

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

Communicating conservation, honouring commitment

December, for the last many years, has been the month that a large part of the conservation community eagerly looks forward to with a sense of anticipation. The reason is the Sanctuary Wildlife Awards that are given by *Sanctuary Asia*, India's premier wildlife magazine. In this issue of the *PA Update* we carry the names of the 2015 awardees and in the section 'A Decade Ago' (pg. 23), we reproduce the list of those who were awarded 10 years ago. The lists for both the years have notable names – respected for their contributions that are exemplary and inspirational.

If the Lifetime Service Award was given to Dr AJT Johnsingh in 2005, its most deserving recipients for 2015 were Norma and Claude Alvares, the duo from Goa whose diversity of work is as breath-taking as it has been deep and effective. Protection teams from Gir in Gujarat are, coincidentally, in the list for both the years and we also see Jay Mazoomdar being awarded in 2005 for his series of stories on the status of the tiger, most prominently of its being wiped out completely from Sariska that year. Mazoomdar has, of course, continued his work, bringing to light the situation on the ground in many places and the many challenges wildlife conservation continues to face. It has sometimes been controversial, but he's kept the light focused on issues that not many people are writing about and discussing.

That also brings us to *Sanctuary Asia*, which has been and continues to be a torch-bearer for writing and communicating about wildlife and conservation concerns in the sub-continent. The space and visibility it has offered to wildlife, to issues and to writers and photographers is unparalleled and it is nice to see it go from strength to strength. One may not always agree with the magazine's editorial position, like in its strident and continued

opposition to the Forest Rights Act, but then everyone has a right to their opinions and points of view. The debates and the discussions have to continue and that is important.

And in that light, it seems very apt that the back-of-the-book Perspective piece in this issue of the *PA Update* should be by Anirudh Nair, a member of the present editorial team at *Sanctuary Asia*. His is only a short note, but gives an illuminating glimpse of what goes into the production of a wildlife magazine, of the challenges faced in bringing it out and the nature of the choices made. Needless to say, much of Nair's points would apply to the production of the *PA Update* as well!

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Training on 'animal rescue' held at Nagarjunsagar-Srisailam TR

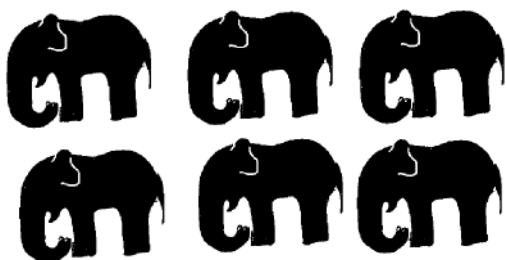
A training programme on 'handling tranquilisation equipment' for animal rescue was conducted recently at the Nagarjunsagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve. Several veterinary doctors and experts including those from the Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, explained the steps, including precautions, to be taken while rescuing animals.

The Divisional Forest Officers of Atmakur, Dornala, the Atmakur Flying Squad and Sub-Divisional Forest Officers of Srisailam, Dornala and Kadapa attended the programme. Fifty staffers of the forest divisions of Atmakur, Markapur, Kadapa, Kurnool, Giddalur and Proddatur also participated.

Source: 'Focus on steps to rescue animals', *The Hans India*, 14/12/15.

ASSAM

Stay on expansion by Numaligarh Refinery to continue: NGT



The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has refused to stay its order restraining the Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) from carrying out any construction activity in the no-development zone of the Kaziranga National Park (KNP). The observation came while hearing a plea seeking directions to immediately demolish the concrete wall constructed by NRL near the Deopahar Reserve Forest as it was obstructing movement of elephants (*PA Update* Vol. XXI, No. 6).

The petitioner alleged that the refinery, a joint venture of Bharat Petroleum, Oil India and the Assam government, has illegally built a two-km-long boundary wall for a golf course around their township, which has obstructed elephant movement, causing the death of an elephant calf in May. The counsel for the petitioner argued that the site inspection report shows sharp contrast between the neighboring forest areas which have high forest canopy density and the golf course with no trees at all. Elephant tracks were found all around the golf course site suggesting that the area is regularly used by the elephants.

The NGT had earlier pulled up NRL for cutting trees to construct a boundary wall for the golf course in the no-development zone in KNP, saying its forest clearance was an “abuse of law”. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change had also submitted a letter issued by the Divisional Forest Officer of Golaghat division to the Deputy Commissioner which stated that the land acquired by the

refinery was in clear violation of the established laws, rules and conditions.

Source: ‘Stay on expansion by Numaligarh Refinery to continue: NGT’, *Business Standard*, 08/12/15.

BIHAR

Training on legal aspects for Valmiki TR frontline staff

The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) in partnership with the Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) and the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR), recently imparted training on legal aspects of enforcement of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and wildlife crime prevention to 120 frontline staff of two forest divisions from the nine forest ranges of VTR.

The training was aimed at making the frontline forest staff here well versed with various legal aspects in order to ensure appropriate documentation and court proceedings. The course included crime prevention topics like anti-poaching patrolling techniques, intelligence gathering, interrogation techniques, crime scene investigation, preparation of preliminary offence report and the various procedures for collection and preservation of evidence.

Source: <http://www.wti.org.in/NewsDetails.aspx?NewsId=1477>

DELHI

Staff crunch at Delhi FD

According to data submitted to the National Green Tribunal (NGT), there is a serious staff crunch in the Delhi Forest Department (FD). The existing strength of officers and staff under the FD is 546. Of this, 499 are labourers, leaving only about 47 officers, office and field staff at various levels. Posts lying vacant at present are that of forest ranger (6), wildlife inspector (3), forest guard (38), deputy forest

ranger (3) and wildlife game watcher (10). The data was made available during a hearing on a plea regarding felling of trees and the need for better equipment to survey the city's forests.

Taking a serious view of the situation, the NGT has directed the Delhi chief secretary to hold a meeting with the concerned authorities and to "consider appropriate enhancement in the strength of the FD and provision of proper infrastructure to ensure all personnel discharge their duties".

The FD has come under fire from the Delhi High Court and the NGT in the past two years over the delay in completing the survey of trees.

Source: Aneesha Mathur. 'Delhi govt's forest dept under severe staff crunch, green panel told', *The Indian Express*, 11/12/15.

GUJARAT

SC relief for Taj Group resort in Gir

The Supreme Court (SC) has stayed the Gujarat High Court's (HC) order by which the Taj Group's luxury resort in the Gir sanctuary was sealed. This hotel was closed during a sealing drive carried out in March-April, 2015, at the high court's instance because most hospitality units around Gir were found to be functioning in violation of the eco-tourism policy. The HC refused to un-seal it when the hotel management approached it in the month of April. They had then moved the apex court.

In this case, the Centre gave land to the state government in 1971. This particular plot was leased to Gujarat tourism. The hotel group got a 20-year lease in 1994 and the hotel was constructed. The lease was renewed in the year 2014. However, the mandatory permission from the National Board for Wildlife was not obtained and hence the forest department did not issue an NOC to operate the hotel inside the sanctuary.

Experts say the SC's intervention and relief to the luxury resort run by Indian Hotels Company Ltd. has paved the way for other hospitality units facing action for violation of

norms to also seek redress. They may approach the high court citing the SC order and claim relief by requesting the court to direct authorities to remove the seals on numerous rooms in guest houses across three districts. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XXI, No. 4).

Source: 'Taj Group's resort in Gir gets SC relief', *The Times of India*, 11/12/15.

