

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

Vol. XXII, No. 6

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LIST OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

Assam

Translocated rhino calf in Burachapori WLS dies
Drones approved for Kaziranga NP
Kaziranga NP to be divided into two wildlife divisions
Police team felicitated for preventing poaching in Kaziranga NP

Gujarat

Mobiles of trackers, drivers banned inside Gir WLS
Gujarat FD to set up crocodile research unit
Policy of caging lions involved in attacks on humans needs a re-look: experts
11 lion and 35 leopard deaths in 2015-16 in Gujarat due to infighting

Jharkhand

Proposal to include grassland management in and around Palamau TR under MGNREGA

Karnataka

Great Canara Trekking Trail opposed on account of its ecological impact
Karnataka increases compensation for crop damage and injury in wild animal attacks

Kerala

Camera traps for Wayanad tiger census go missing
Resort owner arrested for shooting elephant within Wayanad WLS
Wayanad forest staff seeks protection as hostilities increase in Kozhikode
Survey records 53 species of odonates in Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary

Ten new 'ecotourism' circuits planned in Kerala
New termite species discovered in Malabar WLS

Madhya Pradesh

Butterfly park to be set up in Bhopal

Maharashtra

57 armed commandos to guard SGNP

Maharashtra's Vision 2030 for wildlife

- 3 CZA denies permission for leopard safari at SGNP
Conservation clubs formed around Pench, Umred-Karhandla and Bor TRs
- 5 NHAI to build fourth underpass for animals on NH-6 near Nagzira TR
18 month avifauna study in the Sahyadri TR
Tourism promotion initiatives in buffer of Sahyadri Tiger Reserve
Majority of clearances by Regional Empowered Committee – Nagpur granted for linear projects
State considering sanctuary/TR status for Kolamarka Conservation Reserve
20 wild buffaloes recorded in Kolamarka CR
Resource scarcity bigger concern than wolf attacks for shepherd community in Maharashtra
FD not keen to extend collaring of tigers
Mini solar energy project in buffer zone village of Pench TR

Maharashtra/Telangana

14 Another tiger travels from Maharashtra to Telangana

Odisha

15 Fishing ban on the Odisha coast for the turtle nesting season

UNESCO team visits Bhitarkanika NP to evaluate for World Heritage Site status

CM announces compensation for villages to relocate from protected areas

Satkosia TR to get tigers from Tadoba-Andhari TR
Women personnel engaged for protection work in Mahanadi Wildlife Division

Rajasthan

16 Free cooking gas connections for families in and around tiger reserves

Chinkara population in Jodhpur hit by dog attacks, other wildlife also impacted

Tamil Nadu

9 250 villagers agree to move out of the Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary

Camera traps to study elephants in Kallar, Walayar

Foresters and farmers meet to discuss human- elephant conflict in KMTR		IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE	21
Uttarakhand	18	National News	
Corbett TR to conduct own tiger census		Bird migration studies on hold as Centre denies access to satellite transmitters citing security reasons	
West Bengal	18	Gujarat	
More than 85 tigers in the Sunderbans		Only six GIBs counted in Kutch	
NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA	18	Nagaland	
Three NE states to exchange wild animals for Himachal monkeys		Two more Amur Falcons fitted with satellite transmitters	
Illegal traders prefer Indian railways for transporting tigers and body parts: TRAFFIC, WWF		A DECADE AGO	23
		PERSPECTIVE	24
		The impacts of linear infrastructure on wildlife	

Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

Linear intrusions – lines of death

Thin lines criss-crossing the country, connecting the country like arteries and veins connect a human body, driving the economy – rail lines, roadways, canals and electricity cable networks today occupy pride of place in the rapidly growing infrastructure of the country. The investments have been huge and their expansion immense - a win-win situation, it is argued, that benefits all.

At first sight these seem rather innocuous - as Shashank Srinivasan points out in the Perspective piece (see pg. 24), the widest highways are less than 30 m wide and a double line on a broad gauge railway is 10 m wide at most. What impact can these have anyways? But that is precisely the point. All these seemingly innocuous lines, together called linear intrusions are cutting up wildlife habitats and the entire effort of wildlife conservation in a way that has never been seen before.

Reports in recent issues of the *PA Update* – a railway line proposal through the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka, animal deaths on a highway in Haridwar, Uttarakhand, illegal road construction in the Krishna WLS in Andhra Pradesh, highways that have destroyed some of the most important wildlife corridors in eastern Maharashtra, flamingoes and bustards being electrocuted by high tension power lines in Gujarat, the re-opening of a 60 km long stretch of road for regular traffic within the Kawal Tiger Reserve in Telangana and elephant deaths in railway accidents across the country – only confirm that.

It is no coincidence at all that an increasingly large number of forest and wildlife related proposals coming up for approval are for such intrusions. Of the 266 projects approved under the Forest Conservation Act in the last three years more than half (125 road projects, 20 transmission lines and two for railways – a total of 147) were for linear projects. Of another 174

granted in-principle approval within the same period, more than 50% were again for linear projects - 78 and 12 for roads and transmission lines respectively (see *PA Update* Vol. XXII, No. 5). In the first six months of 2016, the Nagpur regional office of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change sanctioned the diversion of 263 hectares of land for such linear projects. This is nearly 75% of the total 351 hectares that they granted approval for (see pg. 12). And all this within the larger legal and policy framework of making approvals for these projects simpler and faster.

Single linear-intrusion projects don't look dangerous at first sight, but there is evidence now that each one has significant ecological impacts. And when hundreds of them are being implanted on the landscape simultaneously, the consequences can only be imagined. These life-lines of the current economy are the death lines for the natural infrastructure on which everything depends. The long-term is being ruthlessly sacrificed for short-term gain, and these are damages that can scarcely be undone. Srinivasan has outlined a very useful four step hierarchy of possibilities to help us deal with the increasing demand for these linear intrusions. This needs to be incorporated urgently into our policies and planning processes.

And we have to also acknowledge that our desire for faster connections, better connectivity and more comfortable journeys is extracting a huge price. The faster we recognize and accept this, the better it might be for all of us and the future that is still to come!



ASSAM

Drones approved for Kaziranga NP

The Government of India has given the green signal to the Kaziranga National Park authorities to fly Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (drones) over the national park in order to check the activities of antisocial elements including poachers. The information was provided recently by the Additional Director General, Wildlife and Member Secretary of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, (NTCA), BS Bonal. He said that all the requisite formalities in this regard including clearances from the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Defence, Government of India had been completed.

Bonal, who has been director of Kaziranga, added that electronic surveillance, also called 'e-surveillance' is already in place with eight towers within a 20-km area. These towers have thermal, infrared cameras, which would immediately alert the forest staff of Kaziranga, if images of any kind of moving objects are captured by them. This would help the forest staff to take immediate action, as the captured images would be reflected back to a computer at the base office.

This is a reversal of the earlier decision to not allow the use of drones here (see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, No. 5 and Vol. XVIII, No. 6)

Source: Debasish Baruah. 'Drones approved for Kaziranga National Park', *The Assam Tribune*, 13/11/16.

Kaziranga NP to be divided into two wildlife divisions

The Kaziranga National Park (KNP) will be divided into two wildlife divisions in an effort to better manage and administer the park. The two divisions would be named the North Kaziranga

Wildlife Division and South Kaziranga Wildlife Division. Two new range offices will also be established at Tezpur and Gohpur.

