulation/ Printed matter

From

Kalpavriksh

Apt. 5, Sri Dutta Krupa
908 Deccan Gymkhana
Pune 411004

To