

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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## EDITORIAL

### Where tiger is king!

The latest tiger numbers are just out and the data suggests that tigers have done particularly well in the last few years. The all India number has gone up - from an estimated 1706 in 2010 to 2226 in the recently released figures of the 2014 census. It is a 30% increase in just four years, and one that has generated considerable excitement and hope in the wildlife community. In a climate of concern and gloom, both with the situation at the ground level and with the direction that environmental policy is taking, news like this is particularly welcome and a host of initial explanations have also been offered to understand these numbers – that protection has been better, that corridors have been made secure and also that the earlier census numbers were, perhaps, not a true reflection of the status on the ground. There have also been some reactions suggesting that the methodology for the census could have been better.

While this analysis will undoubtedly continue for a while, it is instructive also to notice the interest this has generated in the mainstream media. Virtually every single news outlet – print, electronic, online – featured the news prominently. The matter also made it to the front pages of a number of national newspapers including the business dailies, and some like *The Hindu* even carried it as the lead news item of the day. In a world with so much happening it is remarkable that the census figures have generated so much interest.

No wildlife conservation matter has managed to create this kind of buzz in recent times and this raises some interesting questions. How has this issue caught the national imagination in this manner? Is it the charisma of the tiger alone? Why has it not been possible to create such interests and stakes for other mega fauna, even when their numbers are much smaller and the threats to them much larger? Is it a pointer to the fact that conservation, particularly of the tiger, is now an important part of the larger national agenda? What have

researchers, conservation NGOs and the government done over the years that has allowed tiger conservation to come centre stage in such a manner? Can one hope that increased national interest in and commitment to tiger conservation will have a ripple effect on other species and other issues?

While the answers may not be easy to come by, some effort at understanding these backstage dynamics might be both interesting and useful. Needless to say there is no space to let the guard down. The issues of the larger landscapes and their connectivity; of protected areas that are rapidly becoming islands; of pressures of development and growth; and the challenges for human communities that live in and around will need constant engagement and innovative solutions. The tiger might be king for the moment, but there can be no room for any complacency. The future continues to hang by only a slim thread and if anything, we only need to be more vigilant.



## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ARUNACHAL PRADESH

#### Genetic studies report eight tigers in Pakke Tiger Reserve

The first genetic study of tigers in the Pakke Tiger Reserve (TR) has recorded the presence of eight big cats - three female and five male - here. The results are based on a two-month field survey carried out in the reserve in early 2014. Of 175 carnivore scats collected, 45 were identified to be of tiger origin. Of these only 20 were, however, taken for analysis, as the rest showed ambiguous results possibly because of cross-contamination. The study was carried out

by the NGO, Aaranyak in collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

The last camera-trapping exercise carried out as part of the phase-IV monitoring of tiger and prey populations under Project Tiger in collaboration with the NTCA, the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India, from December 2012 to January 2013, had recorded six tigers in Pakke.



Source: Roopak Goswami, 'Genetic study reveals eight tigers in Pakke', *The Telegraph*, 29/12/14.

Contact: **Firoz Ahmed**, Aaranyak, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Beltola, Guwahati – 781028, Assam. Tel: 0361-636768 / 266087. Fax: 266087. Email: [assamensis@gmail.com](mailto:assamensis@gmail.com)

**Divisional Forest Officer**, Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary Division, P.O. Seijusa, Dist. West Kameng - 790 103, Arunachal Pradesh.

## ASSAM

### Interpretation centre to be set up at Kaziranga NP

A Rs. two crore interpretation centre having three wings – the Mark Shand Asian Elephant Wing, Kaziranga World Heritage Wing and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)–Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) Animal Rescue Wing – is to soon come up at the Kaziranga National Park (KNP).

The Asian Elephant Wing will have an exhibit on Mark Shand, the Founder Director of the organization Elephant Family, who passed away recently. It will have basic facts about elephants, elephant ecology, human–elephant interactions, habitat and corridor securement, WTI projects on elephant conservation in Assam, and, a 'treatment kraal' for providing medical treatment to captive elephants. The Assamese treatise on elephants will also be displayed and interpreted at the centre. There are nearly 1,500 captive elephants in Assam and Kaziranga alone has 45 elephants used for ferrying tourists and for patrolling. Training mahouts on humane methods of handling and

training elephants will also be a major activity at the centre. The section will be manned by an education officer and an assistant.

The Kaziranga World Heritage Wing will have exhibits on the history of the park and on efforts of the Assam Forest Department to conserve wildlife in the Brahmaputra Valley. The third section – the IFAW–WTI Animal Rescue Wing, will showcase the rescue and rehabilitation activities of the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) that was set up here in 2002. The centre has been involved in rescue and rehabilitation of displaced animals in Assam and has handled over 3,500 cases of animals in distress in this period.

Source: 'Kaziranga gets more 'wings', to come closer to visitors', *The Sentinel*, 28/12/14 'Jumbo centre in Kaziranga', *The Telegraph*, 28/12/14.

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

### Eastern swamp deer translocated from Kaziranga NP to Manas NP



19 Eastern swamp deer – three male and 16 female – were recently shifted from the Kaziranga National Park (NP) to Manas NP. They were brought to Manas by road and released in a specially prepared 'boma' secured by a two-line power fence installed over a bamboo barrier, to deter leopards from entering the enclosure. Short grass was earlier transplanted in the boma to ensure steady fodder supply to the deer. The deer will be kept in the special enclosure for the first few months and would be later released in the park in batches. Some would continue to be kept here for breeding purposes.

While the translocation was conducted jointly by the Assam Forest Department and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) in collaboration with the Oil and Natural Gas Commission, experts from College of Veterinary Science (AAU) monitored the entire translocation process. Markus Hofmyr, a renowned

conservation and animal welfare biologist from South Africa, was also specially flown in to help with the capturing of the deer.

As per the last count held in May 2014, Kaziranga NP had 854 Eastern swamp deer, including 176 adult males, 504 adult females and 174 calves.

Source: Samudra Gupta Kashyap. '19 eastern swamp deer shifted from Kaziranga to Manas', *The Indian Express*, 29/12/14.

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

### **Awareness campaign against encroachment, poaching in Manas NP**

Hundreds of students, activists and local residents recently formed a human chain at Betpara under the Bhuyanpara range of Manas National Park to protest against large scale encroachment and poaching here. Groups like the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) and local residents participated in the campaign that was organised by International Fund for Animal Welfare and the Wildlife Trust of India in association with the forest department.

A workshop was also organised on the theme 'Paintings Inspired by Nature' at the Bansbari range of the park. Nearly 300 children from local schools and the All Artist Visual Association (AAVA) participated in the workshop.

Source: 'Rally against poaching', *The Telegraph*, 30/11/14.

## **DELHI**

### **Drones to monitor encroachments in Delhi forests**

The Delhi Forest Department (FD) has formulated a plan for using drones to monitor encroachments and the breach of boundaries of protected forest areas in Delhi. The plan would soon be submitted to the Delhi government and the FD will also hold discussions with the

Wildlife Institute of India and Madhya Pradesh government as they are also implementing a similar plan (*PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 4).

The FD has digitised and uploaded the forest area maps in its possession and also provided them to the revenue department for authentication. It has said that in due course of time no objection certificates for the operation of the drones will be also taken from the Ministry of Defence and Director General, Civil Aviation.

Source: 'Drones to guard Delhi forests, monitor encroachments', *The Times of India*, 18/12/14.