Two new additions – the 7th and 8th – are also being made to the park. These will include the areas of Bandardubi, Palkhowa and Deuchurchang where an eviction drive was conducted recently. The core area of KNP covers 430 sq km. Six additions have been made to the park, of which the 1st and 4th additions falling in Nagaon district have been handed over to KNP by the state revenue department. The 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th additions are yet to be handed over.

(Also see *PA Update* Vol. XXI, No. 4)

Source: 'Kaziranga to be divided into two wildlife divisions', *The Sentinel*, 29/09/16.

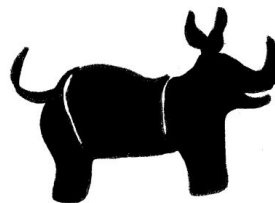
Police team felicitated for preventing poaching in Kaziranga NP

Aaranyak, a non-governmental organization felicitated the police team of Jakhlabanda Police Station in upper Assam for preventing poaching attempts in the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) in the month of September. The efforts led by the officer in-charge, Deben Bora, had resulted in the arrest of rhino poachers along with arms and ammunitions and in preventing future poaching attempts in the park.

Aaranyak also donated two country boats to the two village defence organisations near Burhapahar for their patrol duty.

Source: 'Aaranyak felicitates police team for preventing poaching in Kaziranga National Park', *The Indian Express*, 30/09/16.

Translocated rhino calf in Burachapori WLS dies



Both the rhinos – an adult female and her calf – that had been translocated to the Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary

(WLS) in March earlier this year have now died. The mother had died of a lung infection in the month of May and the calf died recently, in October, on account of multiple problems that included anaemia and increased parasite count in the intestines.

The animals had been brought to Burachapori from the Kaziranga National Park under the aegis of the Indian Rhino Vision, 2020, which is a joint programme of the state forest department, the World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature, and the International Rhino Foundation that aims to attain a population of 3,000 wild rhinos in Assam, spread over seven of its protected areas by 2020 (For more on the Indian Rhino Vision 2020 see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, No. 5; Vol. XVIII, Nos. 6 & 2; Vol. XIV, Nos. 6 & 5 and Vol. XIII, Nos. 5 & 3).

The sanctuary that had more than 70 rhinos in the early 1980s had lost all these animals by 1991 on account of natural deaths and poaching, particularly during the civil unrest in the period 1981-91.

Source: 'Last rhino dies at sanctuary', *The Telegraph*, 27/10/16.

GUJARAT

Mobiles of trackers, drivers banned inside Gir WLS

The Gujarat Forest Department has banned the use of mobile phones for guides, trackers and safari drivers on the eight tourists routes in the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary. This is aimed at controlling the unregulated movement of the vehicles that often disturbs the lions. The decision is also aimed at breaking the nexus between some trackers and a few Gypsy drivers that used to result in large number of vehicles crowding at the same spot where lions were seen in good numbers.

The sanctuary is witnessing an unprecedented influx of tourists. In just seven days, from October 30 to November 6, 50,368 tourists visited the Devaliya Interpretation Zone while 6,835 visited the sanctuary. The department is issuing 90 permits daily to visit

the sanctuary. There are 20 trackers in the tourists' zone and eight tourist routes in the sanctuary.

Source: Vijaysinh Parmar. 'Mobiles of trackers, drivers banned inside Gir sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 08/11/16.

Gujarat FD to set up crocodile research unit

The Gujarat Forest Department (FD) has decided to recognize the non-government organizations working in the field of rescue and research of crocodiles and to set up a separate unit for the reptiles, which will carry out research and studies related to the species. It was also decided to prepare a state action plan for the conservation and population control of crocodiles in the state. The action plan will have guidelines about where to release rescued crocodiles.

At a meeting held in Sasan on World Reptile Day, October 21, the FD also decided that microchips will be inserted in all crocodiles rescued or found to have attacked humans. This is the practice adopted by the FD for the Asiatic lion as well. The microchip will also allow the FD to know if a particular animal has been rescued for the second time.

Further, the FD has decided to map areas with large crocodile populations and also carry out regular population estimations of crocodiles in the state. In 1955, there were 1,500-odd crocodiles in the state and this number is said to have risen to about 2,000 now. There are 600-odd crocodiles in Junagadh district, followed by 300-odd in Kutch, 200 plus in Charotar and an equal number in Vadodara.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. 'Forest department to set up croc research unit', *The Times of India*, 23/10/16.

Policy of caging lions involved in attacks on humans needs a re-look: experts

Wildlife experts have called for a re-look into the forest department's (FD) present policy of caging lions immediately after an incident of

lion attack on humans. The animal is then kept for life in the Sakkarbaug Zoo in Junagadh.

A total of 21 lions have been so caged in the last 10 months – four are in Sakkarbaug while 17 others have been in captivity for the last six months in the proposed Ambardi Interpretation Zone near Dhari.

A wildlife conservationist and member of the State Wildlife Advisory Board is reported to have emphasized the need of having a standard operating procedure (SOP) after capturing lions following incidents of attack. Another wildlife expert has suggested the need to develop a protocol by which a caged animal is released in an open enclosure where the animal can lead a freer life and also be studied by officials to ascertain whether it could be released back or if should be kept in captivity for life.

A state forest official said that such a SOP is to be finalised soon by the government.

Source: ‘Caging lions after attack on humans needs relook’, *The Times of India*, 29/10/16.

11 lion and 35 leopard deaths in 2015-16 in Gujarat due to infighting



A census conducted in mid-2016 by the Gujarat Forest Department suggests that 11 lions and 35 leopards were killed due to infighting in 2015-16. An assessment for the last

10 years indicates that the numbers are 106 lions and 161 leopards

Some experts have however doubted these figures, suggesting that the department ascribes the death to in-fighting in order to avoid investigation and to shut the file.

Source: Alok Brahmabhatt. ‘Infighting killed 11 lions and 35 leopards last year in Gujarat’, *The Times of India*, 21/10/16.

JHARKHAND

Proposal to include grassland management in and around Palamau TR under MGNREGA

The field director, Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR), has proposed to include grassland management in villages in and around the reserve under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). A similar suggestion has been made for the Mahuadarn Wolf Sanctuary as well.

Officials said there were no meadows in the villages in and around the TR as a result of which people push their cattle into the reserve for grazing. This, they note, puts wildlife to risk, including the possible transmission of diseases such as the foot and mouth disease, which is common in cattle.

The forest department has written to the concerned MGNREGA authorities, who in turn have agreed in principle to the idea.

Source: ‘Palamau Tiger Reserve director pushes for grassland scheme’, *The Times of India*, 02/11/16.

KARNATAKA

Karnataka increases compensation for crop damage and injury in wild animal attacks

The Karnataka state government has, after a seven-year-long wait, issued an order increasing the compensation for crop loss and loss to life in wild animal attacks.

There has been a rise in the compensation amount for crops like maize, ragi, chilli, coriander leaves and ginger in Kushalnagar and Shanivarasanthe in Somwarpet taluk. According to forest officials, the growers of other crops like sunflower, soya, sugarcane, carrot, potato, beans, onion, tomato and flowers will also get the benefit following the hike in relief amount.

