

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XXII, No. 3

June 2016 (No. 121)

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Editor: **Pankaj Sekhsaria**

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

Illustrations:

Mayuri Kerr, Shruti Kulkarni, Madhuvanti Anantharajan & Peeyush Sekhsaria

Produced by

The Documentation and Outreach Centre

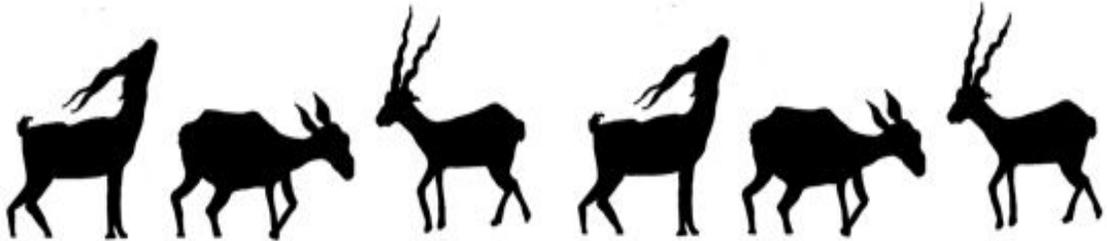
KALPAVRIKSH

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

Tel/Fax: 020 – 25654239

Email: psekhsaria@gmail.com

Website: <http://kalpavriksh.org/index.php/conservation-livelihoods1/protected-area-update>



Publication of the PA Update has been supported by

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

Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust, C/o FES

Bombay Natural History Society/ Indian Bird Conservation Network

Donations from a number of individual supporters

EDITORIAL

A season of despair

Be it news from individual PAs located in different parts of the country, incidents across landscapes, or developments in the policy-scape, 'despair' is the word that comes to mind as the vision stretches across what's been happening over the last few months.

It has been a scorching summer and one news that is dominating the national consciousness as this issue of the *PA Update* goes to press, is the unprecedented drought being experienced across large parts of the country – according to some estimates nearly 40% of the farmers of the country have been hit. The changing climate and failure of successive monsoons over the two preceding years have been held responsible, and agreeably, nothing could have or can be done in the short term to change this reality. What stands out, however, is the failure of the state to anticipate the scale of the challenge and be ready to deal with the situation. It is only when we were right in the middle of the crisis did the political and bureaucratic machinery start to respond and serious questions need to be asked of the intentions and priorities of the political and state establishments.

If farmlands and farmers are being badly hit, forests have not been spared either. The months of April and May reported widespread fires across the Himalayas, which the media report and regions like Bastar (which got completely ignored), destroying huge tracts of forests, killing wild animals and causing severe hardships to residents of these landscapes. News of fires in individual PAs also continues to come in, fires caused undoubtedly by the hot and dry conditions, but also catalysed by human neglect and callousness – in Sariska TR in Rajasthan due to carelessly thrown bidis, in the Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh, because of sparking in the high tension lines running

above and in Tipeshwar WLS in Maharashtra, the cause for which is still unclear.

And it is not just natural conditions that are a cause for concern as specific news reports in the following pages indicate – prime forest land in the Rajaji TR being handed over to an adjoining ashram, denotification in the Venkateswara NP in Andhra for industrial activity, approval to the Ken-Betwa river link that would sound the death-knell for the Panna TR, cutting down of forests adjoining the Kapilash WLS in Odisha to set up, believe it or not, a forest nursery and killing in police firing in Arunachal of those opposing a dam project that will destroy prime habitat of the extremely rare Black-necked crane!

There is also the development related to the culling of certain species of wildlife in several states by declaring them vermin. While prima-facie it seems to be a response to the threats these species pose to agriculture and to farming and forest communities, some investigation indicates the intentions are not all honourable (see Pg. 17). In Telangana, for instance, established shooters who are members of the National Rifle Association of India and a few former members of the 'Indians for Guns' forum have been roped in by the state government to cull wild boars damaging agriculture crops. While the issue of crop damage cannot be denied, a lot more information and analysis is needed before states and the centre makes their decisions on culling. It is well known that illegal hunting by urban and rural elite is common for sport and for the pot and there is serious concern over the impacts the current permissions will have, including on predator and apex species that depend on these animals for their own survival.

As the days move ahead, the summer and heat will, of course, be gone and predictions suggest that the monsoon this coming season is going to be a normal one, if not better than normal. While that might bring momentary and much needed relief and hope, it is no solution for the despair that spans the horizons. That will need far more fundamental, even paradigmatic political and policy changes, and that, as is amply clear, is nowhere in sight!

ANDHRA PRADESH

Reserve forest in vicinity of Sri Venkateswara NP to be denotified; road opened through Sri Lanka Malleswara WLS

The Andhra Pradesh Government is planning to de-notify 970 hectares of reserve forest adjoining the Sri Venkateswara National Park (NP) and hand over the area to AP Industrial Infrastructure Corporation.

The proposal to de-notify the forest area has been prepared and is expected to be sent soon to the Centre for approval. Concerns have been expressed on the impact this will have on the PA as also the possibility of this opening up a new smuggling route for red sanders.

Meanwhile, political pressure from the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is believed to have forced the officials to re-open the Sidhout road in Kadapa district at night; even though its closure was not posing any problem to commuters as there were two alternative routes connecting Badvel and Kadapa. The road cuts across the Sri Lanka Malleswara Wildlife Sanctuary that forms a part of the tiger corridor connecting the Seshachalam and Nallamala hill ranges. The 37-km stretch was closed for night traffic in early 2013 after five animals, including spotted deer and sambar were killed in accidents in a span of one and a half months.

Three animals, including two spotted deer, have been killed in accidents since the road was reopened two months ago. An official also informed that four tigers that had established their territory in that area were moving quite close to the road at night.

Source: Y. Mallikarjun. 'Disquiet over move to de-notify forestland', *The Hindu*, 06/04/16.

GUJARAT

Gujarat Coastal Zone Management Authority constituted

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has constituted a 15-member Gujarat Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Authority, which will identify critical stretches of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) and prepare Integrated CZM Plans. Apart from giving clearances, the authority shall co-ordinate the implementation of conservation projects or projects aimed at uplifting and protecting the people of the coastal areas, identify coastal areas vulnerable to erosion or degradation and formulate area-specific management plans for these areas and arrange funding for them.

It will deal with environmental issues relating to the CRZ that may be referred to it by the state government, the National CZM Authority or the centre. The authority will have powers to examine proposals for change or modification to the CZM plan received from the state government and will be free to make specific recommendations on the CRZ.

The MoEFCC has stated that the authority will be headed by the additional chief secretary environment and forest, and, apart from various forest department and other officials, it will have TP Singh, Director, BISAG, Gandhinagar; Rajesh Doshi, marine engineer, Vadodara; HB Chauhan senior scientist, Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad or his senior representative; HS Singh, ex-PCCF, Gandhinagar and Rajesh Shah, managing trustee, VIKAS Centre for Development, Ahmedabad as expert members.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. '15-member panel for Gujarat coastal management formed', *The Times of India*, 09/04/16.

Proposal for six eco-sensitive zones in Gujarat approved

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) has approved eco-sensitive zones for six protected areas in Gujarat

- the Marine National Park (NP) and Marine Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), the Girnar, Narayan Sarovar, Purna and Thol WLSs and the Vansda NP.

These six are in the list of 275 such zones that the ministry has approved recently.