'More study needed for lion translocation'



The central government has accepted Gujarat's demand for conducting more studies on behaviour of local people and the habitat at Kuno-Palpur in Madhya Pradesh before lions from Gir can be translocated there. Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar, refused to give any time frame for translocation of lions to Kuno-Palpur and also said that the Madhya Pradesh government needs to enlarge its sanctuary from the present 350 sq km to 700 sq. km. He was responding to a question in the Lok Sabha that was raised by Madhya Pradesh MPs Kamal Nath and Jyotiraditya Scindia and the Uttar Pradesh MP, Jagdambika Pal. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXI, No. 4; Vol. XX, No. 6 and Vol. XIX, Nos. 6, 5, 4 & 3)

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. 'More study needed for lion translocation', *The Times of India*, 16/12/15.

PIL against lion safari in Ambardi, Gir WLS

A PIL in the Gujarat high court has questioned the forest department (FD)'s proposal to create a 400-hectare lion safari park near Ambardi village of the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) on the grounds that it would lead to ecological imbalance in the area, would disturb the wildlife and that it is also against the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WLPA).

The petitioner, wildlife activist Biren Pandya, sought the HC's intervention on the

issue and urged the court to restrain forest officials from fencing and putting up permanent structures in the reserved forest area. He contended that the park is proposed in the Ambardi reserve forest area which is a habitat of nearly 35-40 free ranging Asiatic lions. He additionally also raised the issue of corridors - Ambardi-Ranigala, Vadal-Gir PA, Ambardi-Lilya - and argued that these corridors which lions use for movement would be destroyed. He stated further that the FD had failed to learn lessons from the Devaliya model, which has created problems for wildlife. He has also sought HC guidelines for the foresters in this regard.

The court has asked the state government to show the provisions in the WLPA or in any other law that permits the authorities to create such facility in forest areas.

Source: 'PIL against lion safari in Ambardi', *The Times of India*, 23/12/15

KARNATAKA

NGO reaches out to tourists at Bandipur regarding alternative routes and night traffic

Wildlife activists from the NGO, Vanya Let the Wild be Wild, have launched an awareness campaign in Bandipur on the alternative routes for tourists and the imperatives of complying with the ban on motoring through the national park at night. This is an ongoing attempt to mitigate the high volume of traffic that flows through Bandipur during the extended holiday season, and to help tourists avoid being stranded on the outskirts of the forests past the deadline (9 p.m. to 6 a.m.), when the forests are closed to traffic.

Bandipur is bisected by two national highways — NH-212 connecting to Udhagamandalam in Tamil Nadu and NH-67 linking Wayanad in Kerala. The traffic on the roads cutting through Bandipur tends to be chaotic, particularly during holiday seasons. The drive was launched keeping in mind the continued violations of the ban order, including a prominent one during Diwali, when irate

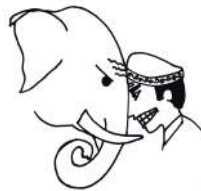
motorists drove through the forests in a convoy, roughed up guards and violated the law.

Volunteers have, as part of the awareness drive, put up informative posters on road closure at night at vantage points, in addition to tourist resorts around Masinagudi, Gudalur, Gundlupet and Wayanad.

Source: R Krishna Kumar. 'Wildlife activists reach out to tourists at Bandipur reserve' *The Hindu*, 28/12/15.

Human-elephant conflict on the rise in Mysore Elephant Reserve

Human-elephant conflict is said to be on the rise around the Bandipur-Nagarahole-Biligiri Rangan Temple WLS sanctuary belt in the Mysore Elephant Reserve. The year 2015 saw the electrocution here of 15 elephants; this is more than



the number in the four preceding years combined. More than 95 per cent of the cases were reported from the Mysuru-Chamarajanagar-Hassan-Madikeri belt. While FIRs have been filed and cases booked, there have been no follow-ups and near zero convictions due to failure of authorities to build up evidence. The Chief Conservator of Forests (Project Elephant) said that in most cases, farmers tend to destroy evidence by removing the wire or dismantling the fence.

The government offers 50% subsidy to encourage farmers to install solar fence around their fields to keep wild animals at bay. The initiative, launched last year, has not elicited an encouraging response from farmers. Where they have been installed, they have not been maintained and have become in-effective.

The other solutions of erecting a railway line fence or digging elephant proof trenches have also not worked. Only 3.5 km of the rail fence has come up against a target of 40 km and the trenches too get filled up enabling the animals to cross over.

Source: R. Krishna Kumar. '15 elephants electrocuted this year; no conviction yet', *The Hindu*, 06/12/15.

Forest division builds illegal road inside Kudremukh National Park

It has been alleged that a new road has been constructed on the Gangdikal slopes inside the Kudremukh National Park (KNP) without appropriate environmental clearances. The Karkala forest division has converted a walkway leading to the Gangdikal peak in Malleswara range into a road. Conservationists have noted that this would increase the soil erosion here and cause serious damage on account of the heavy rainfall the area receives.

They have also demanded a moratorium on all road construction, including the ill-advised proposals for construction of patrolling roads. To increase security, they have asked to increase the number of ranges in Kudremukh to at least seven and for enough number of young, fit personnel to carry out foot patrol.

In the meanwhile, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Vinay Luthra, during whose tenure as wildlife chief the road came up, is reported to have said that he was unaware of this particular road in Kudremukh and the purpose for which it was constructed.

Source: Meera Bhardwaj. 'The Illegal Road to Gangdikal Peak', *The New Indian Express*, 13/12/15.

MADHYA PRADESH

NGT issues notices over firing range near Van Vihar NP

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued notices to the Madhya Pradesh government, the State Forest and Police Departments and the Central Zoo Authority over shifting the Police Department's firing range that is located near the Van Vihar National Park (VVNP). The notices were issued in the specific context of the proposed translocation of two lions from Gujarat to the park.

The NGT was responding to a petition that claimed that the SAF 25 Battalion was holding 94.10 acres of the land allotted to the VVNP and using it as a firing range. The petition noted that the noise of firing was having an adverse impact on the wild animals and the lions too would be disturbed.

A committee, the petition noted further, had been constituted in compliance with the apex court orders with regard to declaring the surrounding areas of VVNP as an eco-sensitive and eco-fragile area. This committee has recommended that the firing range should be shifted to another place and permission should not be given to establish the same within a 3 km radius of the park boundary. No action, however, is reported to have been taken in the matter.

Source: 'NGT notice to MP govt over firing range near Van Vihar', *The Times of India*, 15/12/15.

MAHARASHTRA

Special tiger protection force to keep watch outside TRs too

The Maharashtra government has decided that the special tiger protection force (STPF) will be deployed in tiger bearing areas even outside of the tiger reserves. The decision has been taken following the death, recently, of four tiger cubs in the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra's (FDCM) Pathri range following the disappearance of the mother tigress.

The forest department (FD) has also formally informed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) - Wildlife wing - to institute a special investigation team (SIT) to trace the missing tigress. The SIT will consist of an officer each from the CBI, forest and police departments. The FD has also increased the number of camera traps in the forests to track the mother tigress. Forest officers have not ruled out the possibility of the tigress being involved in the recent killing of a woman. Hence, camera traps have also been installed at the place where the woman was killed.

Source: Mazhar Ali. 'Special tiger protection force to keep watch outside reserve too', *The Times of India*, 30/12/15.