## **KARNATAKA**

### **Forest watcher injured in encounter with poachers in Cauvery WLS**

Encounters between local poachers and the forest staff have increased in parts of the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary (CWLS). In an incident that occurred recently, 22-year-old forest watcher, Siddaraj Naik, was injured when forest staff intercepted a poaching gang comprising 6-7 people in the Sangam range of the sanctuary. A cache of country-made weapons, ammunition, mobile phones with Karnataka SIM cards, and caps with head torches were recovered from the area as the gang fled the scene.

The sanctuary that straddles the three districts of Ramanagaram, Chamarajnagar and Mandya, has witnessed almost 50 to 60 cases of poaching in the last two-and-a-half years. According to officials most of the poachers are from the nearby Kanakapura taluka. The forest department has increased protective measures to deal with the situation. There are 30 anti-poaching camps, night patrols and foot and vehicle patrolling is also carried out regularly. The poachers are being regularly challenged and are also being arrested by the forest staff. A number of cases are also going on in local courts. The FD has also been making efforts to wean the locals away from poaching and has been organising awareness camps for the purpose.

Source: Meera Bhardwaj, 'Gangs of Meat Poachers Threaten Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary', *The New Indian Express*, 30/11/14.

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

### High Court says 'no' to increase night traffic inside Bandipur



The Karnataka High Court has dismissed a petition filed by the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) seeking permission to allow more

buses inside the Bandipur forests at night.

The court had, in 2009, issued an order restricting the night traffic on two roads inside Bandipur (*PA Updates* Vol. XVII, No. 6; Vol. XVI, Nos. 3 & 2; Vol. XV, Nos. 5 & 4 and Vol. XIV, No. 6). Aggrieved with the order and the fact that there was an increased demand for the night running of buses through the forest, the KSRTC had asked the court to allow for an increase in the number of buses. After hearing the objections filed by the Chamarajanagar Deputy Commissioner, the court rejected the KSRTC's appeal and dismissed the petition.

Source: 'Bandipur: High Court Dismisses KSRTC's Plea', *The New Indian Express*, 09/12/14.

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

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

## MADHYA PRADESH

### Ken-Betwa river link project violates public hearing norms; EIA flawed

Public hearings for the Ken-Betwa River Linking project were held in Silon village in Chhatarpur district on December 23, 2014, and

in Hinouta village in Panna district on December 27, 2014. Both hearings were confined to pleas for fair compensation, with barely any reference to the environmental impact of the ambitious Rs. 9,393 crore project. Activists who attended the hearings said that the few attempts made to address environmental issues were not paid heed to by the authorities.

It has been pointed out that the environment impact assessment (EIA) report of the project was not uploaded on the website of the State Pollution Control Board until December 27, the day of the second hearing. Even the executive summary was displayed less than 15 days in advance, and was not easily accessible on the website. No notices regarding the public hearing, as mandated by the EIA notification of 2006, were issued to the concerned panchayats.

Environment activists have also pointed out that the EIA of the project has either ignored or addressed in a flawed manner the vital issues relating to water availability in the Ken basin. The terms of reference (TOR) of the project require that prevailing norms regarding environmental flows of rivers be followed. But the EIA does not mention environmental flows. The EIA has also not addressed the impact of the Daudhan dam, from where water is proposed to be diverted, on the downstream flows in the river.

Districts downstream of the dam which may be affected are parts of Panna and Chhatarpur, along with Banda, Hamirpur and Mahoba in Uttar Pradesh. Even the Ranefall (Ken) Gharial Sanctuary and the falls, both in Chhatarpur district, have been ignored. The EIA, additionally, also contains several mistakes in listing the wildlife in the Panna Tiger Reserve (TR), part of which will be submerged by the project. The impact of fragmentation of habitat within the TR has been downplayed: forest officials say that land submergence inside the reserve has been estimated by the EIA to be at seven per cent, while it is actually likely to be in the range of 28-30%.

Source: Aparna Pallavi. 'Public hearings for Ken-Betwa river link project a sham, complain activists', *Down to Earth*, 30/12/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Panna National Park,  
Panna – 488001, Madhya Pradesh. Tel:  
07732-252135. Fax: 07732-252120

### **Sand mining mafia attacks foresters near Son Gharial Crocodile Sanctuary**

In two incidents, just a week apart, in December, forest officials were attacked by the sand-mining mafia operating close to Son Gharial Crocodile Sanctuary. The 1<sup>st</sup> incident took place at Katra village, when Deputy ranger VP Tripathi who had gone to probe a complaint on illegal sand mining in the area, was attacked by three people. The second incident was reported from Sidhi Bhitri village, where a team led by Assistant conservator of forest (protection), D P Gupta, was attacked, allegedly, by a group supported by Rinku Shukla who is known to be a notorious criminal in the area.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had, on December 8, summoned wildlife authorities of Madhya Pradesh and the central government after taking note of a petition seeking a ban on illegal sand mining around Son Gharial sanctuary in Sidhi. It also directed the state government to take measures to stop illegal mining in the area. The forest department has also been asked to put on record the impact of such measures in the past six months.

Source: 'Mining mafia attack deputy ranger in Rewa', *The Times of India*, 02/01/15.

Contact: **I/c Son Gharial Crocodile Sanctuary**,  
C/o Director, Sanjay Tiger Reserve,  
Sidhi, Madhya Pradesh

### **Wireless network technology for monitoring of Panna TR**



Scientists from the Ohio State University, United States of America and the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Allahabad (IIIT-A) are collaborating to develop a

wireless technology for monitoring of the Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR).

The project involves the development of a wireless network of low-powered radars for

the forest boundary. When the system notices a human entering the tiger reserve, or an animal leaving the forest, it will sound an alarm. This will help in keeping a watch, detecting and tracking the movements. Each radar by itself has a radius of 15 meters and if the system is adopted, there could be a requirement of 750-1000 radars. The project is now entering its operational phase at Panna, and after monitoring its operation here, it might be replicated elsewhere based on its success.

At present, the number of tigers in Panna is around 21 and tracking is done manually.

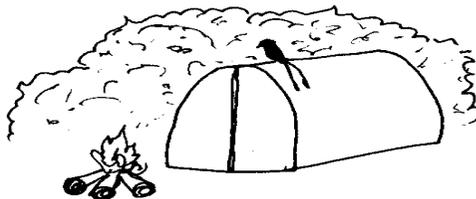
In similar developments elsewhere, another scientist at IIIT-A has experimented with fibre-optic sensors to detect and identify trespassers, while researchers at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru are developing pyro-electric infrared sensors for the same purpose.

Source: Vanita Srivastava. 'Sensor technology may soon help protect tigers', *Hindustan Times*, 09/12/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Panna National Park,  
Panna – 488001, Madhya Pradesh. Tel:  
07732-252135. Fax: 07732-252120

## **MAHARASHTRA**

### **New initiatives for forest protection, conservation in Maharashtra**



A number of initiatives for forest protection and wildlife conservation have been proposed by the new government in Maharashtra. This includes an ambitious tourism development and promotion plan for the buffer areas of the Tadoba and Pench Tiger Reserves, which the state expects, will eventually generate an annual income of Rs. 10,000 crore. The focus will be to divert pressure from the core forest areas to buffer zones and to transform the livelihood of

people living in forests and around protected areas. The government will also aim to provide the families living on the fringes of forests with alternatives like cooking gas, biogas and solar energy so that they don't have to enter forests and cut trees for their fuel wood requirement and also to avoid getting into conflicts with wild animals.