Source: 'Proposal for six eco-sensitive zones in Gujarat approved', *The Times of India*, 26/04/16.

KARNATAKA

Concerns over growth in size and activities of Huliyyamma temple within Bandipur TR

Concerns have been expressed over the growth in size and in activities of the Huliyyamma temple that is located in the Kundkere range of the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. Wildlife activists have pointed to the coming up of electric lines and to the installation of a submersible water-pump as evidence of such developments. The temple near Mangala village abuts a water body and is an area that connects the Lokkere reserved forest to the tiger reserve.

The temple, which at one time was only a small stone idol worshipped by local villagers, gradually became a small shrine until it turned into a full-fledged temple a decade ago. In 2012, efforts to build a concrete structure were thwarted by the forest authorities. The current developments appear to have been ignored, however.

The Huliyyamma temple is one of many such small nondescript temples that were once found in these forests. Another example is the Belladkuppe temple, situated in the core of the reserve and which has grown over the years with the development of roads and water supply. While certain forest officers have opposed construction and other such activities in these temples, others have turned a blind eye and allowed provisioning of infrastructure such as roads, borewells and in the case of the Huliyyamma temple, even electric supply lines.

The number of pilgrims and tourists visiting the temples too has been on the rise.

Source: Bellie Thomas. 'From a tiger-protecting deity to a threat: Wildlife activist', *Deccan Chronicle*, 27/04/16.

MADHYA PRADESH

NBWL agrees over compensation of land for submergence in Panna due to Ken-Betwa project



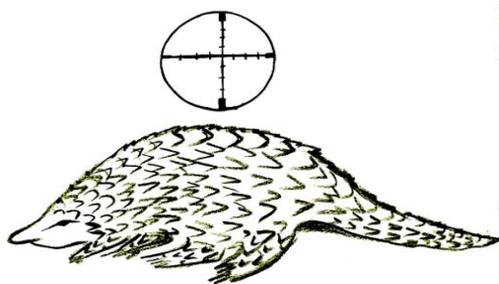
The standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), which conducted a detailed study on the impact of the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project on the Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR), has reportedly agreed to the Madhya Pradesh government's alternative action plan to compensate for the 4,141 hectares of tiger habitat that the project will submerge.

A six-member team of the NBWL's standing committee had visited PTR from April 8 to 11 for a feasibility study. The committee said it is convinced with the State Wildlife Advisory Board (SWAB) proposal suggesting that 8,000 hectares of buffer area of PTR be converted into a core area against 4,141 hectares of land that will be submerged. Some of the villages will have to be relocated in the process.

The river-linking project was expected to begin in January this year, but got delayed, pending environment clearances. The Rs. 9,393-crore project involves 9,000 hectares, half of which is within the tiger reserve. If the project is cleared, 7% of the reserve area will be lost. The former PTR Director too had red flagged the project, claiming it would hurt the tiger habitat. However, he was transferred a few months later. (*PA Updates* Vol. XXII, No. 2 and Vol. XXI, Nos. 4, 3 & 1).

Source: P Naveen. 'Ken-Betwa project: Panel gives nod to government's Plan-II', *The Times of India*, 22/04/16.

Alleged kingpin of Indo-China pangolin smuggling module arrested



The Madhya Pradesh forest's special task force (STF) says it has arrested the alleged kingpin of the Indo-China Pangolin smuggling network. Accused Amir Hussain Laskar, who is believed to be the middleman between Indian and Chinese traders, was arrested in Assam recently. His is the 80th arrest linked to the pangolin smuggling network from nine states across India so far. Nine of his local conduits were arrested in the state's Chhindwara district in September 2014. At least 47 kg pangolin scales known as 'chuan shan jia' in Chinese had been seized from them.

Officials say local poachers are paid Rs. 6000 for scales of one pangolin, which weighs around 1.3 to 2 kg. They are resold for Rs. 15,000 to middlemen and Rs. 30,000 to those who then export these. The international value is 30 times more than what is paid to poachers.

Pangolins are found mostly in south-eastern parts of Madhya Pradesh – mainly in the districts of Hoshangabad, Chhindwara, Balaghat and Seoni.

Source: 'Madhya Pradesh STF Arrests Kingpin of Indo-China Pangolin Smuggling Module – India' www.pangolinconservation.org, 19/04/16.

NGT seeks details on status of Ratapani TR

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) recently asked the Madhya Pradesh Chief Secretary,

Anthony JC De Sa, to submit the state's stand on the notification of Ratapani as a tiger reserve. The NGT central zonal bench was hearing the matter over tiger movement from the Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary to the state capital, Bhopal, and an intervention filed by RTI activist, Ajay Dubey.

It has been noted that the state government has put the proposal to notify Ratapani as a tiger reserve in cold storage despite receiving an 'in-principle approval' from the Centre in 2008. (*PA Update XVIII*, No. 5)

Source: 'Tiger reserve: NGT summons top bureaucrats' *The Times of India*, 26/04/16.

16 tiger deaths in Madhya Pradesh in last one year; seven in Pench TR

16 tigers have been reported dead in Madhya Pradesh in the last one-year period on account of a number of reasons including poaching. The information available on the website of the National Tiger Conservation Authority's (NTCA) website, notes that seven deaths occurred in Pench Tiger Reserve (TR), where a tigress and its two cubs were poisoned in the Satosha area in March. In September last year too, the Pench TR authorities had arrested four poachers and recovered body parts of a big cat they had killed.

The other places from where tiger deaths have been reported include the Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Panna and Sanjay-Dubri TRs, the Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary, a forest in the Chhindwara district, the Umaria-Shahdol district highway and Dewas. The details of most of the deaths were awaited by the NTCA, the website has reported.

According to the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), most of the deaths were due to natural causes.

Source: 'Madhya Pradesh loses 16 tigers in last 12 months', *The Indian Express*, 08/04/16.

Some details of the tiger deaths

January 2: A tiger died in Ghatkohka buffer zone of PTR, while the carcass of another tiger from Madhya Pradesh was found in Deolapar range of Maharashtra

January 8: Carcass of a three-year-old tigress, which was electrocuted, was found hidden under stones in the Chourai range of Chhindwara. Four people were arrested on charges of poaching

January 31: A tiger from Gumtara range died, allegedly, due to septicemia resulting from an injury.

March 28: 11-year-old tigress and her two eight-month-old cubs were found dead.

Source: 'MP: Four arrested near Pench reserve with tiger paws', *Hindustan Times*, 05/04/16.

Kuno-Palpur to be developed as a tiger reserve; Gujarat FD feels relieved

The Madhya Pradesh (MP) government's decision to develop Kuno-Palpur as a tiger reserve has brought relief to officials of the forest department (FD) in Gujarat, who had been fighting a long battle in the apex court over the issue of translocation of lions to Kuno-Palpur.

The Union Minister of State for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar, recently made a statement that it would take 25 years for translocation of lions from Sasan Gir to Kuno Palpur. This is reported to have led the MP government to rethink priorities, leading them to decide to have tigers in Kuno-Palpur, rather than lions. Officials of the National Tiger Conservation Authority have also suggested to their counterparts in MP to develop Kuno-Palpur as a tiger reserve, as it was an important corridor for the movement of tigers from Ranthambhore to Kuno. At present, one tiger is already residing in Kuno, while another two have been reported in the periphery.