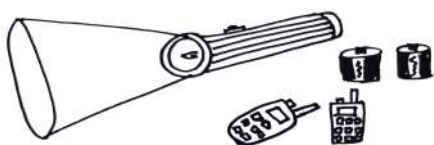
Seven poachers nabbed in Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary

Seven poachers were recently nabbed by the forest department (FD) inside the Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The accused have been booked under several sections, including setting fire, hunting and trespassing of the Indian Forest Act 1927, sections under Wildlife Protection Act 1972 as well as Arms Act.

The FD — which had already intensified patrolling in the forest area after they found a carcass of a leopard at the Shilonda trail of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park — managed to nab seven people with guns. 13 others, however, managed to escape. The accused, most of whom are residents of Rajavali village, claimed that they had planned to hunt a wild boar for a party planned by them. They denied any involvement in the leopard poaching case, however.

Source: Virat Singh. 'Forest department nabs seven poachers from Tungareshwar wildlife sanctuary', *DNA*, 30/12/15.

Centre sanctions Rs. 10 lakh to deal with elephant depredation in Kolhapur district



The Central Government has sanctioned Rs. 10 lakh to deal with the issue of elephant depredation in Kolhapur district. The amount will be utilised for providing vehicles to the local staff for continuous monitoring, making provision of batteries and torches and communication devices.

The elephants are said to have crossed from neighbouring Karnataka and the impact has been most felt in the villages of Here, Kalasgade, Gudawale, Waghotre, Parle,

Nagave, Kokare, Umgaon, Mali, Zambre, Bhogoli, Pilani, Kanoor, Kalgondwadi and Buzawade that are located close to the forest areas. Villagers are reported to have said that revenue and forest officials were taking very long to assess the damages suffered by the farmers, besides providing very low compensation.

According to the Chief Conservator of Forest (wildlife), Kolhapur division, a detailed technical report has already been submitted to the state government regarding the elephant problem - their route and behavioural patterns, choice of crops frequently raided and variation in response to measures undertaken for keeping them away from the fields.

Source: 'Centre approves 10L for elephant-hit areas', *The Times of India*, 09/12/15.

NGOs seek public hearing over proposed Smart City project of Amravati; fear over impact on proposed PA

Various NGOs including the Satpuda Foundation, Wildlife and Environment Conservation Society, Youth for Nature Conservation, Deesha Foundation, and, Nature Protection and Wildlife Conservation Society have urged the Amravati Municipal Corporation to hold an environmental public hearing before moving ahead with the proposed Smart City project.

They have expressed fears over the possibility of increased human-animal conflict if the proposed Smart City comes up on the boundary of the Pohra-Malkhed Reserve Forest in the Benoda-Jewad area of Amravati city. They say the environment of the city depends on the Pohra-Malkhed forest and Chhatri and Wadali tanks. A proposal of declaring this forest as a wildlife sanctuary or a conservation reserve is also under consideration.

They have also pointed out that the hilly region of Benoda-Jewad is a watershed for groundwater in east Amravati. If the Smart City came up here, it would adversely affect the natural water storage of the city and groundwater water level too would be affected.

Source: 'Greens fret over Smart City near Amravati forest', *The Times of India*, 08/12/15.

Three sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for tiger poaching in Melghat TR

An Amravati court recently sentenced three people, Ranjit, Sarju and Dalbir, to seven years' rigorous imprisonment in the Dhakna tiger poaching case in Melghat Tiger Reserve (*PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 2). The interesting point in the case is that the tiger's body was not found and the conclusion that it was poached was based on DNA analysis. The electronically recorded statements of the accused and call detail records were produced in evidence as per relevant legal provisions.

Ranjit was arrested from Visakhapatnam. He had also been booked by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 2009 in a tiger smuggling case. However, he was released on bail, which he later jumped. Sarju was arrested while he was driving to Delhi, while Dalbir was arrested from Haryana. Sarju and Dalbir have been booked by the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) in other tiger poaching cases too. Their arrests were made in 2013.

The FD had arrested over 30 persons in the various cases that involved the killing of over 15 tigers. Many of the cases are still under trial.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Dhakna poaching case: 3 tiger traders sentenced to seven years' imprisonment', *The Indian Express*, 11/12/15.

No permission for new projects around SGNP: NGT

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has restrained the government and other planning authorities from granting permissions to any new projects within 10 km of the boundary of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). The bar on such new sanctions would remain until

the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) issues a notification for a change in the demarcation of the "eco-sensitive zone".

The order, according to those in the real estate field, will have a debilitating impact on an already weak real estate industry in Mumbai. It will impact construction in and around the park, especially in Goregaon (East), Malad (East) Borivali (East) and Mulund, where applications for projects, mainly slum redevelopment projects, abound.

The NGT, however, clarified that its order would not apply to ongoing projects. There is, also, a draft notification of the NBWL which proposes to reduce the eco-sensitive zone to 100 metres from the park boundary at certain places, keeping in mind construction that already exists.

Source: Swati Deshpande, 'NGT bars new projects within 10 km of SGNP', *The Times of India*, 09/12/15.

Maharashtra to set up leopard safaris near Sanjay Gandhi NP and the Tadoba Andhari TR



The Maharashtra State Government has decided to set up two leopard safaris — one in Chandrapur and the other at Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai. A committee under the Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis, has cleared the proposal for both the safaris and work is expected to start soon. The information was provided by the state Forest Minister, Sudhir Mungantiwar recently while he was replying to a query in the legislative assembly.

Only leopards which have attacked people after straying into human settlements will be relocated to these safaris. Five such leopards are currently caged in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Chandrapur. Of those, one had attacked 8 people while another had attacked a small girl recently. The leopard safari in Chandrapur will be located around TATR.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, (Wildlife) said that the forest department (FD) will start working on the project after getting approval from the government. The work would involve identification of an appropriate area for the safaris, appointments of consultants and taking required permissions from concerned authorities.

Source: 'Leopard Safaris in Chanda and Mumbai', *The Times of India*, 15/12/15.

Maharashtra proposes enhanced punishment for poaching

The Maharashtra government has proposed to the Centre to enhance punishment for poaching wild animals to a jail sentence of 10 years and a fine of Rs. 5 lakh. The existing punishment under the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WLPA) – 1972, is seven years in jail along with a fine of Rs. 25,000. The information was provided in the state assembly recently by the state forest minister, Sudhir Mungantiwar. He was responding to a query pertaining to the National Tiger Conservation Authority's claim of 41 tiger deaths within a span of seven months from January 2015 in the state. It claimed that apart from natural deaths, the tigers were being killed due to their increasing intrusion into human habitations and that they were even administered poison.

The minister said that the government has moved a proposal to amend the WLPA. It has also deployed the 'Special Tiger Protection Force' at Gondia, Navegaon-Nagzira, Melghat and Tadoba to curb poaching. The government has, additionally, issued a resolution on providing four times the current compensation payable to villagers for lands acquired for

wildlife sanctuaries. Listing other measures, the minister said that watch-towers were erected at many places, wireless surveillance systems had been installed and camera traps had been set up at water holes and sensitive places to monitor tiger movement. Vehicles entering forest areas are being thoroughly checked and sniffer dogs are being pressed into service at railway and bus stations, markets and other sensitive places to detect illegal trade of animals' body parts.

In reply to another query on tiger poaching incidents at Umred Karhandla sanctuary, the minister added that all efforts were made to increase their prey base in the forests so that the tigers would not intrude into human habitations.