In the case of permanent disability on account of wild animal attack, the compensation has been raised from Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh. Anyone rendered partly-disabled will be eligible

for a compensation of Rs 2.5 lakh (earlier Rs 20,000). Injured persons will get for Rs 30,000 (earlier Rs 20,000), while for damages to property, the relief per case has been increased to Rs 10,000 against Rs 7000 earlier. The relief amount extended to the next of the kin of the dead remains the same – Rs 5 lakh.



Crop	Revised amount (Rs)	Earlier amount (Rs)
Coffee (arabica and robusta)	200 per stick	100 per stick
Cardamom	800 per kg	400 per kg
Pepper	180 per kg	90 per kg
Orange plants (less than five years old)	200 per stick	100 per stick
Orange plants (above five years old)	320 per stick	160 per stick
Areca and coconut trees (less than five years old)	400	200
Areca and coconut trees (seven to nine years old)	800	400
Areca and coconut trees (10 years and above)	2000	1000
Banana	160 per stick	80 per stick
Lemon	10	5
Lemon (bigger size)	24	12
Paddy	1320 per quintal	660 per quintal

Source: KA Aditya. 'Man-animal conflict: hike in relief for crop loss, victims', *Deccan Herald*, 05/10/16.

Great Canara Trekking Trail opposed on account of its ecological impact

The forest department's (FD) plan to open the 270-km long Great Canara Trail from Jog Falls to Castle Rock, for trekkers, is being opposed by environmentalists and conservationists. The first leg of the trail – the 108-km trekking route from Ulavi to Castle Rock near Dudhsagar waterfalls – is to be opened this year itself, while the entire route will be made operational in about a year's time.

There has, however, been opposition on multiple grounds. It has been argued that there will be a negative impact on wildlife and on the fragile ecosystems that lie along the route. It has also been noted that 97 km of the trail fall under the Kali Tiger Reserve, but no permission has been taken from the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

Officials have, however, said that no permanent structures are to be put up anywhere on the route. The entire trek will be a guided one and the number of trekkers will also be limited. They have argued that such activities are carried out around the world and it will not be a threat to the local ecology.

Source: Rohit BR. 'Great Canara Trail at Western Ghats faces green challenge', *The Times of India*, 01/11/16.

KERALA

Camera traps for Wayanad tiger census go missing

As many as 20 of the 350 camera traps deployed for the tiger census in two forest divisions of Wayanad (*PA Update* Vol. XXII, No. 2) were found missing in early November. It has been suggested that the traps have been removed by poachers or Maoists to avoid detection. The development has also affected the census in many stretches.

Four camera pairs have been reported missing in the North Wayanad forest division while the rest are in the South Wayanad division. The annual tiger census, being held

simultaneously across forests in the state, was scheduled to conclude by mid-November. North Wayanad DFO, Narendra Nath Veluri, said these cameras include two deep inside the jungle at Thalappuzha and Vellamunda, where people normally don't venture.

District police chief K Karthik said two special teams had been formed to investigate the incidents. He said the removal of these traps seemed well planned as the steel chains used to fasten them to trees were cut using sharp instruments. Cases in the matter have been registered in Vellamunda, Vythiri, Meppadi, Pulpally, Thalappuzha and Thirunelly station limits.

Source: 'Camera traps for Wayanad tiger census go missing', *The Times of India*, 09/11/16.

Resort owner arrested for shooting elephant within Wayanad WLS

The resort owner, who was arrested in Wayanad for shooting a wild elephant inside the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, has been named accused in another case involving the hunting of a spotted deer. The investigation by the forest department (FD) into the killing of an elephant on May 30 has also led to the busting of a poaching racket with links to a section of the tourism lobby in the district.

FD officials said that resort owner, Kulathingal Shaji, who had allegedly gunned down the wild elephant in retaliation to the action taken by the FD against his resorts, was found to be involved in several other hunting cases including that of a spotted deer within the sanctuary in April.

Source: 'More poaching cases surface in Wayanad', *The Times of India*, 29/10/16.

Wayanad forest staff seeks protection as hostilities increase in Kozhikode

The warden of the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary has written to the chief wildlife warden of the state seeking protection for forest staff that is

facing violent attacks and unprecedented hostilities from a section of locals in the Kozhikode district. The letter states that the forest officials are afraid of venturing out to perform their duties in areas like Vadakkanad and Thatoor.

It says further that the forest department (FD) had received confidential information that in an all-party meeting held recently, it was decided to manhandle forest staff on sight in the Panayambam, Karippur, Pallivayal and Valluvadi areas. Staffers have informed forest department authorities that they will take up duties only if their safety can be assured.

There have been a series of physical attacks and threats against forest staff in recent days with the FD stepping up action against those involved in poaching and other wildlife crimes. A resort owner was arrested recently on charges of killing a wild elephant, allegedly an act of revenge against forest officials (see story above).

A section of the forest officials have noted that one possible reason for the sudden rise in hostilities was the recent blockbuster movie 'Pulimurugan', which has a storyline pitting villagers against forest officials and glorifying the hero who slays man-eating tigers.

Source: K R Rajeev. 'Pulimurugan' blamed for spurt in attacks against forest staff', *The Times of India*, 29/10/16.

Survey records 53 species of odonates in Aralam WLS

A three day survey in the month of October spotted 53 species of odonates – 32 species of dragonflies and 21 of damselflies - in the Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary. The survey was organised by the sanctuary management in association with the Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department, the Malabar Natural History Society and Travancore Natural History Society.

52 odonate enthusiasts participated in this survey, which was the second such systematic survey conducted here; the earlier one being in 2014. The major locations surveyed were the Kottiyur forests, Meenmuttery

falls, Kappil, Paripputhodu, Chavachi, Kuruckathodu, Narikkadavu, Bhoothankallu, Pookudnu and Valayamchal.

The total odonata diversity of the sanctuary consists of 36 damselflies and 57 dragonflies, including 23 endemics.

Source: Mohamd Nazeer. 'Survey spots 53 new species of odonates', *The Hindu*, 01/11/16.

Ten new 'ecotourism' circuits planned in Kerala

The Kerala government has proposed ten new 'ecotourism' circuits in the state, many of which will include protected areas. The circuits are: Neyyar-Kottoor-Shenduruny-Achencoil; Konni-Gavi-Thekkady-Wagamon; Munnar-Iravikulam-Chinnar; Athirappilly-Parambikulam-Vazhachal; Nelliampathy-Peechi-Siruvani - Vazhani; Kannur north; Wayanad circuit; Kottiyoor-Ranipuram-Parappa; Silent Valley-Nilambur; and the Wayanad special circuit. A Kasaragod-Kannur mangrove circuit would also be included.

The information was provided recently by the Kerala forest minister, K Raju, in the state assembly.

Source: 'Ten ecotourism circuits, more amenities planned', *The Hindu*, 04/11/16.

New termite species discovered in Malabar WLS

Researchers have discovered a new termite species *Glyptotermes chiraharitae* in the Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary. The discovery by researchers Amina Poovoli and Rajmohana K was published in *Zoosystema*, the Journal of Natural History Museum, Paris.

The specific name 'chiraharitae' has been taken after the tropical evergreen forest of Western Ghats, from where the termite was collected. The new species is a damp-wood termite, which infest parts of wood with high moisture content.