In order to make working in forests a lucrative job, the government would balance pay scales of forest officials and ensure periodical promotions and incentives. Two new special tiger protection forces, one for Melghat and the other for Nagzira, each of 85 people, would also be established.

Source: 'Maharashtra government to boost eco-tourism in buffer areas of woodlands', *DNA*, 28/12/14.

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

### **Tigress walks 70 km to reach Navegaon from New Nagzira**

A tigress named Kaani (T6) is recorded to have travelled almost 70 km to reach the Navegaon Wildlife Sanctuary from the New Nagzira WLS. Both the protected areas are part of the Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve, though divided by the national highway 6.

T6 was one of the three siblings born in October 2012 in New Nagzira to a tigress named 'Alpha'. The cubs, one male and two females, were sighted for the first time in Gaikhuri of New Nagzira on May 1, 2013. Movement of the cubs with their mother was mainly found in the Gaikhuri and Bandarzara areas. According to a recent study by the honorary wildlife warden of Gondia with inputs from the Wildlife Trust of India, the family was reported in adjoining Koka sanctuary in March 2014. T6 moved along the Koka-Chandrapur state highway and was frequently sighted on the edges of forests of Koka. As the rainy season of 2014 faded, she was seen moving to the north of Nagzira and was reported in the adjoining

forests of Mangezari, Govindtola and Junewani, which connect to the Kanha and Pench TRs.

Some cattle kills were also reported in this area from October 21 to November 4. Subsequently, T6 was reported in camera traps in compartment number 92 of Nagzira WLS in November. Her movement was later observed towards Murdoli on the state highway, following which she crossed Chulbandh and headed towards Jambhdi. On November 26, the tigress moved to Ghisamari, which is considered the richest part of the corridor. As movement was observed in Navegaon, officials installed camera traps and the tigress was photographed again on December 3. The camera trap pictures were compared with available records confirming that T6 had moved from New Nagzira.

Quite a few migrations have been reported from Nagzira in the recent past. In 2009, it was Prince – a tiger, who travelled to Pench followed by another male Aayat, who moved along the Balaghat-Kanha corridor in February 2013. During the same year, another male, Jai, reached Umred-Karhandla sanctuary, travelling 120 km.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tigress Kaani travels 70km, New Nagzira to Navegaon', *The Times of India*, 31/12/14.

Contact: **Director**, Navegaon NP, ITI Road, Fulchua, Gondia – 441601, Maharashtra.

### **NBWL clearance a must for constructions near Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) has informed the Mumbai and Thane Municipal Corporations that a clearance is needed from the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) for construction projects over 20,000 sq m that are located within a 10 km radius of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). A circular to this effect was issued in the first week of December by the Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) and Director, SGNP.

The FD, had in 2014, submitted a proposal demarcating an area within 0.1 km to 2 km from the periphery of the national park as the eco-sensitive zone (*PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 1). However, the Ministry of Environment

and Forests (MOEF) is yet to notify the proposal and until then, any non-forestry activity, especially construction over 20,000 sq m, requires a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the NBWL.

The National Real Estate Development Council said that a majority of the buffer zone area falls in residential zone, and the move is likely to add to the procedural delays in several ongoing and proposed projects between Borivli and Bandra and from Sion to Thane city, in addition to a few areas within Thane district. The CCF has, however, pointed out that most projects were bypassing the NOC requirement as the planning agencies had not cared to implement the MOEF orders in the first place.

Source: Shalini Nair. 'Out of blue, new blues for real estate projects in Mumbai suburbs, Thane', *Indian Express*, 17/12/14.

'Construction near SGNP to need wildlife board nod', *The Times of India*, 18/12/14.

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

### **Non-functioning anti-poaching squad in Vidarbha**

The non-functioning of the anti-poaching squad attached to the Nagpur territorial circle has resulted in a spurt in illegal wildlife trade in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. For the past one year, the post of Assistant Conservator of Forest and RFO (anti-poaching squad) are under additional charge. Only one guard is posted with the squad, whose jurisdiction spreads over Nagpur, Amravati, Chandrapur forest circles, covering roughly an area of 32,000 sq km.

This anti-poaching unit is one of two such units that were created by the state government in August 1980. The other one was in Thane. The units were attached to the deputy conservators (wildlife) in Thane and Nagpur. They were then transferred to the respective territorial circles in light of the fact that wildlife crime was seen to be more focused outside protected areas.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'With anti-poaching squad defunct, wildlife trade flourishes', *The Times of India*, 31/12/14.

### **NBWL approval needed for Adani power plant near Navegaon-Nagzira TR**

Adani Power Maharashtra Ltd. will have to secure an approval from the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) before getting 148 hectares of forestland for its Tiroda thermal power plant near the Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (NNTR).

The state had approved the diversion, but the office of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), which had to implement the order, had put it on hold. The PCCF's office had sought a clarification from the centre on whether 10 km or the proposed limit of 7.5 km in case of NNTR should be taken as ecologically sensitive zone (ESZ). In NNTR, a 7.5 km ESZ has been proposed in the direction in which company's proposed forestland is situated, but a notification has not been issued yet.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has replied that notwithstanding anything else, all the relevant approvals have to be taken before diversion. The reply has, also, stated that though NBWL approvals have been de-linked from forestland diversion procedures from August 20, 2014 onwards, it does not mean that the former is exempted. All the relevant clearances, including NBWL clearance, if needed, have to be taken.

Source: Shishir Arya. 'Adani will have to get NBWL nod too for Tiroda land', *The Times of India*, 17/12/14.

Contact: **DCF, Wildlife**, Nagzira WLS, ITI Road, Fulchur, Gondia 441601, Maharashtra. Tel: 07184-226399(O), 226564(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

## MIZORAM

### **NBWL asks for an EIA of fencing, road projects in Dampa TR**

The standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife has in its approval to proposals for fencing and road construction along the India-Bangladesh border in the Dampa Tiger Reserve asked for an environmental impact assessment (EIA) of these projects. The EIA has to be conducted at the expense of the Border Security Force, which is doing the fencing. The number of border outposts proposed inside the tiger reserve will also be reduced from seven to five.

The revenue department will transfer 1519.575 hectares of non-forest land as compensation for an equivalent area required to be diverted inside the tiger reserve from neighbouring areas or elsewhere as stipulated by the expert team of the standing committee.

The Ministry of Home Affairs had called for construction of seven border outposts, the road as well as the fencing, to stop infiltration from Bangladesh. Wildlife experts have, however, noted that the border outpost, a concrete road and fences if constructed, would cause a huge impediment to the movement of animals and could hamper conservation of tigers and other key species in Dampa (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 6).

Source: 'Panel calls for scan on Dampa tiger reserve', *The Telegraph*, 14/12/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Dampa Tiger Reserve, P.O. West Phaileng, Dist. Mamit – 796431, Mizoram

## ODISHA

### **Fisherfolk of Purunabandha village await benefits of PDS scheme**

Red tape has become a hurdle for 109 fisherfolk, involved in protection of Olive ridley turtles, from being included in a special public distribution system (PDS) scheme.

The Odisha government had launched the 'Matsyajibi Unnayana Yojana' in December 2011 to provide support to those marine fisherfolk near the Rushikulya rookery whose

livelihoods get affected due to restrictions on fishing during the mating, nesting and hatching season of the turtles. All marine fisherfolk families, whether they were included in the BPL list or not, were to be provided 25 kg of rice at one rupee per kg during the lean fishing season as part of the scheme. Fishermen of 12 coastal villages and some living in the Ganjam Notified Area Council have benefitted from the scheme but those of Purunabandha have not.