Source: Vaibhav Ganjapure. 'State for tougher punishment to poachers', *The Times of India*, 15/12/15.

Poachers caught on camera traps, arrested in Tadoba Andhari TR



Forest officers of the Nagbhid range of the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve were successful, recently, in busting a gang of poachers and nabbing the three accused from different villages in Nagbhid and Brahmapuri tehsils. A muzzle loading gun and other poaching equipment were seized from them during the raid. The poachers were apprehended on the basis of their photographs captured in camera traps installed in the jungle, when they were on their poaching trips.

Camera traps had been installed in compartment no. 733 in Nagbhid range on November 4, to follow the movement of a full-grown tiger in the area. When the camera traps were recovered by forest staff a couple of days

later they found pictures of a gang of four poachers moving through the jungle with a muzzle loading gun, sharp weapons and other poaching equipment. The camera trap had captured the tiger at 7.12 pm on November 4 and the poachers too appeared at the same location at 1.30 am the same night. The foresters identified the poachers and tracked them to village Kosabi Gawli in Nagbhid and Chorti Vaigaon in Brahmapuri tehsil.

Explaining the use of muzzle loading guns in poaching, wildlife experts said that poachers walk into the jungle with loaded guns equipped with other electrical gadgets. They carry a battery-powered flashlight mounted on their head and a special sound making device to catch the attention of animals. The poachers creep up close to the targeted animal and suddenly focus the flashlight on their eyes, while buzzing their sound device. The animal captivated by the sudden flash of light and buzzing sound, is then shot from close range with the muzzle loading gun.

Source: Mazhar Ali. 'Poachers caught on camera traps, arrested', *The Times of India*, 11/12/15.

Eco-tourism board to boost tourism in PAs in state

The Maharashtra government has approved the establishment of an eco-tourism board, which will work to boost tourism in the state's protected areas. The board, which will be on the lines of those in other states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Karnataka, will frame a comprehensive plan for the development of tourism in these areas, ensure conservation and involve local communities in an effort to boost employment. A decision in this regard was taken by the state cabinet recently.

To be called the Maharashtra Eco-tourism Development Board, it will be headquartered at Nagpur. It will be headed by the State Forest Minister with the executive committee to be chaired by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests.

The objectives of the board will include development of tourism infrastructure like guesthouses and lodges, publicity, conservation of bio-diversity, forests, wildlife and education. It will also involve locals for the management of these areas, creation of homestays, and providing food, vehicles, guides for tourists and build their capacity.

Source: Dhaval Kulkarni. 'New board to boost Maharashtra tourism in protected areas' *DNA*, 12/12/15.

ODISHA

Maoist camp inside Satkosia WLS raided

Security forces raided a Maoist camp at Chutkei under Purunakote Police Station in the Satkosia Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in the month of December. The Maoists fled from the camp leaving behind some materials, including wireless sets. There were no reports of injury either of the security personnel or from the side of the Maoists.

This is the second such incident in the area; in 2013, an encounter took place between the security forces and the cadres in a jungle under the Chhendipada police station in which a Maoist camp was destroyed by the security forces. The rebels had, however, managed to flee on that occasion as well.

The movement of Maoists inside the Satkosia forests was reported some years back. However, in the later part of September 2015 there were reports of mass movement of armed cadre at some places in the sanctuary where they held regular meetings with the local villagers.

Source: 'Maoist camp destroyed in encounter inside Satkosia Sanctuary area', www.news.webindia123.com, 14/12/15.

18 fishermen held in Gahirmatha

18 fishermen from Bhadrak and Kendrapara districts were arrested in the middle of December for 'unlawful' fishing activity along the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary. Three trawlers were also seized by the patrolling unit

engaged by forest department near the unmanned Ekakulanasi. The total number of people arrested from fishing trawlers inside the prohibited area this season now stands at 96

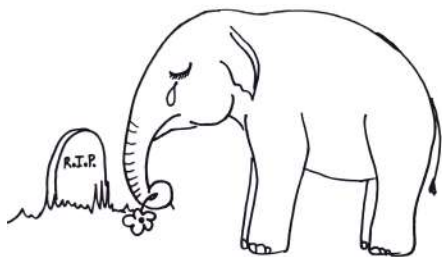
Sea patrolling has been stepped up within the Gahirmatha Sanctuary in view of the annual mass nesting season of the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles. A ban on trawler fishing along the 20 km stretch of Gahirmatha



marine sanctuary has been in force here from November 1 (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XXI, No. 1; Vol. XX, No. 1 and Vol. XIX, No. 6).

Source: '18 fishermen held in Gahirmatha', *The Hindu*, 16/12/15.

402 elephant deaths in Odisha in last five years



Information provided recently to the Odisha state assembly notes that Odisha saw the death of 402 elephants in the period 2010-11 to 2015-16. This includes 15 elephants that were killed due to poisoning while 38 died because of deliberate electrocution. Besides, 26 elephants died due to accidental electrocution while 16 were killed in train and road accidents. 37 elephants have died due to natural causes like infighting and falling from hilltops during the same period. However, the reasons for the death of 85 elephants were not yet known. While 61 elephants died natural deaths from 2010-11 till December 2, 2015, as many as 89 jumbos died of different diseases.

In a span of five years till November 2015, 345 people were killed and 161 injured after being attacked by elephants.

There are 1,954 elephants in the state as per the 2015 census.

Source: *The New Indian Express*, 09/12/15.

Odisha govt engages WTI to prepare wildlife management plan

A MoU to develop a comprehensive wildlife management plan for Odisha was signed recently between the state government and the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). The plan will cover protected areas as well as areas outside the PA network.

Besides mapping the key biological resources and their connectivity across the landscape, the plan will also suggest measures to restore the degraded or lost habitats, which are necessary for movement and sustenance of wildlife. A major objective behind the pact will be to reduce animal mortality by identifying conflict zones. Factors responsible for wildlife deaths such as poaching, deliberate and accidental killings through electrocution and train hits will also be mapped.

The plan will be prepared at a cost of Rs 3.65 crore and completed within 15 months. WTI will get 12 months to assess the ground situation and another three months to complete the plan. The memorandum mandates WTI with preparing 50 sub-management plans for each of the 50 forest and wildlife divisions and will comprise both short and long-term activities over a period of 10 years.

Source: 'Odisha govt engages WTI to prepare wildlife management plan', *Business Standard*, 12/12/15.

RAJASTHAN

50 families from Umari village relocate voluntarily after re-occupying their original village inside Sariska TR

50 families that had re-occupied their original village of Umari inside the core area of the Sariska Tiger Reserve (STR) have recently

relocated themselves voluntarily from the tiger reserve.

Nearly 84 families had been relocated from various villages in the STR in 2012 with each family being paid Rs. 10 lakh, besides other benefits. 50 of these families had moved back to Umari village alleging that many of their demands had not been met though the authorities claimed that they had been duly compensated.

Forest officials said they had surrounded the village inside the reserve and arrested a few villagers on charges of encroachment. An agitation had been planned against the move of the STR authorities to remove the encroachers, but it was postponed after the agitators met with the district administration. The officials said that the meeting yielded positive results. The administration formed a committee to look into the demands including registration of land, relocation of villagers and reopening of roads closed by the STR administration.

In the meanwhile, STR field director has written a letter to the state's chief wildlife warden, alleging that the district administration and police are working under political pressure, and not removing some 45 families who had been duly compensated to relocate, but had gone back into the STR's core area.