Source: KR Rajeev. 'New termite species spotted in Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 06/10/16.

MADHYA PRADESH

Butterfly park to be set up in Bhopal



The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (FD) will help the state eco-tourism board set up a butterfly park in Bhopal that will house more than 150 butterfly species that are found in the state. The FD is currently looking for an appropriate site for the park.

Source: Neeraj Santoshi. 'MP's first butterfly park to come up in Bhopal', *Hindustan Times*, 31/10/16.

MAHARASHTRA

57 armed commandos to guard SGNP

Armed commandos will soon be deployed for protection of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). Trained security personnel from the Maharashtra State Security Corporation will soon be deployed in Borivli, Bhandup and at the Tumnipada and Kanheri check posts. An amount of Rs 1.6 crore has been budgeted for the purpose.

The park receives 14 lakh visitors annually and earns a revenue of Rs 10 crore, which is expected to go up to Rs 12 crore this year. This growth in visitors is part of the reason to station armed commandos here.

A few months ago, a young BMC corporator from north Mumbai tried to force his way through the park late in the evening. Forest officials did manage to stop his entry, but they note that such illegal entry by so-called VIPs is a regular occurrence. It has also been noted that though entry is restricted on the road which connects the eastern and western suburbs, and passes through the core forest area, elected representatives and political activists use their

clout to use the internal forest road as a thoroughfare to avoid traffic.

Based on an assessment of the situation, it was decided that the park needs about 57 personnel. 45 of these will be deployed on a full-time basis.

Source: Clara Lewis. '57 armed commandos to guard national park', *The Times of India*, 07/11/16.

Maharashtra's Vision 2030 for wildlife

The Maharashtra government is reported to have formulated a Vision 2030 document for wildlife in the state. The proposals include among others:

- a) e-eye surveillance to track the movement of wild animals 24x7.
- b) Use of suitable devices to act as a deterrent to wild animals to reduce conflict, encouraging land owners to install solar fencing and also establishing quick response teams.
- c) Relocation of more villages out of the protected areas to reduce human-animal conflicts.
- d) Declaration of new protected areas including conservation reserves.
- e) Setting up of a special tiger protection force in tiger reserves in the state.
- f) Using Maharashtra Remote Sensing Application Center (MRSAC) to assess district wise changes in the forest cover.
- g) Efforts to increase forest cover in Marathwada, which has been reeling under acute water scarcity for the last four years.
- h) Special recovery programmes for endangered plants and animals.

Source: 'Maharashtra plans 'e-eye surveillance' system to track wild animals' *The Indian Express*, 11/11/16.

CZA denies permission for leopard safari at Sanjay Gandhi NP

The Central Zoo Authority of India (CZA) has denied permission for setting up a leopard safari

at the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). The primary reason for the denial is the fact that all the full grown trees around the area where big cats would be kept in the forest would have to be cut.

The state government had, in December last year, announced the setting up two leopard safaris in the state — one at the SGNP in Mumbai and another in the Chandrapur region (*PA Update* Vol. XXII, No. 1). State forest minister, Sudhir Mungantiwar, had informed the state assembly that the wild cats captured for attacking human would be kept in these leopard safaris. CZA officials visited SGNP on September 6 and conducted a day-long inspection of the proposed area along with the park officials.

The park authorities have now come up with an alternative and proposed to have a safari of herbivores. A park official said that the idea was not only to have a safari but also attempt captive breeding. This would then enable them to release some of the captive bred animals into the forest to provide for the leopards and prevent their moving out, thereby reducing incidents of conflict.

Source: Neha Tripathi. 'SGNP's leopard safari proposal rejected', *The Asian Age*, 16/10/16.

Conservation clubs formed around Pench, Umred-Karhandla and Bor TRs

In a bid to involve the locals in better management of forests and wildlife, conservation clubs involving locals called 'Vyaghra Mitra Mandals' have been initiated in the buffer zones of the Pench, Umred-Karhandla and Bor Tiger Reserves. A brainchild of chief conservator of forests (CCF) and field director of Pench TR, MS Reddy, the program was launched recently.

39 such clubs have been formed so far with a membership of over 400 members. Each mandal consists of 12 members between the age of 18 and 35 years. Presently, there are eight mandals with around 100 members in Bor. Umred-Karhandla has 25 mandals with 350

members while Pench has formed 6 mandals with 75 members.

The mandals will provide information related to wildlife issues to local staff. They will also help in reporting fire incidences, illegal grazing, tree felling, poaching and also help mediate in cases of human-animal conflict. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XXII, No. 2)

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Pench Tiger Reserve forms conservation clubs with locals', *The Times of India*, 09/11/16.

NHAI to build fourth underpass for animals on NH-6 near Nagzira TR

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has agreed to construct a fourth underpass for animals on national highway 6 (NH-6) between Sakoli and Deori near the Nagzira Tiger Reserve (TR). The NHAI had earlier agreed to construct three structures of 750 m each in the Maramjob-Bamnitola, Bamnitola-Duggipar and Sakoli-Mundipar sections of the highway.

It was not keen on the fourth underpass, but has now filed an affidavit agreeing to construct it. The fourth underpass will be a 700m long structure that will be located between Sirpur and Navatola. This is being done as per the suggestions of the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Wildlife Institute of India. The affidavit comes after a division bench consisting of Justice Bhushan Gavai and Justice VM Deshpande took a strong stand in the last two hearings at the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court.

The NHAI has stated that the fourth underpass would be subject to getting a FRA certificate from Gondia collector and a resolution from the Deori Nagar Parishad. It also requested the court to pass an order asking Gondia district collector to issue the certificate. Accordingly, the court has asked the respective authorities to grant clearances in three weeks.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Now, a 4th animal underpass near Nagzira', *The Times of India*, 29/10/16.

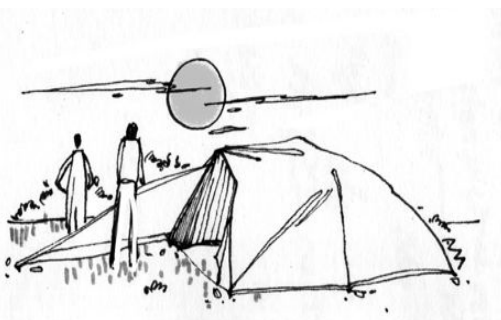
18 month avifauna study in the Sahyadri TR

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) has proposed an 18-month avifauna study of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. The study will be carried out in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India and will be funded by the FD through the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve Foundation.

It will look at a number of aspects including land use and land cover categories in the landscape, species components of birds and their estimated abundance. The study will help in the formulation of a long-term conservation and management plan for the landscape.

Source: Dhaval Kulkarni. 'State to count, map out bird species', *DNA*, 10/11/16.

Tourism promotion initiatives in buffer of Sahyadri TR



The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) has proposed a number of initiatives to promote tourism in the buffer and tourism zones of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. This includes creating camping facilities and homestays and encouraging trekking, all in association with the local communities so that they can get some economic benefits. An app giving details of various biological and geographical features on various trek routes is also being developed.

Source: Dhaval Kulkarni. 'Save, conserve and promote nature', *DNA*, 04/11/12.