There are 523 lions in Gujarat. It was in April 2013 that the Supreme Court had formed a 12-member committee to oversee the translocation of lions to Kuno from Sasan Gir. The issue is pending with the committee.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXII, Nos. 2 & 1; Vol. XXI, Nos. 6 & 4; Vol. XX, No. 6 and Vol. XIX, Nos. 6, 5, 4, & 3).

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. 'Gujarat foresters relieved as MP marks Kuno-Palpur for tigers', *The Times of India*, 05/04/16.

MAHARASHTRA

FD approves land diversion of tiger forests for explosives factory near Nagpur

The explosives company, Solar Industries India Ltd (SIIL), has moved a proposal to take over 87.98 hectares (222 acres) reserved and protected forest land in Chakdoh – Kondhali and Kalmeshwar ranges in tiger rich forests some 40 km from Nagpur. The diversion has been mired in controversy as the land and surrounding forests have 7-8 tigers and other animals listed under various schedules of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.

A camera trap survey to verify presence of tigers in the area was conducted earlier this year, from February 29 to March 15. The report, based on 35 camera traps, deployed in a 10 km radius from the factory, recorded tigers in 11 of the cameras at a distance of 4.76 km from the land proposed for diversion. The Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF), Nagpur Circle, who was given the report has, however, recommended the diversion saying that there are no tigers and leopards in the 87 hectares land to be diverted. Two earlier surveys, one conducted between March 25 and April 14, 2015 and the other between October 10 and 25, 2015 too had reported tigers, leopard and hyena in the area.

The local Saoner MLA from the Congress party has opposed the move saying that the forest officials are misleading the state government. Wildlife conservationists too have alleged that the company is not keen on procuring private land due to high market rates.

As per the government rules and the market rate, an acre of land costs Rs. 88 lakh. Forest land, on the contrary, will be available for between Rs. 7 and Rs. 10 lakh per hectare.

Following stiff opposition, the Nagpur forest division had asked district honorary wildlife wardens to re-survey the forest land in 10-km periphery of the existing explosives factory. However, one of the wardens said that his views opposing the project had not been considered in the forest department's decision agreeing to the diversion.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Forest dept set to give 222 acres to explosives co', *The Times of India*, 18/04/16.

Proposal to declare Tipeswar, Painganga WLSs a tiger reserve

The Maharashtra government is pushing for the Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) to be clubbed with the Painganga WLS and be declared a tiger project. A proposal in this regard has been sent to the principal chief conservator of forests (wildlife). Tipeswar is spread over 140 sq km, while the area of the Painganga WLS is 400 sq km. The two are separated by a distance of about 100 km but connected by a forest corridor.

The proposal has support of the local MLA and the member of parliament from the region as well. Several other local representatives too have submitted letters in support of the proposal. The Maharashtra State Forest Minister, Mr Sudhir Mungantiwar, too has said he will take up the matter with the Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Mr Prakash Javadekar.

He said further that Tipeswar can be developed on the Tadoba buffer model, where e-learning in schools, cottage units and other employment generation measures have helped conserve tigers. Community development and water conservation work in the buffer zone villages can be taken up under the Shyamaprasad Mukherjee Jan Van Vikas Scheme, he added.

The sanctuary currently has nine tigers – four adults and five sub-adults. Tipeswar has also emerged as a source population for tigers for Painganga, the Tadoba-Andhari tiger reserve and even the Kawal tiger reserve in Telangana (*PA Updates* Vol. XXII, No. 2 and Vol. XIX, No. 5).

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Mungantiwar 'will consider' Tipeswar tiger reserve demand', *The Times of India*, 22/04/16. Dhaval Kulkarni. 'Maharashtra for clubbing of Tipeswar, Painganga sanctuaries to form tiger reserve', *DNA*, 27/04/16.

Maharashtra proposes to set up tiger research institute



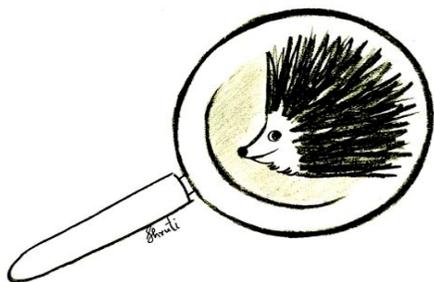
The Maharashtra government has proposed setting up a tiger research institute in the state. The proposal was submitted to the central government during the 'Third Asia Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation' that was held recently in New Delhi. The location proposed is Nagpur or Chandrapur, as there are 13 tiger reserves with 350 tigers located within a 300-km radius of either of these two places.

The proposal has been welcomed by researchers and naturalists on account of the resources and autonomy for research that this institute would potentially get.

Source: Mayuri Phadnis, 'state roots for tiger research institute', *Pune Mirror*, 19/04/16.



Project to study small mammals taken up by Pune Wildlife Division



The Pune Wildlife Division has, in collaboration with the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE), initiated a project in the Baramati region of Pune district to study the behavior of small mammals such as the fox, jackal and jungle cat. The animals will be collared with GPS collars that will help tracking them and studying their behavior. The researchers have permissions to tag 20 foxes of which eight have already been tagged. Jackals and jungle cats will soon be brought into the ambit of the study.

The Forest Department (FD) had, in 2014, started a project called *Ovitla Landga* (The Wolf in Folklore) to study the particular species. At the time, the project had been taken up on a large scale, involving several naturalists and studying various aspects of the animals, like their den sites, interactions with the shepherd community and habitat loss. Although not part of this project, the new GPS tagging is expected to similarly add to a comprehensive database formed during the earlier initiative.

Source: Mayuri Phadnis. 'Size doesn't matter for the forest dept', *Pune Mirror*, 27/04/16.

Pench TR moves court to get back STPF weapons

The Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR) authorities have moved the court to get back weapons for its Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) that had been seized by the police in February 2015.

On February 23, 2015, a group of fishermen was allegedly involved in illegal

fishing in Totladoh lake inside PTR and was challenged by the STPF patrolling party. The fishermen, who were present in large numbers, were defiant and started throwing stones and petrol bombs at the STPF personnel. Firing in the air did not help either and the STPF was forced to fire as at the fishermen as they surrounded the STPF and started to throw petrol bombs at them. One from the fishermen group, Harinand Banwari, died due to a bullet injury from the STPF firing and the Deolapar police had registered an offence of murder against the STPF personnel. The police also seized STPF's two 9 mm pistols, one 7.62 mm SLR rifle, two 12 bore guns, 15 cartridges and 12 bullets.

The Pench authorities say that no action has been taken against the fishermen though they were involved in illegal activities and had destroyed three patrolling boats besides setting the Salama protection camp on fire. The damage to the TR property was estimated to be over Rs. 60 lakh. They note further that the police action was against a government notification of September 19, 2006, which states that under Section 197 of CrPC wherever firing is resorted to by any forest personnel, it shall be inquired into by an executive magistrate of the area, and any proceedings including instituting a criminal case or effecting arrest can be initiated only if it is held as a result of inquiry that use of arms was unwarranted. This implies that the FIR against forest officials should not have been registered till the magisterial inquiry was concluded. The offence against foresters was registered amid pressure from the local MLA who resorted to a rasta roko.

The TR authorities have through special public prosecutor PK Sathianathan, now moved a local court in Ramtek, demanding return of weapons and ammunition.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Arms in police custody, Pench tiger protectors left toothless', *The Times of India*, 25/04/16.