The block development officer of Ganjam had verified and passed a list of 109 probable beneficiary fishermen from Purunabandha, and this had been sent to the state fisheries department more than a year ago. The village is still waiting for a decision to be taken in the matter.

Source: '109 fishermen of Odisha village yet to get benefits of govt. scheme', *The Hindu*, 22/12/14.

### **Fishermen held for illegal fishing in Gahirmatha sanctuary**

Nine fishermen were held for allegedly unlawful fishing activity in the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary in violation of the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1982. The trawler used by the fishermen was also seized by the patrolling unit of the forest department.

Fishing has been banned along the 20 km stretch of the sanctuary from November 1 and sea patrolling has been stepped up within the sanctuary area in view of the annual mass nesting of the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles that occurs in this period in these waters.

Source: 'Nine fishermen held for illegal fishing in Odisha', [zeenews.india.com](http://zeenews.india.com), 26/11/14.

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

### **Human-elephant conflict on the rise in Hindol forest range; electrocution, poaching causing elephant deaths**

Human-elephant conflict is reported to be on the rise in the Hindol forest range of Dhenkanal

district in Odisha. In the latest incident that occurred in the month of November a tusker was electrocuted while feeding on the crop in a paddy field at Alusingh village under Hindol forest range. The live wire was allegedly drawn by a farmer from a low transmission line in the paddy field for domestic use. A day later, an elephant calf was found dead under similar circumstances in Nuakiari village in the same forest range.

In the last three years, four elephants have been electrocuted in Hindol forest range and one in Sadangi forest range. Locals say they are forced to lay live wires in their agricultural fields as elephants from the nearby forests frequently destroy their crops. Although elephant-proof trenches have been dug in the Baabandha area of Hindol, these are of little help in preventing the animals from entering human habitations.

Electrocution has been identified as one of the main causes of elephant deaths in the region and the reason for this is said to be the lack of coordination between officials of the forest department and the Central Electricity Supply Utility.

Poaching too has been on rise in the last few years. Four elephants have been killed by poachers in four years in the forests bordering Dhenkanal, Cuttack and Keonjhar. The Dhenkanal forest division, meanwhile, has urged the East Coast Railway (ECoR) to reduce the speed of trains running on the Dhenkanal-Angul route. The ECoR authorities have been requested to reduce the speed of the trains from Sadashivpur station to Hindol Road railway station between 6 pm and 6 am every day as elephants use this route.

Source: Biranchi Seth, 'Live Wires Take heavy Toll on Elephants', *The New Indian Express*, 27/11/14.

### **Infrared cameras installed at Satkosia TR; 10 destroyed by elephants**

Authorities at the Satkosia Tiger Reserve (STR) recently installed infrared cameras in an effort to enhance monitoring and protection in the forests here. 10 of these cameras were, however, destroyed by elephants almost immediately.

About half of 500 sq km of the core area of the tiger reserve is being monitored by these cameras and authorities have expressed the need to install more cameras to cover the entire protected area.

Source: 'Lens Eye on Tigers in Satkosia Reserve', *The New Indian Express*, 24/11/14.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Satkosia Wildlife Division, at/P.O./Dist. Angul – 759143, Orissa. Tel: 0674-230218(O), 230219(R).  
**CWLW– Odisha**, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Odisha. Tel: 0674- 2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840. Fax: 512502

## **PUNJAB**

### **Punjab refuses to issue licenses for hunting of neelgai**

The Punjab Chief Minister, Parkash Singh Badal, has turned down a proposal of the state forest and wildlife department to issue licenses for hunting *neelgai*. The animal has been causing huge damage to crops and farmers have been demanding permission to kill them to protect their fields. They have also been the cause of a number of fatal road accidents. The animal is said to have found new habitat in the abandoned 120 km Sutlej Yamuna Link canal which passes through Ropar, SAS Nagar and Patiala. The highest number of complaints of crop damage are from these three districts.

The department allows hunting and permissions are granted by the sub-divisional magistrates after a demand is raised by the village panchayat. Hunting wild boar, which is also a threat to the crops, is allowed in this manner. It has been speculated that the word 'gai' attached to the animal's name invokes religious sentiments, and this is the reason why permissions have not been granted.

Permission for hunting of *neelgai* in Punjab had been given in 2004 by the Captain Amarinder Singh-led government. The permission was, however, withdrawn later.

Source: Gurpreet Singh Nibber. 'Govt refuses nod to neel gai hunting', *Hindustan Times*, 03/12/14.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Punjab, SC No. 2463-64, Sector 22-C, Chandigarh - 160022. Tel: 0172-2705828(O), 2675661(R). Fax: 2705828

### Gharial to be re-introduced in Harike



The Punjab forest and wildlife department plans to reintroduce the gharial in the Harike wetlands. The proposal for the introduction of between 50 and 100 gharials here was first made in 2007 and it has taken seven years for the Centre to grant the permission. The animal was found here till the mid-1960s when unchecked hunting is believed to have resulted in its disappearance from the area.

The breeding of gharials has already been initiated in the Chhatbir zoo, near Chandigarh, and about 50 of them would be brought from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh for the purpose of the re-introduction. The World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF) is helping the department in creating awareness about the reptiles in villages surrounding the wetlands, and, village panchayats are known to have supported the proposal.

Source: Gurpreet Singh Nibber. 'After 5 decades, gharial to be back in Harike wetlands', *Hindustan Times*, 10/12/14.

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

### RAJASTHAN

#### NGT issues warrant against wildlife official in illegal sand mining case in National Chambal Sanctuary

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) issued a bail-able warrant against the chief wildlife officer in Rajasthan for failing to send a

representative for the hearing of a plea on illegal sand mining in the National Chambal Sanctuary. In an order issued on December 23, the NGT's principal bench in New Delhi also expressed its dissatisfaction over the affidavit submitted by the Rajasthan government in the matter.

The bench was hearing a petition by the NGO, Tiger Protection Group, that sought an end to sand mining and other activities along the riverbank inside the sanctuary. The state government had noted in its affidavit that the state had already installed adequate mechanisms to curb illegal sand mining and fishing here. It also stated that joint operations were being carried out with the help of police, traffic, local administration and public representatives.

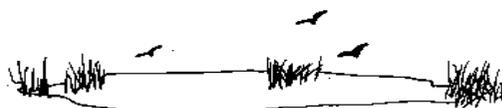
The NGT has questioned the state government about this part of the affidavit and asked the state government to submit details regarding recruitment of staff, rights of people living within the sanctuary area and cases of illegal sand mining. A sanctuary official is reported to have admitted that though they have taken adequate measures to curb illegal activities, minor incidents do happen.

It has also been noted that of the 147 posts that were sanctioned when a new division was constituted for the sanctuary in 2012, 47 are lying vacant.

Year (April-December)	Cases of illegal mining regd. By FD
2008-09	31
2010-11	40
2011-12	3
2012-13	2
2013-14	18
2014-till date	10

Source: 'NGT pulls up govt; issues warrant for wildlife official', *Hindustan Times*, 31/12/14.