Majority of clearances by Regional Empowered Committee – Nagpur granted for linear projects



The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's (MoEFCC) Regional Empowered Committee (REC), Nagpur, which has jurisdiction over Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra, has approved diversion of 351.71 hectare of forest land during the first half of 2016. Three-fourth of this area is for linear projects like roads, canals, railway lines and transmission lines. In six meetings held between January and June 2016, the REC recommended 14 projects out of 26 proposals it considered. Of these, one is from Chhattisgarh and 13 are in Maharashtra. None of the projects that came for approval were rejected.

RECs have been constituted at each of the 10 regional offices of the MoEFCC under a regional head. The panels have two officials of the regional office and three non-official experts in forestry and allied disciplines as members. An REC is competent to either agree in-principle or reject proposals involving diversion of forest area above 5 hectares and up to 40 hectares, except proposals for regularization of encroachments, mining (including renewal of mining leases), and hydel projects.

It was seen in an analysis done by the New Delhi based EIA Resource & Response Centre that linear projects (new roads, widening of existing highways, transmission lines, railway, water supply lines, and optical fibre cabling etc) are conspicuous in approvals. Of the 351 hectare cleared, three-fourths of the area (255 hectare) has been recommended for six such linear projects. This included the Aurangabad-Padghe Power Grid Corporation of

India Limited's power transmission line involving 146 hectare of forest and another transmission line of 400KV from Dherand to Palmbeach in Raigad and Thane districts, involving 97 hectares of forestland.

The MoEFCC has been liberalizing rules for forest diversion for linear projects for a while now and requirements under the Forest Rights Act were also diluted for such projects recently. An order had been passed by the MoEFCC in August 2015 simplifying procedures to get permission for felling trees on forest land in linear projects, with in-principle approval (stage I clearance) deemed as working permission for tree cutting and commencement of work after fulfilling some conditions. Similarly, an inter-ministerial committee has recommended that a resolution of the gram sabha endorsing that the project is in the interest of people living on the forest land, as stipulated under the FRA, may not be required for linear projects.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Relaxed rules leading to environmental clearance for all linear projects', *The Times of India*, 05/11/16.

State considering sanctuary/TR status for Kolamarka CR

Four years after the Maharashtra government launched a project to monitor and protect wild buffaloes at the Kolamarka Conservation Reserve at Sironcha in Gadchiroli, the numbers have shown a gradual rise (see accompanying story; also *PA Update* Vol. XXI, No. 5). Now, the state government is considering a proposal to declare Kolamarka a wildlife sanctuary or a tiger reserve for a higher degree of protection. The conservation reserve that was created in 2013 is spread over an area of 180.72 sq km.

The proposal was discussed at the meeting of the Maharashtra State Wildlife Board recently. According to experts, once the numbers of the wild buffalo increase to a comfortable level, captive breeding at the proposed Gorewada international zoo could also be considered. These buffaloes could also be used to improve the quality of domestic breeds

as buffaloes form a major share of milk production in India. According to the chief conservator of forests, Gadchiroli, the numbers of these wild buffaloes had risen from around 16 in 2015-16 to 22 now.

Source: Dhaval Kulkarni, 'Maharashtra sees rise in buffalo population', *DNA*, 29/10/16.

20 wild buffaloes recorded in Kolamarka CR



A census carried out between February and May 2016 has reported 20 wild buffaloes in the Kolamarka Conservation Reserve in the Sironcha forest division of

Gadchiroli district. Kolamarka is divided by the Indravati River adjoining Chhattisgarh and wild buffaloes are known to move regularly from one side of the river to the other.

It also needs to be confirmed whether these buffaloes are of a genetically pure breed, are a floating population or resident in the area. In Kolamarka, there is an old record of seven wild buffaloes in 2009.

As per the report — 'Status review and recovery programme of wild buffalo in central India' — published jointly in 2012 by the forest department, Satpuda Foundation, Wildlife Trust of India and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the population of wild buffaloes in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh may be lower than 50. The report says that the total world population of wild buffaloes is almost certainly less than 4,000 and it may actually be less than 200 on account of inter-breeding that may have taken place with domestic buffaloes.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Facing extinction, 20 wild buffaloes surface in Gadchiroli forest', *The Times of India*, 04/10/16.

Resource scarcity bigger concern than wolf attacks for shepherd community in Maharashtra

Maharashtra's Dhangar community – a nomadic tribe that rears sheep – has said that the scarcity of resources like water and fodder is a bigger concern for them than are attacks by wolves. The observation has been recorded in a collaborative report published recently by the Pune Wildlife Division of the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The report is the outcome of a two-year project 'Ovitla Landga' that covered about 90,000 sq km of grasslands across seven districts in the state. Of the surveyed area, 41% had wolf presence, 31% had presence of hyena, and that of leopards stood at 21%. The report states that these areas also have high human population. There is considerable interaction between wild carnivores and the communities and livestock comprises as much of 50% of the wolf's diet here. For the shepherd community, however, lack of water and fodder resources were a much bigger concern than loss of their animals to wolves.

Based on the assessment of all aspects of human and wildlife in these grasslands, the project team has made recommendations, which will be forwarded by the FD to the government.

Source: 'Wolf attacks a lesser worry for grassland shepherds', *The Times of India*, 30/09/16.

FD not keen to extend collaring of tigers

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) is reportedly against the idea of replacing the dying batteries on the radio collars fitted to tigers Bittu and Shriniwas. A state wildlife official has said that they also don't want the tigers to be re-collared once the old collars are removed. The tigers had been collared as part of a project to study the dispersal of tigers across Eastern Vidarbha landscape. The two-year project, costing Rs one crore, was being jointly implemented by the FD, the National Tiger

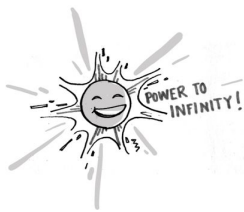
Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Wildlife Institute of India.

Shriniwas and Bittu were sired by Jai and other resident tigers of the Umred-Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). Jai was fitted with a collar in September last year and Shriniwas and Bittu were collared in March 2016. While Jai has gone missing since April, Shriniwas is still in Paoni while Bittu has moved to Bhuyar near Nagbhid.

It has been suggested that the FD is wary of replacing the collars of Bittu and Shriniwas, especially after the Jai episode. Senior officials have reportedly admitted in private that had Jai not been collared, his absence would not have been "blown out of proportion". They noted that tigers Dendu and Veeru and the tigress Alpha had also gone missing from the Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve, but there was no outcry over their absence because they had not been radio-collared. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XXII, No. 4)

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'No more radio-collaring, forest department tells WII', *The Times of India*, 02/11/16.

Mini solar energy project in buffer zone village of Pench TR



A solar energy project named Kiran Prabha Solar Mini Grid has been set up at Ghatpendhri village in the buffer zone of Pench Tiger Reserve. 76 of the 200

households in the village have been connected to the mini-grid in the first phase of the project that has been set up by the Satpuda Foundation and Conservation Action Trust.

Source: 'Solar mini-grid in Pench buffer inaugurated', *The Times of India*, 29/09/16.