Youngsters from fishing community to work at marine centre in Navi Mumbai



Youngsters from the fishing community in Mumbai will be trained to work in the upcoming marine interpretation centre at Airoli in Navi Mumbai. The centre will have

multi-sensory, mechanical exhibits to give tourists an experience of coastal biodiversity. It is one of the many initiatives of the Mangrove Cell, which has also received funding from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, an international agency involved in sustainable management and conservation of coastal regions in the state.

The youngsters, numbering at least 20, will be inducted following a five-day training programme that is to be conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society.

Source: Sadaf Modak. 'Youngsters from fishermen families to work as 'naturalists' at marine centre', *The Indian Express*, 28/03/16.

MEGHALAYA

NGT sets up panel to restore ecological damages done by coal mining in Meghalaya



The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has constituted a high-powered committee of government officials to prepare guidelines for the restoration of the environment and ecology

destroyed as a result of coal mining in Meghalaya. The constitution of the committee came via an order issued by the NGT in the end of March. The order states that the state government, in consultation with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), shall submit a report within four weeks mentioning the steps they would take to restore environment and ecology, particularly protection of water-bodies resulting from legal or illegal mining, and unscientific or unregulated mining, which have taken place in the previous years.

Secretary, MoEFCC would head the committee, which will include as members, the Meghalaya chief secretary, secretaries of Meghalaya Mining and Meghalaya Forest Departments and the additional secretary to the Union Coal Ministry. The committee would be at liberty to engage any expert in the field if necessary.

Further, the NGT appointed five advocates as commissioners in addition to those appointed earlier. These commissioners are expected to conduct field visits to those areas where mining was being carried out earlier and submit a report about whether there is or was any illegal mining and transportation of coal in that area.

The NGT had extended the date for depositing of royalty along with environmental charges to the Meghalaya Environmental Restoration Fund until April 15. However, it declined to extend the date for the transportation of extracted coal. No coal would be permitted for transportation after May 15.

Source: 'NGT sets up panel to restore ecology - Coal transport extended till May 15', *The Telegraph*, 04/04/16.

ODISHA

61 day fishing ban along Odisha coast

In order to facilitate fish breeding along the coastline, the Odisha government has banned fishing activities along the state coast for 61 days from April 14. The Fisheries Department

sent out an appeal to fishermen not to venture into sea with mechanized vessels and trawlers in contravention of the ban order.

Source: 'Odisha Govt ban on fishing activities in state coast 61 for days from April 14', www.orissadiary.com, 11/04/16.

Forest adjoining Kapilash WLS to be cut for setting up nursery

The Odisha Forest Department (FD) is planning to fell trees in the Dalijoda reserve forest, adjoining the Kapilash Wildlife Sanctuary, to set up a nursery over an area of over 25 hectares.

The local Van Surakhya Samiti (VSS) has opposed the move and members have also approached the Athgarh MLA, Ranendra Pratap Swain, under whose jurisdiction the reserve forest falls. The VSS says that they have been protecting the Dalijoda forest for the past 13 years. The approval of the gram sabha is also required under the provisions of the Forest Rights Act for conversion of any forest, but this has not been done either.

The FD proposal, if sanctioned, will undo the effort of the VSS and is also expected to result in increased human-wildlife conflict in the area.

Source: Riyan Ramanath V. 'Dalijoda forest to be axed for nursery', *The Times of India*, 06/04/16.

Hi-tech patrolling system at Similipal TR

Hi-tech patrolling is set to be introduced in the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) ahead of Maha Vishuva Sankranti, a religious function when tribals indulge in a ritual of mass killing of wild animals in the forests here.

The STR authorities have identified 30 vulnerable areas where anti-poaching camps have been set up to launch the system. Forest personnel manning the camps will be given a mobile handset each with a pre-loaded application called Hejje that will enable senior officers to track the movement of the field

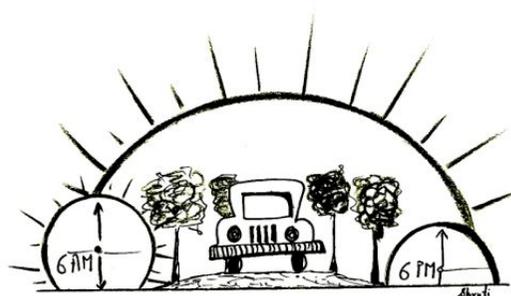
personnel and get real-time data about poachers, prey base and tigers.

Around 300 camera traps have also been installed to facilitate monitoring over a 318 sq km area that has been identified as tiger landscape within the STR's core area. Another 200 such traps will also be installed for a tiger estimation drive to be undertaken here.

Source: 'Hi-tech patrolling at STR from Thursday', *The Times of India*, 05/04/16.

RAJASTHAN

Full day safari at Ranthambhore TR



The Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve has, starting the first week of April, opened the reserve for full day safaris from sunrise to sunset. A limited number of vehicles, five gypsies, will be allowed only in the tourist zones (1-5) within the carrying capacity of six people. The full day ticket for foreigners would be Rs. 40,000 and for Indians Rs. 30,000. Besides, there would be a guide on each gypsy that would be GPS monitored.

Currently, the total number of vehicles allowed in the tourism zones is 40 (20 gypsies and 20 canters). The full day safari would allow for 25 gypsies but at an exorbitant price which, it has been pointed out, can only be afforded by the rich and the elite and professional photographers.

The Rajasthan State Congress, which is in the opposition in the state assembly, has claimed that the government decision is against conservation and that the forest department seems interested only in making money through tourism.

Source: Rachna Singh. 'Now, Ranthambhore opens for full day safari', *The Times of India*, 06/04/16.

TAMIL NADU

Mountadan Chetty community all set to relocate from Mudumalai TR

The Mountadan Chetty community is all set to relocate from the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (TR). 235 of the 701 families living inside the reserve have been identified for the first phase of relocation and 88 of these have been identified for receiving cash compensation or housing facilities.

The community is one that has been seeking relocation for a long time and there have been pleas for relocation that go back nearly four decades.

Source: P Oppili. 'After 40 years, forest dwellers get new houses', *The Times of India*, 27/04/16.

45 day fishing ban off the Tamil Nadu coast



The 45 day annual ban on deep sea fishing has been imposed along the Tamil Nadu coast for the period April 15 to May 29. An estimated 10,000 mechanised fishing boats would not be allowed into the sea for fishing; country boats will however be exempted.

The ban is aimed at facilitating conservation and breeding of fish stock along the coast.

Source: 'Annual 45-day fishing ban in TN from Friday', www.zeenews.india.com, 15/04/16.

UTTARAKHAND

Exchange of prime forestland from Rajaji TR approved for ashram bordering reserve

A committee of three members including the Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve (TR), has cleared the handover of 19.53 hectares of land from the Haridwar range of the Rajaji TR to the Haridwar based Doodhadhari Burfani ashram. In exchange, the ashram will transfer an equal amount of land belonging to it on the boundary of the Chilla range of Rajaji.

The ashram had, on two occasions in the past, proposed taking over of the land, first for setting up a hospital and then a medicinal plant nursery. Both proposals were rejected by the State Board for Wildlife. The ashram then directly applied to the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) suggesting exchange of land. Subsequently, a team of three members – HS Negi, Inspector General of the National Tiger Conservation Authority; PC Tyagi of the Wildlife Institute of India and Corbett TR Director, Sameer Sinha, recommended land exchange a couple of months ago saying that the land at Haridwar range is fragmented while the one at Chilla provides extension of continuous forests. The NBWL too has now approved the proposal.