Contact: **DCF (Wildlife)**, National Chambal WLS, Dist. Kota, Rajasthan. Tel: 0744-2321263(O). Fax: 0744-2322074



## TAMIL NADU

### FD considering construction of flyover in elephant corridor connecting the Mettupalayam road to Coonoor road



The forest department (FD) is considering a Rs. 90-crore project to construct a flyover connecting the Mettupalayam road to the second hairpin bend on Coonoor road in order to protect elephants. This is part of a critical corridor that elephants take to traverse the forests of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. Elephants from Nilambur, Silent Valley, Kerala, and the Mulli forests use this stretch of land to proceed towards the Nilgiris or the Sathyamangalam hills. The particular stretch, which connects the reserve forests of Kallar and Jaccanarie, is only 40 metres wide and the movement of heavy vehicles compounds the problems here.

The proposal for the construction of the flyover was first mooted by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - India in 2004, which had in a study conducted then, estimated that four heavy vehicles passed through this road every minute. That figure is expected to have doubled now. The FD has sought a feasibility report from the State Highways department on constructing a flyover. If approved, the project is likely to be funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the National Highways Authority of India and the state government.

Source: 'Forest Department seeks feasibility report on flyover', *The Hindu*, 16/12/14.

### Clean-up drive at Mudumalai TR by women SHGs, FD

The women self-help groups of Mavanhalla village in association with the forest department and the Masinagudi panchayat have launched a

drive to keep the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) litter free.

Women equipped with bags and sticks moved in pairs and groups along the road picking up discarded items such as paper, chocolate wrappers, plastic bottles, plates and cups. About 100 women and 25 men of Mavanhalla participated in the campaign that started at the bottom of Kalhatty Ghat road and went on till the border of the MTR. Trash collected by the volunteers was taken to the Masinagudi dump yard.

Source: D. Radhakrishnan, 'Drive to keep Mudumalai road clean', *The Hindu*, 13/12/14.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Mudumalai WLS, Mt. Stewart Hill, Udthagamandalam - 643001 Tamil Nadu. Tel: 0423-244098

## UTTARAKHAND

### New entry gate for Binsar WLS

A new entry gate has been opened from the Dhaulchina side of the Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) for tourists who are interested in trekking. Vehicles will not be allowed to enter through this gate and tourists will be accommodated in one of the guesthouses located in the nearby villages.

The opening of the second gate is expected to regulate the inflow of tourists and boost trekking as well as community-based tourism in and around this part of the sanctuary. The Conservator of Forest, North Kumaon, said that people coming from Pithoragarh and nearby districts would find it easier to reach Binsar through the second gate.

Source: 'New gate opened at Uttarakhand's Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary to facilitate trekking', *Travelbizmonitor.com*, 30/12/14.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Askot & Binsar WLS, Dist. Almora, Uttarakhand. Tel: 05964-225234/225390. Fax: 285376

## UTTAR PRADESH

### Tiger count in Pilibhit declines drastically

The tiger count in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve has come down drastically in the last couple of years - from 40 in 2010 to 23 in 2013. Mr Hemraj Verma, MLA from the Barkhera assembly constituency of Pilibhit district has written to chief minister, Mr Akhilesh Yadav, expressing fear of large scale poaching and demanding a probe into this fall in numbers.

Source: Keshav Agrawal, '10 tigers missing from Pilibhit reserve', *The Times of India*, 25/11/14.

## WEST BENGAL

### Four species of butterflies recorded for the first time in Gorumara NP

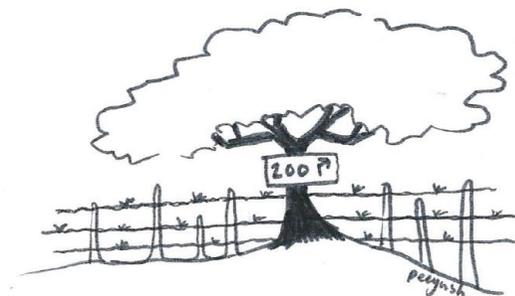
At least four species of butterflies that have never been reported from West Bengal were sighted recently in the Gorumara National Park. Two of these, the Bicolour cupid and Malayan nawab are listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, while the other two, the Witch and the Branded young fly are in Schedule II of the Act.

The park is home to more than 330 species of butterflies. 314 of these were recorded initially as part of an inventory building exercise and published in the form of a book. After the publication about 15 more species have been found. The work for identification of the different species of butterflies, which started in 2012 as a joint effort of Wildlife Division II Jalpaiguri and Nature-Mates Nature-Club – an NGO, is still going on.

Source: Shiv Sahay Singh, 'Big role for small national park in saving threatened butterflies', *The Hindu*, 04/01/15.

Contact: **DFO**, Gorumara NP, Aranya Bhawan, Old Court Campus, Jubilee Park, P.O. & Dist. Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-224907(O), 222838(R). Fax: 03561-223563. Email: wild2@dte.vsnl.net.in

## Mangrove zoo in Sunderbans



The West Bengal Chief Minister, Ms Mamata Banerjee has announced that land has been identified for the creation of a mangrove zoo that will house rare and endangered animals of the Sunderbans. The project will cost Rs. 25 crore and will be completed in five years.

She also recently inaugurated a Tiger Rescue Centre, with a capacity to look after six injured tigers, and laid the foundation stone of the Rs. 400 crore eco-tourism project that will come up as a public-private partnership.

Source: 'World's first mangrove zoo in Sunderbans: Mamata', *The Hindu*, 09/12/14.

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](mailto:wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in)

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### CAG holds ZSI responsible for failure to protect endangered species



The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, has in its recently tabled report in parliament, come down strongly on the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)

for its failure to protect endangered species in the country. Latest data by the ZSI shows that the number of endangered species in India has increased sharply from 190 in 2010 to 443 in 2012.

Blaming the ZSI for failing to carry out its mandate to provide direction to the government for protecting India's biodiversity, the CAG said status surveys by the ZSI were carried out on only three endangered species since 1993 and these were 'insignificant'. The institute also failed to perform its primary job of regularly updating the Red Data Book - the country's official record of threatened species. The book was last updated about 20 years ago.

There are five categories in the ZSI list: mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish. Of them, birds were hardest hit with 139 species on the list in 2012 – up from 57 in 2010.

Category	Number of endangered species	
	2010	2012
Birds	57	139
Mammals	62	123
Reptiles	14	40
Amphibians	35	74
Fishes	22	67
Total	190	443

Source: Chetan Chauhan. 'India's wildlife at risk, endangered species list doubles in 2 yrs', *Hindustan Times*, 30/11/14.

### Environment laws to be amended

The Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Mr Prakash Javadekar, has said that the government will be bringing in amendments to five environment laws enacted between 1971 and 1986 in the upcoming budget session of parliament. This will be a follow up to the recommendations made by the High Level Committee headed by former Cabinet Secretary T S R Subramanian.

The committee had been given the mandate recently (Editorial, *PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 5) to review the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, The Water (Prevention

and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

The changes could be brought into parliament by the month of April following which they will go to a standing committee for finalization.

Source: 'Govt to bring amendments to 5 green laws in Budget Session', *Daily Excelsior*, 01/01/15.

### WCCB asks for the setting up of state-level 'Wildlife Crime Control Units'

The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) has asked all states and union territories to set up exclusive 'Wildlife crime control units' of local police and forest department officials. The need for these units has been felt by the WCCB as it is facing problems in coordinating with different state agencies and in crimes involving several states.

WCCB's Additional director, S B Negi, wrote recently to all chief secretaries recommending formation of such units. He has written that effective combating of wildlife crime requires systematic identification and busting of organised networks by dedicated crime control units. The existing wildlife crime enforcement infrastructure in country has certain institutional weaknesses that hinder its effectiveness functioning requiring urgent attention.