The matter of encroachment in Umari village came to notice recently after a team from the National Tiger Conservation Authority came to the STR for an inspection. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XVIII, Nos. 3 & 2 and Vol. XVI, No. 3).



Source: Rajendra Sharma. '50 families finally leave Sariska reserve', *The Times of India*, 14/12/15.

TAMIL NADU

Elephant proof trenches successfully protect village from elephants in Coimbatore

Elephant-proof trenches (EPTs) have successfully protected the tribal settlement of Arakadavu in the Periyanaickenpalayam range in Coimbatore from regular wild elephant raids. The trenches have ensured nil crop damage for the village for the first time in many years.

The settlement with a total population of 58 families (234 individuals) belonging to the Irula community has a total of 51.52 hectares of land under cultivation here. Till 2013, agriculture was unviable owing to frequent crop raids. EPTs were provided at the nearby hamlet Moonukuttai in 2013-14, and in 2014-15, the forest department (FD) created trenches at Aravakadu for a length of 5.775 km at a cost of Rs 26.13 lakh. The FD has also helped the villagers here to get quality seeds and commercial crops that could fetch them a good price in the market.

Source: VS Palaniappan. 'Tribal village now safe from elephants', *The Hindu*, 28/12/15.

TELANGANA

Government plans to boost tourism in Nallamala hills; 2500 families to be relocated from Amrabad TR

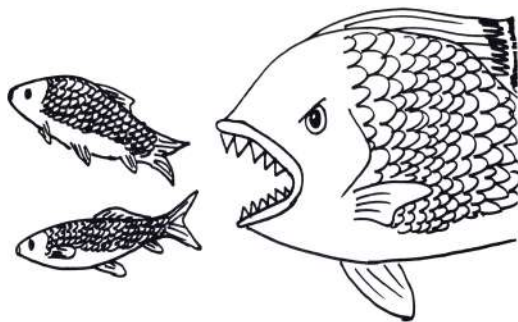
The state government plans to boost eco-tourism in the state of Telangana, including by the development of a nature tourism circuit in the Nallamala hills. The circuit will have safari drives in the forest, camping and overnight stay facilities.

A committee of senior officials has also been set up to oversee the relocation of villages from the Amrabad Tiger Reserve. The forest department officials say that while most of the residents in Sarlapally, Kudichintalabailu and Vatvarlapally of Amrabad mandala are ready to relocate, some villagers are reluctant. About 2,500 families are expected to be shifted out.

Many of them are ready to relocate as the government is offering an attractive rehabilitation package of nearly Rs. 12 lakh to each family.

Source: 'Nature tourism circuit in Nallamala in the offing', *The Times of India*, 08/12/15.

Piscine diversity under threat in Krishna river



Research undertaken by the Fisheries Development Officer, Gadwal, research scholars and a faculty member of Osmania University, Hyderabad, has revealed that feral fish are causing a decline in the species of Major Indian Carps, Minor Indian Carps and Catfish in the Krishna river, damaging the piscine diversity of the second largest river in South India. The results are based on the analysis of samples from 15 fishing sites along the 250-km stretch of the river in Mahabubnagar district that had been collected between January 2012 and December 2014.

It has also been found that the population of the feral fish, the Nile Tilapia *Oreochromis niloticus*, which was introduced for aquaculture purposes in India in 1987, has been going up. The Indian Major Carps were found to have declined from 11.91% in 2012 to 9.63% in 2013 and 6.96% in 2014, while Tilapia presence increased from 35.99% in 2012 to 42.01% in 2013 and 48.82% in 2014.

Source: T Karnakar Reddy. 'Piscine diversity under threat in Krishna river', *The Hindu*, 08/12/15.

UTTARAKHAND

Camping banned, but rafting allowed on the Ganga: NGT

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has upheld its ban on beach camping along the Ganga from Kaudiyala to Rishikesh (*PA Update* Vol. XXI, No. 5). The NGT has, however, allowed rafting with immediate effect.

The NGT, which had in August cancelled fresh permission for beach camps, also asked the Uttarakhand Forest Department (FD) to constitute a committee to frame a policy in the matter and furnish a report on capacity building in the area and the spots suitable for camping sites in future. It has given further directions to form a committee of officers not below the rank of joint secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), secretary of FD of Uttarakhand, member secretary of Central Pollution Control Board, Chief Conservator of Forest of the concerned area, director of the Wildlife Institute of India or his nominee of a very senior rank to suggest curative and preventive measures for least disturbance to wildlife and least impact on environment and ecology.

The committee has been given three weeks to submit its report to the MoEFCC. The MoEFCC, in turn, has to take a decision on the issue in three weeks after the report is submitted.

Source: Seema Sharma, 'Rafting on Ganga okay but no camping: NGT', *The Times of India*, 11/12/15.

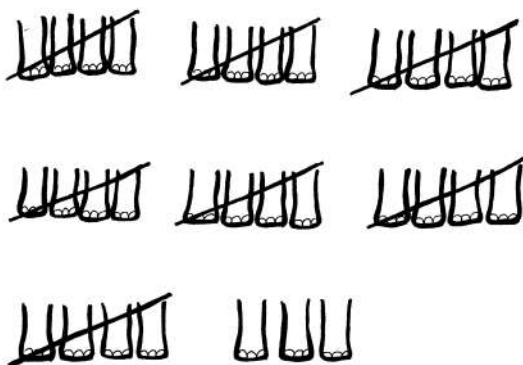
WEST BENGAL

Elephants killed in two train accidents in North Bengal in November-December

An elephant calf was killed in the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) after being hit by a Siliguri-bound passenger train from Bamanhat. The engine of the train also got derailed after it hit the herd. The incident took place in the evening near the railway pillar number 218

located between Gulma and Sevoke. The carcass of the calf was stuck under the engine and the forest department and the Railways could not start rescue operations till 9 pm as the incident took place deep inside the forest and the herd was standing near the train. A semi-adult elephant was confirmed to have died on the spot. This was the second such incident on this track in three weeks. On November 22, a full-grown tusker was mowed down by a speeding goods train near Sishubari, on the outskirts of Dalgaoon forest at Birpara.

As many as 62 elephants have been killed in such accidents on this particular stretch – between New Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar Junction – in the last 11 years. These incidents see a rise in November-December as this is the season when paddy ripens, and fog affects the visibility of the motormen. Conservationists have argued that night traffic must be suspended on this stretch. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXI, No. 5; Vol. 20, No. 4; Vol. XIX, Nos. 6 & 2; and Vol. XVII, No. 6)



Source: Pinak Priya Bhattacharya, ‘Rescue operations yet to start - Train runs over jumbo calf at Mahananda’, *The Times of India*, 15/12/15.
 ‘Train derails after hitting elephant in Bengal, many trains stranded’, www.zeenews.india.com, 14/12/15.



NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

THE SANCTUARY ASIA WILDLIFE AWARDS – 2015

Lifetime Service Award: Claude and Norma Alvares

Green Teacher Award: Anurag Kumar

Sanctuary Legend: Ashok Kumar

Wildlife Service Awards: Varad Giri, Nandini Velho, Param Jit Singh, Yash Veer Bhatnagar, The Gir Lion Protection Team

Young Naturalist Awards: Viral Joshi, Sailaja Nayak, Virendra Singh Panwar,

Wind under the Wings Award: Jayan Menon and *Malayala Manorma*, Anahita Mukherji and *The Times of India*

Special Maharashtra Wildlife Service Awards

Uttam Sawant, ACF, Pench TR

Umesh Verma, DCF, Melghat TR, Akot Wildlife Divn.