Wildlife activists and environmentalists have pointed out that the land of the Haridwar range is within the core area of Rajaji TR and the habitat of the wild animals such as leopards and elephants. The land is also estimated to be worth Rs. 200 crore as per market rates, while the one outside Chilla which is being given in exchange is alleged to be barren and of a value of not more than Rs one crore. They have also noted that forests all over the country were being fragmented with roads, railway lines or habitation, and for this reason prime forestland should not be given to private entities.

Source: Seema Sharma. 'Forest dept, Haridwar ashram decide to swap land in Rajaji', *The Times of India*, 20/04/16.

Show-cause notice to seven range officers for construction inside Rajaji TR

Seven range officers of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve (RTR) were served show-cause notices for illegally constructing cemented roads and walls inside the reserve. The action comes nearly three months after a news report highlighted these constructions inside the seven ranges of the reserve. The rangers were reportedly helped by another unidentified official of RTR, who exercised considerable financial and political powers under the former Congress government. The illegal roads and walls were built inside the reserve in spite of warnings issued by the director of the RTR.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (wildlife), who is also Chief Wildlife Warden, claimed to be unaware of these constructions. The range officer of Motichur, meanwhile admitted to building a cemented road in place of the previous trail but refrained from giving an explanation regarding lack of permission for the construction work.

Source: Seema Sharma, 'Show-cause notices served to 7 Rajaji officers', *The Times of India*, 17/04/16.

UTTAR PRADESH

WII to undertake Ganga biodiversity restoration project near Hastinapur WLS



The Union Ministry of Ganga Rejuvenation has entrusted a pilot project to the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to work towards the restoration of select aquatic species that thrive in the Ganga. The three year project will cost Rs. 25 crore and a Ganga Aqualife Conservation Monitoring Centre will also be set up at the WII as part of it.

The institute has selected a river stretch at Narora near the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh, where by an ideal environment of lesser pollution will be created

and a healthy population of species such as the gharial, turtle, otters, and fish species will be nurtured. The experiment will help demonstrate the role of restoration of biodiversity in keeping the river clean.

The project will involve the local community along with related government departments such as irrigation and tourism for its execution. Rescue and rehabilitation centres will also be set up for endangered fauna at selected sites.

Source: Seema Sharma. 'Wildlife Institute to undertake biodiversity restoration in Ganga', *The Times of India*, 28/04/16.

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

WWF – India and Ricoh India partnership to support conservation

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – India, and Ricoh India, a global technology company recently signed the 'Project Nature Watch' partnership to support conservation activities in India. The project aims at providing need-based infrastructure support to frontline and field staff working in the forest and marine areas, for monitoring species such as the Red panda, Snow leopard, tiger, elephant, rhino, Olive ridley turtle and other threatened fish diversity, coral reefs, cetaceans and marine mammals.

Under this collaboration, around 200 high-end Pentax binoculars will be handed over to the frontline staff of forest departments of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Sikkim and West Bengal to support wildlife monitoring and patrolling activities. Waterproof cameras will also be provided for work in marine habitats across five coastal states of Gujarat, Goa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and the Lakshadweep Island.

Source: Press Release, WWF-I, 22/04/16.

MoEFCC preparing guidelines for procurement of lands to protect tiger corridors

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is working on new guidelines by which project proponents can acquire land to strengthen tiger corridors. This can happen, MoEFCC officials said, as part of compensatory afforestation that project proponents have to do.

The Centre has, in the recent past, been criticised for allowing multiple infrastructure projects like the one through the Kanha-Pench tiger corridor. The National Highways Authority of India is widening National Highway-7 through this corridor while the Gondia-Jabalpur railway doubling will also cut through it. In another instance, the Durgapur open cast mine located near the Tadoba-Indravati tiger corridor was cleared last August. Some wildlife researchers have welcomed the move saying that tiger corridors need to be accorded as much importance as protected areas and a move such as this will help in the process.

Source: Nikhil M. Ghanekar. 'MoEF preparing guidelines to protect tiger corridors', *DNA*, 22/04/16.

NGT asks states to submit list of wetlands



The National Green Tribunal has directed all state governments to submit a complete list of wetlands under their jurisdiction after a plea claimed that large areas which are ecologically important are being lost as these have not been notified as protected under law. A bench headed by Justice Swatanter Kumar also directed the centre to place on record within two weeks the states which have submitted their plans regarding wetlands.

The tribunal's direction came on a plea filed by Anand Arya seeking direction to the

Central and Uttar Pradesh governments to identify all wetlands within the state as per The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2010. The plea had also sought direction "to take action to notify these two wetlands (in Gautam Buddha Nagar) without any further delay and grant an ad interim injunction against interference with these two wetlands till these are notified and protection granted".

According to the plea, the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2010 were passed under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, making it mandatory for the government in coordination with the states to identify and notify all Wetlands in the country within a period of two years. It said such wetlands have not been identified and notified in the country as yet.

Source: 'Time to go green! NGT asks states to submit list of wetlands', www.newsnation.in, 24/04/16.

Three Indian transport companies sign declaration to fight wildlife trafficking

India's national air-carrier Air India and two other Indian transportation companies, Jet Airways and Apeejay Shipping, recently signed the Buckingham Palace Declaration to fight criminal wildlife trafficking. The declaration was signed at a ceremony at the residence of the British High Commissioner to India.

The Buckingham Palace Declaration has been developed by the United for Wildlife International Taskforce on the Transportation of Illegal Wildlife Products. Currently, over 40 chief executives, chairmen, and other leaders of airlines, shipping firms, port operators, custom agencies, intergovernmental organisations and conservation charities from around the world have signed the declaration.

Source: 'Air India signs declaration to fight wildlife trafficking', *Business Standard*, 25/04/16.
'3 companies sign declaration to fight wildlife trafficking', *India Today*, 12/04/16.

MoEFCC issues draft of new rules for wetland management



The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has announced fresh draft guidelines for amendment to the Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010. The draft has been opened up for public consultation, to which comments can be sent by May 30, 2016.

While the MoEFCC has stated that the new rules will be in tune with the previous rules, creation of a state level authority is a major change. The draft amendment rules state that the identification of the water-body will be done by the state, thus, ignoring the involvement of stakeholders and other citizens. Also, the way for stakeholders to approach the wetland authority in case the state fails to identify a threatened water body is not clear.

Source: Sushmita Sengupta, 'MoEFCC notifies new draft rules on wetland management', *Down to Earth*, 08/04/16.

More than 1,600 leopards poached between 2005 and 2015: WPSI

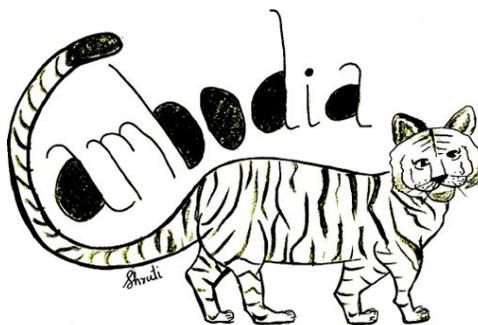
Data put together by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) suggests that 1,664 leopards were poached in the country between 2005 and 2015. 46 leopards are reported to have been poached between January and March this year and another 80 have died for a variety of other reasons. The total figures according to WPSI are only a fraction of the actual poaching and trade in leopard parts in India.