MAHARASHTRA/TELANGANA

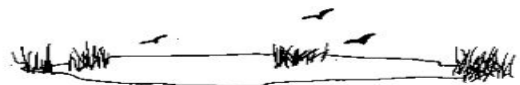
Another tiger travels from Maharashtra to Telangana

In yet another instance of a tiger moving from Maharashtra to Telangana, a male named Vaishaka, was recorded to have traversed 80 km from Chintal Dhaba in the Central Chanda division in Maharashtra to Kagaznagar in Telangana. The tiger that was born in Chintal Dhaba in September 2013, crossed the Wardha River to reach Kagaznagar division, a 500 km² territorial corridor area located between the Tadoba–Andhari and Kawal Tiger Reserves. He also sired four cubs with a tigress named Falguni.

Vaishakha was first recorded in Kagaznagar area in February 2015, but the information has been made public only now – after it was recorded in the report by the Wildlife Conservation Trust titled 'Dispersal of tiger from Maharashtra to Telangana: A case study from Tadoba Andhari-Kawal tiger reserve corridors'. Two other tigers - a male from Pandharkawda, Yavatmal district and a female from Kanhalgaon, Chandrapur district - had also travelled 150 km and 100 km respectively to the Kawal Tiger Reserve in Telangana in January-February this year (*PA Updates* Vol. XXII, No. 2 and Vol. XIX, No. 5).

Forest officials say that the dispersal shows why corridors and sink areas like Kagaznagar need to be strengthened by winning over locals. According to the official records, there was one tiger in Kagaznagar in 2004 but now there are nine, including four cubs. It is now an important source population area between Tadoba and Kawal.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tiger travels 80 km from Central Chanda to reach Telangana', *The Times of India*, 29/10/16.



ODISHA

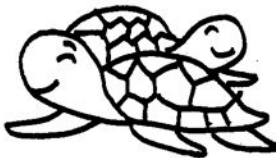
UNESCO team visits Bhitarkanika NP to evaluate for World Heritage Site status

A two-member technical evaluation mission team of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), deputed by UNESCO, visited the Bhitarkanika National Park recently to assess the suitability of the park's inclusion in the World Heritage Site list.

The park had been put on the tentative list of future heritage sites of UNESCO in 2009 and had been included in the final list in 2014. The Odisha government had submitted a dossier, compiled by the Wildlife Institute of India, recommending to UNESCO that the park be declared a World Heritage Site.

Source: 'Global conservation team visits Odisha's Bhitarkanika park', *The Hindu*, 05/11/16.

Fishing ban on the Odisha coast for the turtle nesting season



A seven-month ban on fishing activity was clamped from November 1 along parts of the Odisha coast to protect the Olive ridley turtles that nest on the beaches here. The ban will be in operation along the 20 km stretch of the Dhamra-Rushikulya river mouth that is part of the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary. Trawl operators have been cautioned not to venture into the prohibited zone with the threat that violation would invite punitive measures. 154 trawls and vessels were seized and 322 crew members arrested during the ban last time as vessels defied provisions of the Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act (OMFRA) 1982 and had indulged in fishing along the prohibited zones.

An estimated 26,000 traditional marine fishermen in coastal Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts are likely to be affected due to the ban order, which would remain effective till May 31, 2017. The ban is clamped

as per Sections 2, 7 and 4 of OMFRA and provisions of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

In view of the drop in marine fish catch and subsequent loss of livelihoods, the fishermen have asked the government to provide temporary permits for fishing activity on once-a-week basis. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXII, No. 1, Vol. XXI, No. 1, Vol. XX, No. 1 and Vol. XIX, No. 6)

Source: 'Fishing ban to save Olive Ridley sea turtles', *The Times of India*, 01/11/16.

CM announces compensation for villages to relocate from protected areas

Chief minister (CM) of Odisha, Naveen Patnaik, recently announced that the state was making provisions to compensate villages that volunteer to relocate from protected areas in the interest of wildlife protection. He made this announcement while addressing a function to mark the 62nd State Level Wildlife Week celebration in Bhubaneswar.

According to the state government's proposal, the compensation will be made available to villages located in all the wildlife sanctuaries in the state and in buffer zones of tiger reserves. The rate of compensation will be at par with the central scheme. The funds requirement will be met from the state's own coffers.

The CM also conferred the prestigious Biju Patnaik Award for Wildlife Conservation for 2015-16 to Dr. Gourang Charan Rout during the event.

Source: 'Villages volunteering to relocate from wildlife protection areas will be compensated: Naveen Patnaik', *The Indian Express*, 04/10/16.



Satkosia TR to get tigers from Tadoba-Andhari TR

The Odisha Forest Department (FD) is reportedly preparing a proposal that will entail a tie up with the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Maharashtra for two pairs of large cats, which could be relocated to the Satkosia TR. After the proposal is cleared by the State Government, it would be sent to National Tiger Conservation Authority for its approval.

The preparatory steps that the FD is mulling over for the proposed tiger - relocation include shifting inhabitants from the villages of Raigoda and Morada that are currently located inside the PA. The inhabitants of Morada are said to have been threatened against moving out by Maoists. Plans are also being put in place for grassland development to boost prey and co-predator population here.

Source: 'Satkosia looks at Tadoba tie-up to boost tiger count', *The New Indian Express*, 15/11/16.

Women personnel engaged for protection work in Mahanadi Wildlife Division



The Mahanadi Wildlife Division has for the first time inducted women forest personnel as part of the protection and anti-poaching initiative here. A total of 18 women from several villages were selected on the basis of their physical strength and basic knowledge of wildlife and forest. Though they are not on the payroll, they will get a remuneration of Rs. 6,000 a month. They can also be disengaged from service whenever the forest department wishes so.

The objective behind engaging the women is to make up for the shortcomings of male personnel, particularly in matters related to women who are seen to enter the forests in violation of the laws.

Source: Riyan Ramanath V. 'In a first, women engaged to track down poachers', *The Times of India*, 29/09/16.

RAJASTHAN

Free cooking gas connections for families in and around tiger reserves

The Rajasthan state government has decided to provide free cooking gas connections to 40,000 families in villages situated in the core and the buffer zones of Ranthambore, Sariska and Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserves (TRs) in the state. The decision is aimed at dissuading villagers from entering the forests for collecting firewood.

The beneficiaries would be identified by the forest department and priority would be accorded to families from villages that are being relocated from the TRs. The connections would be issued in the name of woman in the family. In case a family does not have any woman member, the connection can be issued to a male member. Every connection's actual cost would be fully subsidized, up to a maximum Rs 5000.

The state government has prepared a 'firewood free village' scheme in keeping with chief minister Vasundhara Raje's budget 2016-17 announcements on providing 100% subsidy to families in villages in and around the TRs. The scheme would be dovetailed into 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjawala Yojana' and families that are eligible for both the schemes would be granted the difference of subsidy amounts of the two schemes.

Source: 'Free gas connections for 40,000 families in tiger reserves', *The Times of India*, 30/10/16.

Chinkara population in Jodhpur hit by dog attacks; other wildlife also impacted



Analysis of data of wild animals brought to the Jodhpur Rescue Centre between August 2009 and July 2016 has revealed the total number to be 6217. The largest number at 2623 was that of chinkaras. The other animals included peafowl – 839 and blackbuck – 637. The major cause of injury was reported to be attacks by feral dogs. Post-treatment recovery too was found to be very low with 2.65% in chinkara, 5% in blackbuck and 47% in peafowl.