The advisory has suggested that these units get powers to collect intelligence related to wildlife crime activities, establish a wildlife crime databank, prevent, investigate and prosecute organised wildlife crime cases and also act as nodal point for WCCB. They should also be able to advice governments on issues relating to wildlife crime and related laws. Constitution of 'State Level Inter Agency Co-ordination Committees' for combating wildlife crimes has also been suggested.

Source: Mayank Aggarwal. 'States asked to form wildlife crime control units', *DNA*, 27/11/14.

## WLPA to protect endangered plants

The government is planning to bring endangered species of flora under the aegis of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA). Officials have proposed a new schedule under the WLPA that will provide legal protection to rare plants. They have suggested that plants be ranked on their 'extinction probability'. Thus, the more endangered a plant, the more severe will be the punishment meted out to any person caught smuggling it.

Currently, a person found carrying an endangered plant species can only be booked for cutting a tree and can be subjected to a maximum of six months imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 500. However, if the schedule is accepted, plant smugglers will be dealt with as severely as poachers.

Source: Chetan Chauhan. 'Rare Plants To Receive Protection Under WLPA', Hindustan Times 14/11/14.

## TINA grant for grassroots conservationists

Paul Abraham and Sanctuary Asia have announced the launch of the 'Tina Abraham-Sanctuary Initiative for Nature Action (TINA)'. The grant has been instituted in memory of wildlife conservationist Tina Abraham.

TINA will support individuals who are integrally involved with or spearheading in-situ conservation projects in India. A grant of Rs. 3,00,000 will be awarded every two years to three grantees selected through a rigorous application process. The grant is explicitly for grassroots conservationists and will not be available to researchers, students, organizations and city dwellers.

The first three TINA grantees, for the year 2015, are Sarbaranjan Mondal who works in and around the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, Binod Bora who works to mitigate conflict and rescues wildlife in the militancy afflicted Karbi-Anglong hills near the Kaziranga Tiger reserve and Roheet Karoo, a young crusader associated with the Umred-Karhandla Wildlife sanctuary in Maharashtra.

Source: 'Tina Abraham-Sanctuary Initiative For Nature Action (TINA) Announced', <http://www.sanctuaryasia.com>

## BNHS to be renamed Bharat Natural History Society



The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has decided to drop 'Bombay' from its name. The 131-year-old non-governmental organisation will, however, retain its abbreviation by adopting the name Bharat Natural History Society. In 2010, the Shiv Sena had blackened the word "Bombay" on the BNHS's name board arguing that the institute should rechristen itself as the city had been renamed Mumbai since 1996.

Established in 1883, the BNHS, which specialises in conservation and biodiversity research, first proposed to change its name in 2003. In 2012, the proposal was revived, taking into account its extended work area. According to a BNHS official, the organisation's work is spread over several states, including Maharashtra, Nagaland, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir. Hence, 'Bharat would be a proper replacement for 'Bombay'.

Source: Kiran Tare, 'Bombay Natural History Society all set to be rechristened', *The Indian Express*, 10/12/14.

## **Important Bird Areas Update**

### **ANDHRA PRADESH**

#### **Proposal to downsize Kolleru WLS**

Moves are afoot to reduce the area of the Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS) from the +five contour to +three contour. This is expected to release nearly 30,000 acres of land and make it available for fish farming and other activities. The developments are a follow up to the election-eve promise of the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), wherein Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu made a joint statement in Bhimavaram to this effect. The impact of the reduction of the area of the sanctuary will be felt in nine mandals of West Godavari district and two mandals in the Krishna district. Eluru MP, Maganti Venkateswara Rao of the TDP recently also led a delegation of fishermen from the villages here to the Prime Minister with an appeal to prevail upon the National Board for Wildlife to consider their demand.

A considerable number of MLAs and MPs, including a prominent minister, are reported to have stakes, either overtly or covertly, in the annual Rs. 2,000 cr. pisciculture business in Kolleru. Fishponds are reported to have re-emerged on more than 80 per cent of 14,000-odd acres of zeraiti (private) lands in the prohibited sanctuary area after demolitions during the operation Kolleru programme in 2006. The alleged failure of the government to follow the due process of acquiring these lands by extending compensation to the land owners is said to be the reason for restoration of pisciculture in these patches. Zeraiti lands apart, the government lands in the +five contour are also allegedly subjected to encroachments for fish farming on a large scale in the recent past.

A Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Wildlife Division, Srinivasa Rao, was placed under suspension sometime ago for his alleged

nexus with encroachers, resulting in restoration of fishponds in Pidichintapadu area. In another recent incident, a minister was alleged to have pressurized the top forest staff to condone the encroachers when the forest personnel sought to dismantle a prawn culturing pond built in 150 acres in government lands inside the sanctuary at Chatakai under Bhujabalapatnam gram panchayat of Krishna district (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, Nos. 3 & 1 and Vol. XVIII, No. 6)

Source: G Nagaraja. 'Poll promise to downsize lake takes a heavy toll on Kolleru', *The Hindu*, 10/12/14.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, I/c Kolleru WLS, Eluru, West Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 08812-232356.

### **HIMACHAL PRADESH**

#### **Vultures bred at Pinjore to be released; vulture reserves proposed in Solan, Sirmour**

The Himachal Pradesh government has proposed the creation of vulture conservation reserves in the Solan and Sirmour districts in the state. This comes in light of the plan of the Pinjore Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre to release the vultures that have been bred here. This and related matters were discussed recently at a meeting held by the chairperson of breeding centre with wildlife officials of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh to inform them about the release programme and seek their cooperation. The vultures, once released, are expected to travel to a distance of upto 100 km from Pinjore and this brings the five states mentioned above within the range.

This is also expected to add to Himachal's in-situ conservation initiative for the white rumped vulture in the Kangra district wherein the number of nests of the bird have increased from 26 to 274. The potential nesting

area was identified within 5,739 sq m in Kangra along with identified feeding and breeding points. It was ensured that the ban on diclofenac was strictly enforced to provide drug-free carcasses through conservation education and involvement of the local communities.

A vulture restaurant has also been set up adjoining the Pong Dam to facilitate easy availability of drug-free food. The FD is now planning to issue a notification, imposing a ban on felling of both green and dry trees in Kangra district and also to stop the tapping of pine trees for resin. This includes places like Lalpura, Pandwar, Salol, Surnai, Jalakh-Chelian, Dramman-Behra, Batuhi and Kothibanda areas where there are the highest number of nesting sites of vultures.

Source: Pratibha Chauhan. 'Solan, Sirmour to have vulture reserves' *The Tribune*, 07/12/14.

## MAHARASHTRA

### **Rs. 800 cr plan to limit damage to Sewri wetlands**

The Maharashtra government has said it will spend Rs. 800 crore to limit damage caused to the Sewri wetlands by the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL). The project which involves the construction of a 22 km bridge from Sewri to Nhava in New Mumbai poses a significant threat to the wetlands that are used by many bird species including flamingoes.