While the annual average figure for the last decade is between 150 and 160 animals, there have been years when the numbers have been exceptionally high. An example is the year 2000 when it was estimated that 1278 leopards were killed that year. A large shipment of seized leopard skins and parts in 2000 accounted for the unusual spike in documented animal deaths.

Source: Meera Bhardwaj, 'Data shows 1,664 leopards poached last decade', *The New Indian Express*, 06/04/16.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Cambodia to reintroduce tigers in protected forests



In a bid to revive its tiger population, the Cambodian government has approved a plan to reintroduce tigers into its protected forests. An official of the Department of Wildlife and Biodiversity in Cambodia said they were considering negotiating with the governments of India, Malaysia and Thailand to bring at least seven to eight tigers – two males and five or six females – to live in the protected forests of Mondulkiri.

According to WWF-Cambodia, tigers have become functionally extinct in Cambodia due to poaching of both tigers and their prey. The plan is to bring in the animals after two years as Cambodia needs to first resolve issues related to poaching and rebuilding the population of tiger prey. If the preservation efforts are not completed by 2017 the arrival of the tigers could be pushed back to 2018.

The last tiger spotted in Cambodia was photographed in 2007 by camera traps in the forests of eastern Mondulkiri province.

Source: 'Cambodia wants India-style Project Tiger', *The Statesman*, 06/04/16. Sopheng Cheang, 'Cambodia to repopulate forests with tigers from abroad', www.sfchronicle.com, 08/04/16.

Initiative for wildlife conservation along Indo-Myanmar border

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), India, the Nagaland Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Trust and WCS, Myanmar, have embarked upon a long-term wildlife conservation initiative along the Indo-Myanmar border. Supported by the Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme, the initiative will concentrate on forests in northeast India and northwestern Myanmar.

Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland together share a 1,643 km border

with Myanmar and this region forms a contiguous landscape. According to WCS India, there is little knowledge available at present on the movement of animals across the Indo-Myanmar border, and, there is a need to undertake a large-scale survey to assess wildlife distribution across the region.

Source: Naresh Mitra. 'NE-Myanmar animal corridor restoration drive for reconnecting tiger, other wildlife populations', *The Times of India*, 21/04/16.

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

A compilation of news from the *Protected Area Update*

Edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria

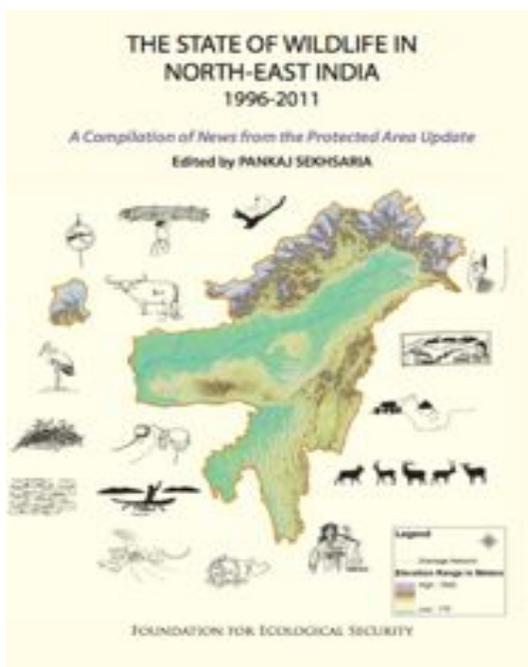
List of Contents: North East India Regional News; News from the States: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura.

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

Annexures

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Culling of wildlife

To address issues of wildlife-human conflict, the central government has encouraged states to use provisions under the Wildlife Protection Act that allow for select wild species to be hunted. Recent months have seen select state governments allow culling under section 11(1) while the Central Government too has declared species vermin (*on request from states*) under section 62 of the Wildlife Protection Act.

The table below enlists state-wise details and developments. This list may increase given that states like Madhya Pradesh have changed the name of nilgai to allow them to cull the species easily and some states would have passed orders but have remained away from the limelight thus far.

Sr.	States	Species & Area	Notified by/ Month	Highlights
1	Uttarakhand	Wild boar Select blocks / districts	Centre Feb 2016	- According to Dhananjay Mohan, chief conservator of forests, Uttarakhand, "The locals do not need permission to cull the animals once it has been declared as vermin and is found in the agricultural land. Killing it however in protected areas (viz. reserve forests and the like) is still punishable under the Wildlife Protection Act." Source: <i>Down to Earth</i> , 10th February 2016.
2	Bihar	Wild boar, nilgai Select blocks / districts	Centre Dec 2015	- This is arguably the first instance where the Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change has declared any species as vermin and granted rights to a state to hunt them down. Bihar had been pressing the matter after several complaints of damage to crops by nilgai Source: <i>Deccan Herald</i> , 6th March 2016.
3	Himachal Pradesh	Rhesus macaque Shimla Municipal Corporation	Centre Mar 2016	- The macaque has been declared vermin in 38 tehsils for a period of one year. The state government had sent a request to the MoEFCC in September last year in the matter. A petition challenging the notification is pending in the High Court. Source: <i>Catch News</i> , 2nd April 2016 <i>Business Standard</i> , 6 th May 2016.
4	Telangana	Wild boar Entire state	State Dec 2015	Established shooters who are members of the National Rifles Association of India and a few former members of the 'Indians for Guns' forum have been roped in by the Telangana state government to cull wild boars damaging agriculture crops. District Forest Officers have been asked to provide logistical support to the shooters at the nearest forest

				rest house and provide local transport as well. Source: <i>Deccan Chronicle</i> , 25th March 2016.
5	Maha-rashtra	Wild boar, nilgai Select blocks / districts	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Farmer will have to file a complaint/application with the RFO concerned - RFOs to issue hunting permit within 24 hours after verification - If permit not granted in 24 hours, it will be considered as deemed permission - No permission to hunt in national parks, sanctuaries, and conservation reserves - Take precautions while hunting animals within a 5 km boundary of protected areas - RFO will have to submit monthly report of permissions and animals hunted to deputy conservators and PCCF <p>Source: Times of India, 24th July 2015.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over 200 wild boars have been killed since February by a professional sharpshooter from Hyderabad, Nawab Shafat Ali Khan, hired by the Forest Department for the job in the constituency of Forest Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar. <p>Source: <i>Indian Express</i>, 17th May 2016.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wild boars are being killed in eco-sensitive zone and tiger bearing areas of Chandrapur whereas Beed, where culling has been recommended, has seen no culling at all. <p>Source: Times of India, 16th May 2016.</p>

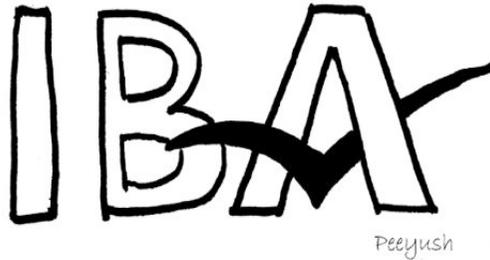
The Federation of Indian Animal Protection Organizations (FIAPO) has – together with friends, partners and member organizations - initiated a campaign on this. Actions taken up include information collation, writing to the MOEFCC, highlighting the topic in the media and filing of PILs. More details are available on FIAPO’s website and face-book pages. FIAPO also welcomes more information on the topic from the states. Contact: **Nimesh Ved**. Email: nimesh.explore@gmail.com

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Important Bird Areas Update



ANDHRA PRADESH

Andhra part of Pulicat lake totally dry

The Pulicat Lake, which is spread across the Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh (AP), and Tiruvallur district, Tamil Nadu, has dried up totally on its northern side in AP, depriving many thousand people of a livelihood.