Looking at the alarming situation, the chief conservator of forests has written letters to senior officers to take effective action and curb the dog population in the Desert National Park and other areas. This is a problem prevalent not only in Jodhpur but has been reported from the entire Thar region.

Source: Vimal Bhatia. 'Chinkaras fast dwindling due to attacks by wild dogs', *The Times of India*, 24/10/16.

TAMIL NADU

250 villagers agree to move out of the Megamalai WLS

About 250 villagers have reportedly agreed to move out of the Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in the Theni district. They will be moved to the fringe areas of the sanctuary and each family will get 5 cents of land for rehabilitation. The administration has said that

additional livelihood promotion schemes might also be sanctioned for them.

The families, mostly labourers in tea estates in the sanctuary, hail from the settlements of Mela and Keela Bommarajapuram, Indra Nagar, and Arasareddy. With forest department getting tough on conservation measures, the families have been finding it increasingly difficult to find their livelihood from forests. They are keen to move for better education and opportunities for their children and also because of serious crop depredation by wild animals.

Source: D Vincent Arokiaraj. 'At last, encroachers get ready to leave Megamalai sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 08/11/16.

Camera traps to study elephants in Kallar, Walayar

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), along with the Coimbatore Forest Department has installed 48 camera traps in the Kallar and Walayar regions to study the movement pattern of elephants. 23 of these traps have been set up in Kallar, while the remaining 25 are in the Walayar forest area. The traps will help enumerate the population of the elephants and also assist in creating individual photo profiles of each of the animals.



Source: 'WWF sets up camera traps to study elephants', *The Times of India*, 01/11/16.

Foresters and farmers meet to discuss human-elephant conflict in KMTR

A meeting was held recently between forest personnel and farmers at the Kalakkad – Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve's (KMTR) Kalakkad division to find a solution for intrusion of elephants into agricultural fields. Such intrusions have been reported regularly from Singampatti, Manimuthar, the stretch between Kalakkad and Cheranmahadevi, South Veeravanallur, Vadakarai, Padmaneri, Tirukkurugudi, Malaiyadipudur, Nambikovil and the areas west of Valliyoor, all under the jurisdiction of the KMTR. Farms between Kadayam and Sivagiri face a similar problem throughout the year as trenches dug along the foothills and solar fences have failed to serve the purpose.

The meeting decided to form a network of farmers and forest personnel to closely follow the movement of elephants along the conflict zones so as to take immediate steps to chase them back into the forest.

Source: P Sudhakar. 'Meet to prevent man-elephant conflict', *The Hindu*, 07/10/16.

UTTARAKHAND

Corbett TR to conduct own tiger census

The Corbett Tiger Reserve (TR) has decided to conduct a tiger census of its own. The census will be conducted in two phases, the first covering 700 sq km of the 1288 sq km reserve and the rest being covered in the second phase. The first phase was initiated in the month of November with one camera trap being used for an area of 2 sq km. 650 staff were to be involved in the exercise. Other census methods as prescribed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority will also be used for the purpose.

A recent report of the Wildlife Institute of India had put the number of tigers in Corbett TR at 215.

Source: Vineet Upadhyay. 'Corbett to conduct own tiger census', *The Times of India* 11/11/16.

WEST BENGAL

More than 85 tigers in the Sunderbans



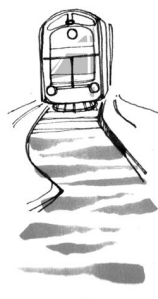
A recent camera-trap exercise in the Sunderbans has put the total number of tigers here at 85 at least. The area covered in the exercise included the tiger reserve area and the South 24-Parganas forest division. 60 of the 85 tigers were spotted within the reserve area. The assessment exercise by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) had in 2015 put the total tiger count here at 76.

The exercise that was carried out jointly by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India and the state forest department (FD) is the first one that has covered the entire Indian side of Sunderbans. It was initiated in December 2015 in the South 24-Parganas forest division and was completed in April 2016 at the Basirhat range that falls inside the tiger reserve.

Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee. 'Tiger count up in Sunderbans, latest survey puts total at over 85', *The Times of India*, 07/11/16.

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Illegal traders prefer Indian railways for transporting tigers and body parts: TRAFFIC, WWF



A report released by TRAFFIC and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has said that of all tiger range countries, India's rail network is

most preferred for transporting tigers and their parts.

Titled 'Reduced to Skin and Bones Re-examined: An analysis of Tiger seizures from 13 range countries from 2000-2015', the report says that parts of a minimum of 1,755 tigers were seized between 2000 and 2015 - an average of more than two animals per week. However, there has been a 'significant decrease' in the number of seizures reported in India since 2010, says the report. Some of the key points that reports makes are the following:

- At least 30% of the big cats seized in 2012-2015 were captive-sourced tigers.
- While the southern region remains a hot spot, there also appears to have been a greater number of seizures reported in the central zone in and around Madhya Pradesh.
- A smaller cluster of seizures has also been observed along the border of Nepal in Uttar Pradesh.
- The national rail network in India, with its many train lines traversing through many protected areas across the country, is the preferred method for transporting tigers and their parts.
- There is an apparent rise in the seizures of live tigers, particularly in Thailand and Vietnam, with 17 animals seized from 2000-2004 and 186 animals in the last four years.

TRAFFIC says that this analysis provides clear evidence that illegal trade in tigers, their parts and products, persists as an important conservation concern. It notes that despite repeated government commitments to close down tiger farms in Asia, such facilities are flourishing and playing an increasing role in fuelling illegal trade. In a move to combat the poaching of tigers, India has asked for the sharing of photographic evidence of seized tiger skins for comparison with camera trap images of wild tigers held in a database.

The report was released during the Conference of Parties – 17 (CoP 17) to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild fauna and flora (CITES) that was held recently in South Africa.

Source: 'India records greatest number of tiger seizures: report', *Deccan Herald*, 29/09/16.

Three NE states to exchange wild animals for Himachal monkeys

Three north-east states - Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram - have agreed to the idea of receiving of Himachal Pradesh's (HP) monkeys in view of the growing population of the animal there. In exchange HP will receive wild animals from these states for exhibition in its zoos.

The HP principal chief conservator of forests has written a formal letter to these states. 500-800 monkeys are to be initially moved to the NE as part of the agreements.

Source: Ashwani Sharma. 'Three north-east states agree to exchange Himachal's monkeys for wild animals', *The Indian Express*, 08/11/16.



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

A compilation of news from the *Protected Area Update*

Edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria

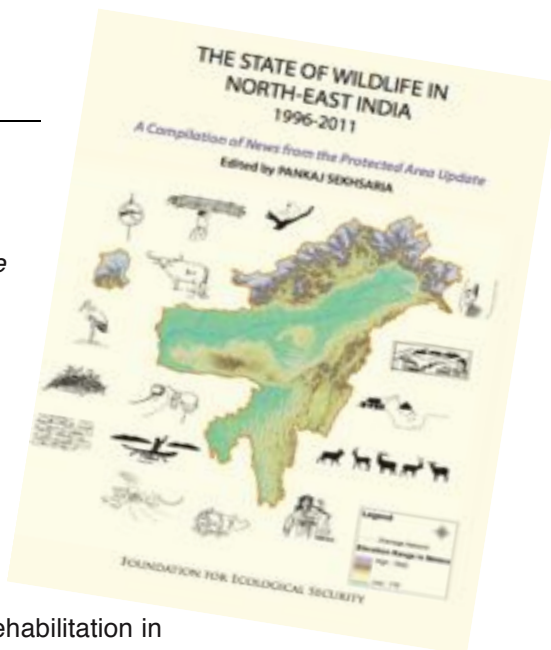
List of Contents: North East India Regional News; News from the States: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura.