N Vasudevan, CCF, Mangrove Cell, Mumbai

Purnima Upadhyay, Khoj and the Gram Sabha of Payvihir village

Kailash Hudme, Laxman Aware, Umred Karhandla WLS and Govinda Luche, Gothangaon

SOUTH ASIA

MoU to study climate change impact in the transboundary Kailash Sacred Landscape

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Uttarakhand Space Application Centre (USAC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to undertake a study of the impact of climate change in the Himalayas. The MoU is a part of the Kailash Sacred Landscape (KSL) project that involves India, Nepal and China.

The KSL project is a trans-boundary collaborative programme between the three countries and is meant for the long-term conservation of ecosystems, habitats and

biodiversity while encouraging sustainable development.

Source: 'WII, state space centre sign MOU', *The Tribune*, 06/12/15.

BHUTAN

Training for Bhutanese officers on genetic techniques for wildlife monitoring

13 officers of the Department of Forests and Park Services from Bhutan participated in a recent capacity building workshop on the application of genetic techniques for wildlife population monitoring. Titled "Hands on training on genetic population estimation", the program was organized by Aaranyak's Wildlife Genetics Division and sponsored by the Government of Bhutan. It was conducted in Guwahati and covered various aspects of application of genetic tools for population monitoring such as study design, development of sampling strategies, various molecular biology laboratory techniques and statistical data analysis.

Source: Drishana Kalita. 'Training on Wildlife Genetic Research', *Assam Times*, 13/12/15.

NEPAL/INDIA

India and Nepal to share information on poaching; common approach for Askot WLS, Api Nampa Conservation Area

Indian and Nepalese forest officials have decided on a number of steps to work jointly on conservation issues. In order to tackle smuggling of bear gall bladders across the Indo-China border, forest officials and scientists from the two countries will work in tandem and the divisional forest official's office at Baithani in Nepal has been identified as the focal centre for sharing information on poachers.

It was also decided that the 10-year financial management plan of the Askot Wildlife Sanctuary will now be the same as for the Api Nampa Conservation Area of Nepal. Both these PAs are separated by the Kali river, and hence a common approach through mutual deliberation in the form of similar management will be devised and implemented in both protected areas.

The decisions were taken in a workshop that was held in Pithoragarh recently.

Source: 'India, Nepal to share info on poaching', *The Times of India*, 05/12/15.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

First UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in Myanmar

The Inle Lake in Shan state was recently declared the first Biosphere Reserve in Myanmar under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme. The lake will now get funding from the government of Norway under the framework of the Inle Lake Conservation and Rehabilitation project.

The 4,89,721 hectare Inle Lake is located in Nyaungshwe township, Taunggyi district in eastern Myanmar. It is home to 267 species of birds, 43 species of freshwater fishes, otters and turtles. It is also reported to be the nesting place for globally endangered Sarus crane.

In addition to its ecological importance, Inle Lake is also unique for the way the local inhabitants have adapted their life style to their environment.

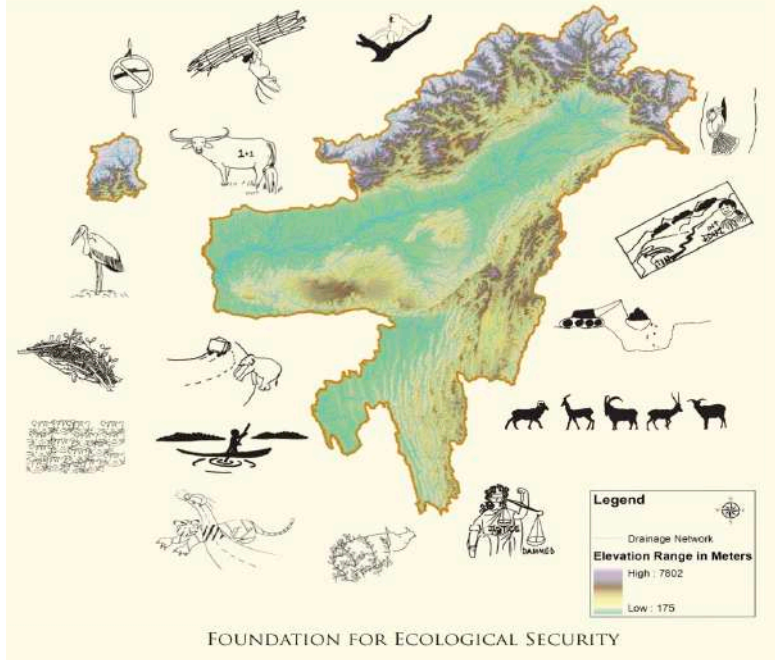
Source: 'Myanmar Launches First Unesco Biosphere Reserve', *The Indian Express*, 11/12/15.

THE STATE OF WILDLIFE IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

1996-2011

A Compilation of News from the Protected Area Update

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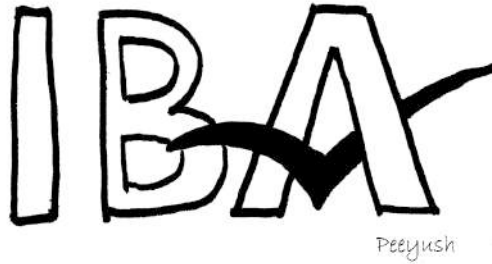
List of Contents: North East India Regional News; News from the States: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura.

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 Vagholikar) and Community conservation of wildlife (Neema Pathak)

Annexures

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Important Bird Areas Update



ANDHRA PRADESH

Environmentalists caution against downsizing of Kolleru WLS

The recently appointed Prof. Raman Sukumar committee to decide on the boundary of the Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) interacted recently with the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N Chandrababu Naidu, and made an aerial survey of the Kolleru lake and its surroundings. Environmentalists have, in view of this development, expressed concern that anything less than a status quo will open the flood gates for the encroachment of the Kolleru lake and sanctuary area.

While they are hoping that the committee would not suggest the downsizing of the Kolleru (WLS) from contour +5 to +3, they are worried that it would recommend that 14,861 acres of private patta land be given to the patta holders as the government was not in a position to pay the promised compensation. They have pointed out that while the *patta* holders had the right to only practice agriculture, in reality they would take up the more profitable aquaculture. And, the creation of fish tanks would cause obstruction to the flow of water and in turn may cause flooding of the neighbouring towns. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXI, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol. XIX, Nos. 3 & 1 and Vol. XVIII, No. 6)

Source: G. Venkataramana Rao.

‘Environmentalists want status quo on Kolleru’, *The Hindu*, 11/12/15.

CHANDIGARH

Chandigarh opposes draft notification on ESZ for Sukhna WLS

The Chandigarh Administration has filed its objection to the draft notification issued by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) on declaration of an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) around the Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary. The Ministry had, on September 17, issued the draft notification only for the area of Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) that falls under the UT Administration and not for the areas under Punjab and Haryana.

The UT, in its objection letter submitted to the MoEFCC, has said that instead of declaring the ESZ only for the area of sanctuary that falls under the UT Administration, the ministry should issue a notification for the entire sanctuary including the areas under the jurisdiction of Chandigarh, Punjab and Haryana. The UT noted that to protect the Sukhna WLS, it is mandatory to declare an ESZ around the entire sanctuary. Moreover, 90 per cent area of the sanctuary falls under the jurisdiction of Punjab and Haryana.