The lake's mouth, a major determining factor for the hydrology, biodiversity and fish in the lake, tends to get narrower and shallower during the non monsoon months (January - September) of the Northeast monsoon, chiefly due to the accretion of sand, resulting in the formation of a sand-bar across the lake's mouth.

The lake was full to its brim even on the northern side because of heavy rains in November and December, last year, but had dried by the end of January. The lake has been drying up annually due to the closure of the mouths of the sea on the northern (AP) side at Kondurupalem and Rayadoruvu in Vakadu mandal of Nellore district several years ago. Fishermen on the Tamil Nadu side make it a point to clear the sand bars for easy access to their hamlets that are located close to Pulicat Lake.

The Forest Officer, Sullurpeta Wildlife Division, AP, has pointed out that all the water emptied into the sea as the lake was on higher ground. He said that there was an urgent need to take up a survey of the levels

before opening the sea's mouth at Rayadoruvu and Kondurupalem. A cost estimate, readied five years ago, had arrived at a sum of Rs. 7 crore to carry out dredging operations. It would cost almost double that amount to take up desilting operations now, he added.

About 40,000 people, living in 34 villages on the banks of the lake on the Tamil Nadu side, and 25,000 people, living in 15 habitations in AP, depend directly or indirectly on the lake.

Source: Pathri Rajasekhar. 'Drying Pulicat Lake in need of Andhra Pradesh's notice', *Deccan Chronicle*, 05/05/16

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

NGT suspends environment clearance of Nyamjang Chhu hydel power project

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has suspended the environment clearance (EC) given to the 780 MW Nyamjang Chhu hydel power project in Arunachal Pradesh. The order came in response to a petition filed by Save Mon Region Federation, an organisation of Monpa indigenous community in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The organisation has called for suspension of the clearance given as important facts related to the project were concealed.

The NGT in its order said the EC, given in 2012, was suspended till the time the

recommended studies are carried out and public consultations done. The NGT also instructed the expert appraisal committee of river valley and hydroelectric projects to carry out a fresh proposal to grant EC and make recommendation to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

The project site, importantly, is the winter habitat of black-necked cranes and the NGT has asked the MoEFCC to expeditiously conduct a separate study on conservation and protection of habitat of the cranes here through the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. The NGT has also noted that the studies done should be open for public consultation in order to offer an opportunity to affected persons having plausible stake in the environment to express their concerns following such studies.

Source: Roopak Goswami, 'NGT order helps save rare bird habitat', *The Telegraph*, 09/04/16.

ODISHA

CRPF for protection of fisherfolk of Chilika

While dealing with a case pertaining to establishment of illegal prawn *gheris* in Chilika lake, the Odisha High Court has directed the Puri district collector to deploy Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel for the safety of leaseholder fisherfolk here.

The order came in response to a petition by the Maa Mangala Primary Fishery Cooperative Society, which alleged that the livelihoods of many leaseholder fishermen have been affected by illegal prawn farming and that the district administration has failed to comply with the Supreme Court directions issued to protect the fisherfolk. The petitioner informed the court that the prawn mafia had been creating terror in the lake, and had urged the court to take steps for the demolition of prawn *gheris* in the lake.

The state government had formulated a special policy to promote traditional fishing activities and modern fish farming in Chilika simultaneously. The state government had

decided to allocate 27,000 acres for traditional fishing activities. On the other hand, it had earmarked 20,000 acres for allotment among interested parties on lease basis for fish farming.

Source: 'CRPF to protect Chilika fishermen at HC behest', www.orissapost.com, 20/04/16.

UTTAR PRADESH

Sparking in high-tension wires causes major fire in Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary

A major fire broke out at the Soor Sarovar Bird Sanctuary in the month of April on account of sparking in high-tension wires that cross over the protected area. It took the Forest Department (FD) and the fire brigade more than five hours to douse the fire and hundreds of birds and animals were reported killed. The fire is said to have started in the north-west part of the sanctuary near the Keetham lake around 8.45 pm and was put out about five hours later, by 2 am. Four hectares of the forest had been burnt down by then.

More than 12 minor fire incidents have been reported in the PA over the past five years and FD officials said that they have written several times to the electricity department to shift the cables, but to no avail.

Source: Aditya Dev. 'Major fire breaks out at Agra's bird sanctuary, hundreds of birds and animals killed', *The Times of India*, 30/04/16.

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)

OBITUARIES

Pratibha Pande: Unforgettable in so many ways...

Sitting at the edge of a jheel or water-body, motionless for hours, elbows on drawn-up knees, binoculars glued to her eyes, willing a nondescript, recalcitrant salt-and-pepper wader to reveal its identity to her. Minutely scrutinizing an eagle's face and then happily telling you what the shape of its nostrils or the colour of its iris was! Every feather and feature observed and noted: they were of vital importance for her finely detailed and beautifully coloured water-colors. What you takeaway from that: if you really want to observe birds, paint them.

Out birding at Sultanpur jheel, the perambulations were slow and relaxed, every sighting given due time and attention. A round trip could last six hours. The weather: blazing summer or bone-chilling winter was of no consequence. Hunger and thirst could be taken care of later on. And for over twenty years of shared birding trips (along with other members of Kalpavriksh) this tried and tested methodology remained the same: eking the most out of every moment out in the open.

The same attention to detail went into her map-making: hunched over unwieldy Survey of India topo-sheets, she produced the most finely detailed maps of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks with her collection of rotoring pens. It was doubtful if she could ever get lost in any of these places!

While speaking to officials or forest-guards or anyone in charge of wildlife on management issues, she drew her point home with soft-spoken perseverance and irrefutable logic but always ready to provide solid backup support if required. Any official showing a modicum of interest was enthusiastically encouraged.

Her driving was something else! Her attention appeared to be anywhere but on the road (while the speedometer nudged 90 kmph) and it didn't matter if you couldn't see beyond the bonnet because of the fog. Her little Maruti Zen kept zipping. Only once did she get flustered – when the brakes failed on the way back from a trip, until told, 'don't get out of second gear and keep one hand ready to yank the handbrake!'

At home, entertaining the motley Kalpavriksh bunch for one memorable dinner after the next: happy to see the pigging-out that ensued every time. Or else, she'd land up at home unannounced, smiling, arms laden with walnut cake or banana bread. She talked to you as if you knew exactly what her train of thought was and where it was coming from, which was nice but could be a bit puzzling until you sorted things out.

But sorting out the last two years: that, at the moment seems a little difficult to do.

- Ranjit Lal

Remembering Rauf

Rauf Saad Ali, Rauf to most of us, breathed his last on the 1st of April 2016. He lost consciousness about 7pm the previous evening, shortly after insisting he be taken to his favourite round table under the neem tree outside his house in Auroville. Rauf's last conscious minutes were the chitchat and cheerful banter of friends and family.

Rauf, to many of us in the ecology community, was much more than just a mischievous, provocative and eccentric scientist. He was a person of intellect with incisive logic and depth of knowledge of the subject. Rauf was not known for diplomacy,

predisposed as he was to calling a spade a spade. His presence often caused anxious moments for those unable to deal with the “Rauf package” - some thought twice before inviting him to a major conference, just in case he sabotage the plot! To most of us, however, he was a valuable resource as a scientist, a solid friend to turn to during both professional and personal crisis and a great chap to hang around with for a drink, or more.