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has been demanding shifting of its starting point in Sewri to 500 meters south to minimise the destruction of mudflats (*PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 4 & 1), but the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), the agency implementing the project, has expressed its inability to do so. It has decided, instead, to appoint an environmental consultant with an estimated budget of Rs 800 crore to minimise ecological losses. This budget is around nine per cent of the total estimated project cost. ARUP, a global firm responsible for the environmental

consultancy for the Hong Kong-Shenzhen corridor, will be given the responsibility for the MTHL. The Chief Engineer MMRDA, said that the project was being modified by taking into account the environmental concerns. The consultant will be working closely to minimise the environmental impact. Noise barriers will be put up to not disturb the habitat and latest technology will be used so as to not disturb the ecosystem. More details of the proposed plans were however not available.

The total project cost of around Rs 10,000 crore, will be mainly met by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The agreements for the project are expected to be inked in the next 6 to 8 months. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 2)

Source: Alok Deshpande. 'Rs. 800-crore plan to save flamingo habitat', *The Hindu*, 26/11/14.

### **Forest owl spotted in Tansa WLS**

The critically endangered Forest owl, believed to be endemic to the Satpuda Mountain Range in Central India, was recently spotted in the Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary in the Western Ghats. The bird was first seen there in October 2014 by naturalists Sunil Laad and Rohidas Dagale who are associated with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). The place where it was located is a dry deciduous forest with open patches very similar to the typical Forest Owllet habitat in the Satpuda ranges. However, this location in Tansa is partially degraded due to human disturbances.

The bird was considered to be extinct for 113 years, until researchers rediscovered it in 1997 in Toranmal Reserve Forest near Shahada in the Satpuda ranges in Nandurbar District, Maharashtra. Later studies established its presence across the Satpuda ranges - from Piplod in Gujarat and Toranmal to Yawal and Melghat in Maharashtra and Kalibhit in Madhya Pradesh.

Source: 'Critically endangered Forest Owllet spotted in Western Ghats', *The Hindu*, 29/11/14.

## RAJASTHAN

### Painted storks abandon Keoladeo NP in the middle of the breeding season

The entire breeding population of more than 1500 Painted storks abandoned the marshes of the Keoladeo National Park in the middle of their breeding season in November, leaving behind hundreds of eggs which were later devoured by crows and other birds.

Forest department staff have suggested that the abandonment was caused by insufficient rain in the monsoon and the consequent shortage of water in the park. Others have pointed to the continued operation of dozens of trucks and JCB machines inside the sanctuary. These were engaged to build mud platforms around the storks' colony and researchers have said this activity, particularly during the nesting season, is most certainly the cause for the abandonment.

Source: 'Bharatpur's pride, painted storks, go missing, officials can't say why', *The Indian Express*, 11/12/14.

Contact: **Director, Keoladeo Ghana NP**, Forest Department, Bharatpur- 321 001 Rajasthan. Tel: 05644-22777(O), 22824(R)

## UTTAR PRADESH

### First vulture census in state counts 900 vultures

At least 900 vultures were counted in 13 districts of Uttar Pradesh in the first ever vulture census conducted in the state recently. The maximum number of 193 birds were counted in Mainpuri district, followed by 125 in Pilibhit and 100 together in the North and South Kheri district.

Source: Neha Shukla. 'Vultures on way back to UP?', *The Times of India*, 20/12/14.



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### International workshop calls for conservation strategy for the White-bellied heron

The Bombay Natural History Society and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Environment and Ecology jointly organized an international workshop to chalk out a strategy for the conservation of the critically endangered White-bellied heron. The workshop was held in December in Guwahati and was attended by 41 participants from the bird's range countries that include Bhutan, India, Myanmar and possibly China.

Experts agreed that there is a need to ensure the heron has the highest level of legal protection in each range country and that this protection is enforced. They called for all sectors of society to be sensitised to the significance of the White-bellied heron as a flagship species for the conservation of healthy river systems. It was also agreed to establish a potential formal structure or working group to facilitate collaboration on the conservation of the White-bellied heron among all range countries.

The world population of the bird is estimated to be less than 250 of which around 20 are in India. It is one of the 50 rarest birds in the world.

Source: 'Experts push for protection of herons', *The Telegraph*, 11/12/14.

**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)***

**Estimated tiger numbers for states and landscapes in 2014 in India compared to earlier estimates reported for 2006 and 2010**

State	Tiger Population		
	2006	2010	2014
<b><i>Shivalik-Gangetic Landscape Complex</i></b>			
Uttarakhand	178 (161-195)	227 (199-256)	340
Uttar Pradesh	109 (91-127)	118 (113-124)	117
Bihar	10 (7-13)	8 (-)	28
<b>Shivalik-Gangetic</b>	<b>297 (259-335)</b>	<b>353 (320-388)</b>	<b>485 (427-543)</b>
<b><i>Central Indian Landscape Complex and Eastern Ghats Landscape Complex</i></b>			
Andhra Pradesh (Including Telangana)	95 (84-107)	72 (65-79)	68
Chattisgarh	26 (23-28)	26 (24-27)	46
Madhya Pradesh	300 (236-364)	257 (213-301)	308*
Maharashtra	103 (76-131)	169 (155-183)	190
Odisha	45 (37-53)	32 (20-44)	28
Rajasthan	32 (30-35)	36 (35-37)	45
Jharkhand	-	10 (6-14)	3+
<b>Central India</b>	<b>601 (486-718)</b>	<b>601 (518-685)</b>	<b>688 (596-780)</b>
<b><i>Western Ghats Landscape Complex</i></b>			
Karnataka	290 (241-339)	300 (280-320)	406
Kerala	46 (39-53)	71 (67-75)	136
Tamil Nadu	76 (56-95)	163 (153-173)	229
Goa	-	-	5
<b>Western Ghats</b>	<b>402 (336-487)</b>	<b>534 (500-586)</b>	<b>776 (685-861)</b>
<b><i>North Eastern Hills and Brahmaputra Flood Plains</i></b>			
Assam	70 (60-80)	143 (113-173)	167
Arunachal Pradesh	14 (12-18)	-	28#
Mizoram	6 (4-8)	5	3+
Northern West Bengal	10 (8-12)	-	3
North East Hills, & Brahmaputra	100 (84-118)	148 (118-178)	201 (174-212)
Sunderbans	-	70 (64-90)	76 (62-96)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1411 (1165-1657)</b>	<b>1706 (1520-1909)</b>	<b>2226 (1945-2491)</b>

\* Likely to be revised because sampling is going on

+ From Scat DNA

# From camera trap data and scat DNA

Source: Status of Tigers in India, 2014

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## MEE ratings of tiger reserves

Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) is the assessment of how well protected areas such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves, community reserves and tiger reserves are being managed and their effectiveness in conserving target flora and fauna. The Framework consists of six elements viz. Context, Planning, Inputs, Process, Output and Outcome; each of them has a precise focus of evaluation. This Framework assesses the importance of each tiger reserve for conservation in the face of current threats to the species