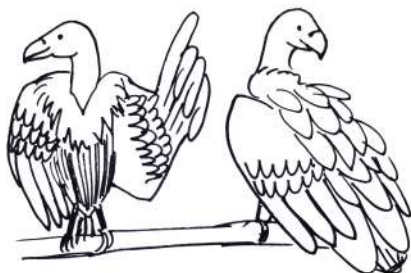
The UT has also opposed the draft notification’s point which reads, “No new construction of any kind shall be permitted within the ESZ, except for the domestic needs of the local residents”. The UT submitted that Chandigarh, in its proposal, had only asked for a complete ban on construction activity in 500 metres alongside the sanctuary and not in the

entire ESZ. The Punjab and Haryana High Court, for instance, also falls in the ESZ. Therefore, the UT's proposal of banning construction activity in only 500 metres along the sanctuary should be considered, the UT has submitted.

Source: Rajinder Nagarkoti. 'Draft notification on ESZ opposed', *The Tribune*, 13/12/15.

MADHYA PRADESH

Survey to count vultures in Indore region



The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (FD) will conduct a survey to count the number of vultures in the Indore region. The local population of vultures has declined sharply and experts fear that the numbers here may have gone down from nearly 50 to 8-10 in the past five years.

The FD has also identified possible new habitats of the vulture - areas such as Devguraria, Tinchha Fall, Patalpani and Yeshwant Sagar - to see if the birds are still to be found here.

Source: 'Few vultures left in region, survey likely from Jan 2016', *The Times of India*, 10/12/15.

MAHARASHTRA

Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link gets wildlife board's approval

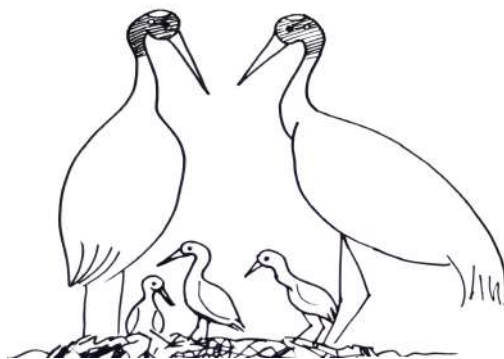
The Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link project has got an approval from the state wildlife board. The development came after the Chief Minister,

Devendra Fadnavis, approved the creation of a 1,600-hectare flamingo sanctuary at Mahul-Sewri. This is in addition to the Thane creek sanctuary that was notified in August.

The Mahul-Sewri sanctuary will have three parts: the Mahul-Sewri Zone, the TSC-NRI wetlands of Palm Beach Road in Navi Mumbai, and the Panje-Funde Zone, also in Navi Mumbai. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXI, Nos. 5, 4, 3 & 1; Vol. XX, No. 2; Vol. XIX, No. 1 and Vol. XVIII, No. 4)

Source: 'Wildlife board approval for MTHL project', *The Times of India*, 04/12/15.

Population of Sarus crane rises in Gondia district



The Sarus crane has shown a dramatic revival in the Gondia and Bhandara districts of Maharashtra. From five birds in 2004, the population of the crane is currently reported to be 35 in the Gondia district. The birds are mostly found in paddy fields in and around Parawada, Zhilmili and Ghattemani villages.

A large flock of 24 birds was spotted here in February 2014 – the biggest since 1970 when there was a report of a flock of 32 cranes in Navegaon Bandh. The bird is reported to have completely vanished, however, from Gothangaon, near Navegaon Bandh, where hundreds of tourists used to sight them regularly. The main cause for their dwindling numbers is said to be the large-scale use of pesticides in farming and also habitat destruction.

A month-long tourism festival has been conceptualized and organized by the District Tourism Committee, Gondia, in the name of Sarus - to showcase the species and the threats it is facing. Starting in the month of December, it focuses on wildlife, adventurous, archaeological and heritage and religious tourism circuits in Gondia district (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 3)

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'From 5 in 2004, Gondia's saras count is 35 now', *The Times of India*, 19/12/15.

MANIPUR

Bird monitoring workshop at Keibul Lamjao NP

A day-long workshop of monitoring common birds was held at Keibul Lamjao National Park under the aegis of Bombay Natural History Society and the Indian Bird Conservation Network in the first week of December. Nearly 50 delegates including those from Kolkata University attended the workshop.

Source: 'Workshop organised', *The Sangai Express*, 06/12/15.

ODISHA

Airborne Visual Infrared Imaging Spectrometer based project for monitoring Chilika Lake

A research project for collecting data and for the monitoring and management of Chilika lake using Airborne Visual Infrared Imaging Spectrometer (AVIRIS) was launched recently by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Space Application Centre (SAC) in collaboration with NASA. Scientists from IIT-Kharagpur, IIT-Kanpur, National Institute of Oceanography, Goa and the Indian Remote Sensing Society, Dehradun, will also be part of this first-of-its kind study in India.

Scientists of the Chilika Development Authority (CDA) are also participating in this experiment, which is expected to help develop a

number of algorithms for the better monitoring and management of the lake ecosystem.

Source: 'Innovative research gets under way for Chilika Lake's management', *The Hindu*, 26/12/15.

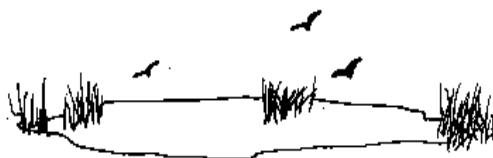
Special drive to remove illegal prawn gheries from Chilika

The Ganjam district authorities have decided to launch a special drive to remove illegal prawn gheries from Chilika, the biggest brackish water lake in the country. A strategy meeting for the purpose was held recently and those participating included officials of the revenue, fishery and forest departments and the Chilika Development Authority (CDA).

The administration has identified around 5,600 acres of area, encroached by prawn cultivators in about 10 villages under Khallikote and Rambha tehsils in the district. The prawn cultivators are reported to have constructed over 50 illegal gheries here. While the CDA will provide funds to remove the gheries, the police will be deployed during the eviction to maintain law and order.

Though the eviction of gheries from the lake has been an annual exercise of the district administration, it was stopped two years ago due to cyclones Phailin and Hudhud that hit the region in 2013 and 2014 respectively. The Chilika Matshyajibi Mahasangha, a federation of the fishermen that depends on Chilika for their livelihood has also been demanding removal of illegal gheries from the lake and steps to prepare a policy for fishing in the lake.

Source: 'Special drive to remove illegal prawn gheries from Chilika', Zeenews.india.com, 10/12/15.



PUNJAB

Amphibious vehicle to be introduced at Harike for tourism promotion

Amphibious vehicles are to be introduced in the Harike wetlands for the promotion of tourism here. After offering a tour on land, the dual-mode vehicle would enter the lake.

Each such vehicle has the capacity to carry 60 tourists and is expected to cost between Rs. 1.5 to 2 crore. Tenders to invite manufacturers to supply one such vehicle have been floated by the Punjab Heritage Tourism Promotion Board. The decision to purchase more such vehicles will be taken after evaluating the performance of the first unit.

Source: 'Punjab plans amphibious vehicles at Harike wetland', *Hindustan Times*, 14/12/15.

More than 70,000 migratory birds arrive at Harike WLS

A preliminary census of waterfowl conducted in December reported more than 70,000 migratory birds at the Harike Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The number is expected to grow as birds keep arriving till February.

A 2nd census is to be conducted in January and will be undertaken by a team of 60 representatives of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – India, the Wildlife Institute of India, Wetland India, Chandigarh Wildlife Group, the army and other NGOs.