Those who didn't know him personally, often referred to him as the nephew of Salim Ali, one of the greatest ornithologists India has seen. Behavioural ecologists would have come across Rauf's pioneering work on primate behaviour in the Kalakadu Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, that was part of his PhD. He wrote insightful articles both in scientific and popular journals covering a myriad of topics from stray and feral dogs to wildlife corridors and the problem of invasive species in the Andaman and Nicobar islands.

The last was his passion - to the extent that he had acquired a small plot of land to serve as a field station for researchers in the Andamans. To facilitate research in Andaman ecology was one of his most fervent desires, as was his dedication to the teaching of biological sciences.

Rauf did not publish much by today's standards - which he considered a rat race. He did not care much for academic laurels - having been burned more than once by the system. But he did work for a long time on a book about his life - and the people in it. His friends were charged with the task of ensuring this book gets published in the coming months. Do it we will, knowing fully well that he's probably pulled our legs and twisted a few tales his way. It does look like Rauf is going to have the last laugh after all!

- Anupama Pai and R.S. Bhalla



INVITING COLLABORATIONS

The *Protected Area Update*, which is now in its 22nd year of publication, has consistently provided news, information and analysis on matters related to wildlife, conservation and protected areas. It has created a credible forum that allows for discussion on a wide-range of often un-addressed issues in the wildlife, conservation and livelihood landscape. It reaches out widely and also represents a wide-range of perspectives and concerns.

We would like to invite, researchers, NGOs, journalists and individuals to collaborate and use the *Protected Area Update* as a platform to further common interests in these related subjects. The newsletter can be used as a platform to put out short analysis and synthesis of ongoing work or work that has already been completed – on lines similar to the update above on the new developments in relation to culling of certain species of wildlife by declaring them vermin. The *PA Update* can also be used, simultaneously and complementarily, as a platform for seeking and gathering information where it is needed.

Please write to the editor at psekhsaria@gmail.com with ideas, queries and suggestions on how these collaborations could be made to work and for specific proposals that are of interest to you.

A Decade Ago **Protected Area Update 60, April 2006**

ASSAM

Project for the Gangetic dolphin in Assam

The Guwahati based Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research had initiated a project titled 'Saving the Gangetic Dolphins, Eco-tourism and Livelihoods'. Funded by the Ford Foundation it will be implemented over a three year period and cover Dhubri district, Kulsi in Kamrup district and Gujjan in Tinsukia district.

The main objective of the project is to stabilise the dolphin population in the area by analysing the threats to the mammals and reducing them. As part of this project an awareness camp on dolphins was organised in the last week of May in collaboration with Gramya Arthanitik Bikas Kendra, a local NGO, in Kukurmara in Kamrup district.

Source: 'New project to save dolphins', *The Statesman*, 30/05/06.

GPS mapping of Manas

A project initiated by the Field Director of the Manas National Park is trying to create a detailed GPS based map of the Manas National Park. It is hoped that once complete, the effort would create a new database for the use of park authorities and researchers.

As part of the initiative so far, some animal tracks inside the park have been marked. The pugmarks of tigers and some routes preferred by elephants have been recorded as also a few important forest types. Several important man-made routes among various beats and camps have been marked, which, it is hoped, will enable forest personnel to reduce response time in accessing different areas, a significant factor in confronting poachers or timber smugglers.

The project is, however, said to be short on funds, which is affecting its initial momentum.

Source: 'GPS to map Manas National Park', *The Assam Tribune*, 07/05/06.

PAKISTAN

Survey to assess Indus Dolphin population

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in Pakistan recently conducted a survey to assess the population of the rare blind Indus Dolphins in the 1500 kms stretch between the Jinnah and Sukkur barrages. The survey has been jointly funded by the Pakistan Wetlands Programme and supported by the Global Environment Facility, United Nations Development Program (GEF-UNDP) and the Wildlife Departments of NWFP, Punjab and Sindh. The Dutch Embassy too has donated US \$4 million for the larger project that will survey endangered wildlife species listed by the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

A survey conducted five years ago found that the Indus had 1,100 dolphins and that they were having difficulties in travelling upstream once they passed the Sukkur Barrage.

The Indus Dolphins were earlier found throughout the Indus River system, including the main tributaries of Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej. In the 1930s, numerous dams and barrages were constructed on the river, which split the dolphins into small groups, destroyed their habitat and hindered their migration. Now, they inhabit the Indus River beginning from Kotri Barrage in Sindh to Jinnah Barrage in North-western Punjab. The stretch of the river between the barrages at Sukkur and Guddu in Sindh, was declared the Indus River Dolphin Reserve by the government of Sindh in 1974. The reserve still continues to harbour a majority of the existing Indus Dolphin population. (Also see *PA Update 46*)

Source: 'WWF conducting survey to save blind Indus dolphins', *Daily Times*, 06/04/06.

PERSPECTIVE

Tigers to Cambodia: Will it Work?

A controversial plan was announced during the recent Global Tiger Forum (GTF) held in New Delhi to take tigers from the wild in India and introduce them in Cambodia. According to one projection, eight tigers will be required for the relocation project that would cost in the range of US\$20-50 million. It has also been suggested in private meetings that tigers being eyed for relocation are conflict animals or those that have clashed with people on the peripheries of India's tiger reserves. Few disagree that it is a good idea to repopulate areas that have lost their tigers, provided there is enough prey base and protection. But will this work in Cambodia?

In a statement issued after the high profile meeting in April, over 20 non government organisations (NGOs), both Indian and international, noted that conservation successes are only happening in Tiger Range Countries with strong laws and where wild tigers are valued for their role in the ecosystem and not where tiger farming exists and they are valued only as a commodity. It is not difficult to be cynical about rule of law in mainland south east Asia. In Cambodia, for instance, corruption is endemic and the rule of law, weak. The country has had the fastest rate of deforestation in the world and nearly one third of forest cover lost here in 2014 was from inside legally protected areas.

Experts too are divided over World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) plan for Cambodia. Dr Ullas Karanth, of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has warned of the risk of tragic failure, saying the idea of translocating captive-bred or wild caught problem tigers from India to Cambodia is bereft of any ecological understanding or of the Cambodian social context. WWF-Mekong's Dr Thomas Gray, responding to my own scepticism, tweeted that political will would be needed but the call by WWF to double tigers was the way to galvanise support and also stop deforestation.

But is this akin to putting the cart before the horse? Cambodia could not protect its

tigers when it had them. Hoping Cambodia will find the political will to protect tigers once they are brought there again, may be an exercise in futility at the cost of the tigers. There must be significant guaranteed protection and demonstrable political will before the tigers are taken from the wild in India and introduced in Cambodia. The process should be transparent, and there must be independent monitoring of progress in protection of prey and habitat.

And apart from the question why and how Cambodia lost its tigers, another question remains without a satisfactory answer: If India can indeed spare these tigers, would it not be more feasible, logical and desirable, to repopulate areas with suboptimal tiger populations in India first? There are several such in India and that might be a better choice than sending them to an uncertain fate in Cambodia.

- **Nirmal Ghosh** is a journalist and a trustee of The Corbett Foundation, one of the NGOs which signed the statement referenced in this article.

Email: karmanomad@gmail.com

For private circulation/ Printed matter

From

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