Cluster	States	Tiger Reserves	MEE Ratings
<b>I</b>	Uttarakhand	Corbett	Very Good
	Maharashtra	Melghat	Very Good
	Maharashtra	Pench	Very Good
	Maharashtra	Tadoba-Andhari	Very Good
	Uttar Pradesh	Dudhwa	Good
	Rajasthan	Ranthambhore	Good
	Maharashtra	Sahyadri	Good
	Rajasthan	Mukundra Hills	Fair
<b>II</b>	Madhya Pradesh	Kanha	Very Good
	Madhya Pradesh	Pench	Very Good
	Madhya Pradesh	Satpuda	Very Good
	Madhya Pradesh	Bandhavgarh	Good
	Madhya Pradesh	Sanjay-Dubri	Good
<b>III</b>	Bihar	Valmiki	Very Good
	Chattisgarh	Achanakmar	Fair
	Andhra Pradesh	Kawal	Fair
	Orissa	Satkosia	Fair
<b>IV</b>	Tamil Nadu	Annamalai	Very Good
	Karnataka	Bandipur	Very Good
	Tamil Nadu	Kalakad-Mundanthurai	Very Good
	Tamil Nadu	Mudumalai	Very Good
	Karnataka	Nagarhole	Very Good
	Kerala	Parambikulam	Very Good
	Kerala	Periyar	Very Good
	Karnataka	Bhadra	Good
	Karnataka	Biligiri Ranganatha Temple	Good
	Karnataka	Dandeli-Anshi	Good
	Tamil Nadu	Sathyamangalam	Good
<b>V</b>	West Bengal	Sundarbans	Very Good
	West Bengal	Buxa	Good
	Mizoram	Dampa	Good
	Assam	Kaziranga	Good
	Assam	Manas	Good
	Arunachal Pradesh	Pakke	Good
	Arunachal Pradesh	Namdapha	Fair
Assam	Nameri	Fair	

<b>Red Corridor</b>	Andhra Pradesh	Nagarjunsagar-Srisailam	Good
	Chhattisgarh	Indravati	Fair
	Jharkhand	Palamau	Fair
	Orissa	Similipal	Fair
	Chhattisgarh	Udanti-Sitanadi	Fair
<b>Reserves that had lost all tigers</b>	Madhya Pradesh	Panna	Very Good
	Rajasthan	Sariska	Good

Ratings in %: Poor Upto 40; Fair – 41-59; Good – 60-79; Very Good – 75 and above

Source: **Tiger~Meter: Measuring the management effectiveness (MEE) of tiger reserves in India**

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A compilation of news from the *Protected Area Update*

Edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria

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## A Decade Ago Protected Area Update 53, February 2005

### ORISSA

#### **Dead olive ridley turtles being washed ashore on Orissa's beaches**

More than a 1000 dead Olive ridley turtles have been found washed ashore on the beaches of Orissa in the two month period ending December 2004. The dead turtles have so far been seen at the Devi, Jatadhar, Harishpur, Chandrabhaga and Ramchandi areas and beaches bordering the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary. While 70 dead turtles were counted at Chandrabhaga-Ramchandi, more than 400 dead turtles were counted between the mouth of the Devi and Paradip. An estimated 500 turtles were killed in the marine sanctuary area as well.

Wildlife activists have warned that these numbers would continue to rise if round the clock patrolling with speed boats is not taken up to check fishing by trawlers in the prohibited zone along the coast. The Wildlife Society of Orissa has said that part of the reason for this is that the state government is still not implementing the April 2004 directions of the Supreme Court Appointed Central Empowered Committee for the protection to the endangered sea turtles. Though an embargo had been clamped on fishing within 20 kms of the coastline between November and May, rampant fishing is being reported from near the mouth of the Devi and Rushikulya. The CEC had directed that Turtle Excluder Devices (TED) be put to mandatory use, but not a single trawler operating in the Orissa coast is reported to be using them during the current season, taking advantage of the lack of patrolling by the Fisheries Department. The patrolling has been of a sporadic nature and is being done with the help of old and slow fishing trawlers. It has also been pointed out that an amount of Rupees one crore given by the Indian Oil Corporation for turtle protection has been lying unutilised for four years. (Also see *PA Updates* 46, 45, 41, 40, 38, 34, 30, & 25)

Source: 'Dead ridley count worries experts', *The Statesman*, 31/12/04.

#### **Orissa fisherfolk demand implementation of Orissa Marine Fisheries Regulation Act**

The Orissa Traditional Fish Workers' Union (OTFWU) has demanded strict enforcement of the Orissa Marine Fisheries Regulation Act (OMFRA) and stern action against the fishing trawlers from outside the state intruding in Orissa waters. They have demanded for the deployment of speed boats to seize these trawlers.

The union stated that livelihoods of around 80,000 traditional fishermen living in six coastal districts of the state were threatened due to these trawlers. Expressing concern over the dwindling fish catch due to capture of fish seeds from river mouths, the OTFWU leaders also demanded enactment of a stringent law to ban the capture of fish seeds. Attributing the silting of river mouths to the fall in fish landing, they also urged the government to take up dredging of river mouths on the Orissa coast.

Lamenting that the traditional fishermen were being deprived of their livelihood in the name of protection of Olive Ridley sea turtles, the union leaders have asked for the restriction of the territorial limit of Gahirmatha marine sanctuary to allow for fishing by traditional fishermen. They also demanded compensation and financial assistance for the traditional fishermen who have lost their livelihood source. The other major demands included giving land *patta* to all the traditional fishermen families living along the Orissa coast within a specific timeframe, recommending to the centre to include the marine fishermen in the list of scheduled castes, providing them subsidised housing and financial assistance for revival of the Orissa Traditional Marine Fishermen Cooperative Society. (Also see *PA Update* 45)

Source: 'Fishermen threaten agitation', *The Statesman*, 24/11/04.

## PERSPECTIVE

### **Ecological trends or speculation?**

Some questions about ecological change in Kodagu

Ever since I started my research work in Kodagu five years ago, I have been told that forest cover here today is a mere shade of what it used to be. The popular history of coffee and forest cover in Kodagu suggests (and most scientists, researchers – local, national and international agree) that Indian coffee is unique because it has been grown under the shade of native tree species from mid 1800s when colonial planters first cultivated coffee here. This narrative argues that these farms continue to rapidly lose these trees because of recent pressures from intensification of coffee...and therefore the current ecological features of farms are the ‘rock bottom’ of the overall ecological trajectory of the landscape. To put it simply, the ecology of coffee farms has never looked worse.

In fact, most scientific literature and policy action derives from this notion that ‘forests have never been more degraded’ or ‘wildlife populations have never been as low’. We mostly perceive current states of ecological tensions as having arisen from a much more harmonious past. The past therefore, is pristine and untouched and the current is most degraded. A critical observer would, however, question this conclusion and the data it is based on. Where, for instance, does evidence of over 200 years of land-use change come from when accessible satellite imagery is not more than 25 to 30 years old? When we say coffee farms today represent the most degraded state (lowest density or diversity of native tree species) in Indian coffee history, how do we know?

A look at historical archives - gazetteers, records and journals of colonial planters, suggests a different reality. It tells us that early coffee production was far from harmonious. Colonial planters did not retain native shade trees (as the dominant story goes), but systematically clear-felled and burnt vast tracts of pristine forests before they planted coffee under direct sunlight as it is done for tea.

Native shade trees were indeed ‘planted back’ into the landscape by colonial planters once the ecological function of trees for coffee plants, as safeguards against harsh summers was discovered. But they were first, razed to the ground.

Insights from this revised history of ecological change highlights how scientists have often relied on deductions of past ecologies from observations of present landscapes and then used these conclusions to inform policies to address ecological changes. This could apply to deductions about shifting cultivation, pastoralism, sustainable harvest as well as assumptions about population growth in and around forest areas. There is enough evidence to suggest that many of these current conclusions are incorrect and there is a clear need to re-assess them as also the data, the methods and the assumptions these are based on. The time has come to look at ecological change in more inter-disciplinary ways – including through serious and rigorous archival research.

- **Arshiya Bose** is a researcher working for Gaia’s Cup, a new initiative for coffee and conservation in the Western Ghats.

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