The birds counted in Harike have been increasing over the last few years – from 55,000 in 2012 to 66,000 in 2013 to 82,100 in 2014.

Source: Gaurav Sagar Bhaskar, 'Good news for birdwatchers: 70,000 winged visitors already at Harike', *Hindustan Times*, 18/12/15.

UTTAR PRADESH

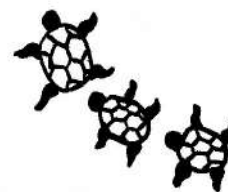
Biodiversity survey conducted around Narora Atomic Power Station



A three-day survey by the Narora Atomic Power Station (NAPS) in and around Narora found 69 species of birds with a total count of 5,306, six species of turtles, 18 endangered Gangetic river dolphins and an endangered gharial. The survey was organised as part of the Environment Stewardship Programme (ESP) of NAPS. Besides ESP members, experts from the Aligarh Muslim University, Gwalior University, Turtle Survival Alliance, Wild Bird Protection Society, Lucknow, and naturalists from several parts of the country took part in the survey.

A flock of common cranes, which are said to be rare in the Narora region, was also spotted during the survey.

Narora is an important bird area and the wetlands spread over 265 sq km of upper Ganga, from Brijghat to Narora Barrage stretch, were declared a Ramsar site in 2005.



Source: Rashi Lal. 'Wetland near Narora plant a home to winged guests', *The Times of India*, 19/12/15.

Allahabad HC seeks explanation regarding leather industry cluster near Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary

The Allahabad High Court has asked the Uttar Pradesh government officials of Agra district to explain why a leather shoe industry cluster was being sited close to the Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary. Notices were also issued to the ministry of environment and forests, the chairman of the Taj Trapezium Zone Authority,

the Agra Development Authority, the wildlife officers and other related departments. The court summons came in response to a public interest litigation pointing to the threat the leather cluster posed to the ecology of the place.

Source: 'Allahabad HC summons officials on pollution in bird sanctuary', *Business Standard*, 12/12/15.



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)*



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A Decade Ago **Protected Area Update 59, February 2006**

11 more biosphere reserves to be set up

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is in the process of adding 11 more biosphere reserves to the existing 14 all over the country. This was announced by Mr Suresh Chandra, Special Secretary to the MOEF at a recent meeting held in Gangtok to review biosphere reserves in the North-East region.

These 11 reserves are to be declared in each of the bio-geographic zones in the country as demarcated by the Wildlife Institute of India.

Further details are, however, not known.

Source: '11 more biosphere reserves to be set up',
The Financial Express, 20/11/05.

The Sanctuary – ABN Amro Wildlife Awards - 2005

The Sanctuary – ABN Amro Wildlife Awards were given in Mumbai in the first of December. The Lifetime Service Award was given to Dr. AJT Johnsingh of the Wildlife Institute of India. Wildlife Service Awards were given to Chander Singh Negi of the Uttaranchal Forest Department; the Gir Rescue Team that works in the Gir East, Gir West and Sasan Wildlife Divisions of the Gujarat FD; and K Manu of the Mysore Amateur Naturalists for bird conservation work in Kokkare Bellur, Karnataka.

The Green Teacher Award was given to Madhu Bhatnagar of the Sri Ram School, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi. The Young Naturalists Awards were given to Vishal Bansod who works with the Nature Conservation Society, Amravati and Bharat Vaghabhi Kamaliya for his work in the Una Taluka, Junagadh District, Gujarat.

Special Tiger Awards were given to Belinda Wright of the Wildlife Protection Society of India; Mr. BK Sharma, DIG in the

Central Bureau of Investigation for his efforts to fight wildlife crime and to Kirat Singh of New Delhi who was considered too young to qualify even for the Young Naturalists' Award.

The newly constituted Wind Under the Wings Award was given to *The Indian Express*, for its support to journalist Jay Mazoomdar to investigate and report on the situation in many of the country's protected areas including the Sariska, Ranthambhor, Panna, Indravati and Corbett Tiger Reserves

Vatavaran film festival awards

Vatavaran – 2005, the Environment and Wildlife Film Festival was held in New Delhi in the month of November. The films that won the awards are as follows:

Best of Vatavaran 2005: 'Indian Leopards - The Killing Fields' by Praveen Singh.

The Delhi Chief Ministers Award for the Best Documentary: 'A Second Hand Life' by Nutan Manmohan.

Environment Category: 'River Taming Mantras' by Sanjay Barnela and Vasant Saberwal.

Best Wildlife Documentary: 'The Last Flight' by Nutan Manmohan and 'The Policing Langur' by Ajay & Vijay Bedi produced for Public Service Broadcasting Trust.

The Forest for Life Award: 'Invocations to the Mountain Goddess' by Christopher Rego.

The Star Award: '*Vikas Bندوق Ki Naal Se*' by Biju Toppo and Meghnath.

Best Animation Film: 'Irony' by R Sathya Narayanan for the Ramanujam Foundation.

Best Public Service Message: 'Do Your Bit' by Anand Thakur and produced by Ogilvy and Mather Advertising Limited for Eco-India.

Student Category: 'Fistful of Steel' by Leena Rani Narzary, Nidhi Bal Singh and Sabir Haque for A J Kidwai Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC), Jamia Millia Islamia.

PERSPECTIVE

Communicating the challenges of conservation

One of the many perks of working with a wildlife, conservation and environment magazine such as *Sanctuary Asia* is that we are purely driven by a love for the wilds. The editorial imperatives of our team of conservationists, naturalists, photographers, designers, writers and editors, to a large extent, are unhampered by market forces unlike many contemporary media organisations.

Using long-form print journalism to communicate the rationale for wildlife conservation and environment protection is a challenge in an age where content that is shorter and online is preferred. Why would a reader be interested in the behaviour of a nondescript lizard found only on the Andaman Islands? Or believe an author when he says that the role of spiders in the ecological cycle of the Kanha Tiger Reserve is similar to that of the tiger? As an editor, one is faced with such routine dilemmas and a part of the struggle is to present the work and stories of those who contribute to the magazine in a manner that is both easy to understand and interesting at the same time.

Scheduling articles in a bimonthly magazine can be a perilous task, which involves dealing with impatient authors who can't wait to see their articles in print and editors who wish for last-minute changes. Rejecting earnest articles from authors about their latest forays into the wild is not easy, but is crucial to maintain the content diversity of the magazine. The varied interests within the domain of wildlife and conservation of the edit department leads to the occasional squabble over what we choose to publish. Should a spectacular natural history moment be chosen over a beautifully-composed image? Should scientific articles make way for narratives? Thankfully, these timely squabbles lead to reinforcing the established healthy content mix of the magazine, which has a tendency to go astray otherwise.

Though it manifests as a magazine, *Sanctuary's* reach spans policy, advocacy,

science, habitat management and on-ground support via our numerous projects, partnerships, events and programmes. Sitting in a small office in Mumbai, it is easy to be sceptical of a world with abundant biodiversity, a sustainable climate and an equitable future for one and all. But it helps to remind oneself of this quote by eminent field biologist and author George Schaller from time to time: "I learned long ago that conservation has no victories, that one must retain connections and remain involved with animals and places that have captured the heart, to prevent their destruction. I am sometimes asked why, given a world that is more wounded and scarred, I do not simply give up, burdened by pessimism. But conservation is my life, I must retain hope."

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