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)

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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 analyses and synthesis of ongoing work or work that has already been completed. 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.

Important Bird Areas Update

NATIONAL NEWS

Bird migration studies on hold as Centre denies access to satellite transmitters citing security reasons

A number of bird studies, particularly related to movement and migration have been stalled in the country because the government is denying access to satellite transmitters citing security reasons. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT), under the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, had issued a notification in early 2015, banning import of all satellite telemetry devices. No study on migratory patterns of birds has, therefore, taken place in the country in the past three years.

Projects of the Bombay Natural History Society that have not taken off on account of this include, for instance, the vulture and flamingo studies proposed in 2013, and others related to the Spotted greenshank, Green spotted eagle, the Imperial eagle, Black-headed ibis and the Lesser flamingo.

Projects of other organisations like the Wildlife Trust of India, Wildlife Institute of India and the World Wide Fund for Nature – India have also been stalled on this account. (Ed's note: An exception to this appears to be the projects for the tracking of the Amur Falcon that have been tagged in Nagaland; see accompanying story)

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'Bird migration studies stagnate in India after Centre cites security reasons', *Hindustan Times*, 05/11/16.

GUJARAT

Only six GIBs counted in Kutch

A two-day population count undertaken in the month of November has revealed that there are

only six Great Indian Bustards left in Naliya, Kutch, as against 48 recorded in 2010. Further, almost no breeding activity was recorded. Officials in the forest department said that the counting exercise was routine departmental activity and figures are not for publication as official count.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. 'Just six Great Indian Bustards left in state', *The Times of India*, 15/11/16.

NAGALAND

Two more Amur Falcons fitted with satellite transmitters

Two Amur Falcons named 'Phom' and 'Longleng' were recently fitted with satellite transmitters and released from Lemscachenlok biodiversity conservation area at Yaongyimchen village in Longleng District. This is the second satellite tagging of Amur Falcons in Nagaland after three Amur Falcons named Pangti, Naga and Wokha were satellite tagged in 2013 in Wokha district (*PA Updates* Vol. XXI, No. 6; Vol. XX, No. 6 and Vol. XIX, No. 6).

Another nine falcons respectively named Yingli, Chingmei, Pongching, Mongtikang, Kompang, Liok, Lasa and Henko were also tagged with rings and identification numbers on the same day. This conservation initiative of Yaongyimchen village involves no hunting or killing of any wildlife within the village jurisdiction. Neighboring villages namely Pongching, Mongtikang, Sanglu and Alayung have also joined hands with Yaongyimchen in the conservation initiative.

Only recently, more than 17 out of the 40 villages in Longleng district have declared in their citizens' meetings to conserve forest and protect wildlife.

Source: "Phom' and 'Longleng' take flight", *The Morung Express*, 30/10/16.

The *Protected Area Update* needs your support

The *Protected Area Update* is now in its 23rd year of uninterrupted publication. It is published six times a year and mailed to nearly 1800 people. Additionally, it goes out in an electronic form to about 2000 individuals via paupdate@yahoogroups.com and is also hosted by a number of websites that deal with issues related to natural history of South Asia. There is also now an active facebook page for the newsletter <https://www.facebook.com/groups/protectedareaupdate/> which helps continue the outreach and the discussions.

The *PA Update* has been a key source of news, information and also opinion on protected areas from across South Asia, and particularly India and we keep getting this affirmation via communication we receive regularly from its readers. Continued publication has been possible on account of the generous interest and support of a number of organisations and individuals and we are extremely for all this support over the years.

That being said, raising funds for the publication year on year has and continues to be a challenge. Kalpavriksh and the *PA Update* team is committed to bring out the newsletter

regularly as we have done in the past and we seek your help in this endeavor.

Please do considering supporting the *PA Update* via individual and/or organizational contributions and also by subscribing to it for yourself, for friends and others who you think might be interested

We do believe that the long-term sustainability and publication of the *PA Update* can be and, in fact, should be based on the participation of and support from the key stakeholder, the reader of the *PA Update*.

For details of how to send a contribution and for other suggestions and ideas please write to the Editor, *PA Update* at psekhsaria@gmail.com or mail us at the editorial address below



A Decade Ago
Protected Area Update 63, October 2006

KERALA

Bird survey in Peezi Vazhani and Chimmony WLSs adds 32 new species

A bird survey conducted in the Peezi Vazhani and Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuaries in Kerala in the month of November has added 32 new species to the list of birds found in the area.

The survey was conducted by ornithologist Dr. P.O. Nameer of the Department of Wildlife Sciences, College of Forestry, Kerala Agricultural University in association with the Kerala Forest Department and the Nature Education Society Thrissur (NEST)

The most significant finding of the survey was the sighting of Lesser Fish Eagle, which until recently was known only from the foothills of the Himalayas. The bird was sighted at both Peechi and Chimmoni during the survey.

The Lesser Fish Eagle was first spotted at Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary in October, also by Dr. Nameer. The sighting of the birds at Peechi and Chimmoni sanctuaries is believed to be only the second such report from Kerala.

The present finding has a special significance as it goes to establish that the three contiguous wildlife sanctuaries in central Kerala, Peechi-Vazhani, Chimmoni and Parambikulam are acting as an important conservation zone for this globally threatened specie. Other significant sightings during the survey included those of the Large Hawk Cuckoo, Broad-billed Roller, House Martin and Ashy Minivet. The earlier bird surveys in the sanctuaries were done in 1991 in Peechi and in 1992 in Chimmony.

Source: '32 rare birds sighted in Thrissur forests', *The Hindu*, 17/11/06. Source: 'Train lure for tour', *The Telegraph*, 01/08/06.

MADHYA PRADESH

No GIB sighting in Karera, Ghatigaon WLSs



There has been no report of the sighting of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) in the Ghatigaon and Karera Wildlife Sanctuaries in the last one year.

The government had initiated a reward scheme last year for the protection of the bird. Rewards of Rs 1000, Rs 2000 and Rs 8000 respectively were offered under the scheme if anyone was able to show a GIB, its eggs or chicks.

Posters informing villagers of the scheme were pasted in the villages and around Rs 1.5 lakh were spent for advertisements and messages on radio as well. This has however not yielded any positive outcome. Officials did receive information of the presence of about a dozen eggs, but found nothing when they reached the specific spot. The birds are reported occasionally from the Tighara, Devkho and Yavapathava areas.

The lack of success has meant that the fund clearance for the scheme for the next year would also become difficult.

The officials here have continuously claimed the presence of six GIBs in the area. There were 17 birds in the area of 512 square km at the time of establishment of the sanctuary.

Source: 'Sone bird fails to appear', *Central Chronicle*, 10/10/06

PERSPECTIVE

The Impacts of linear infrastructure on wildlife

Roads, railways, power transmission lines and canals are essential components of modern civilization, together transporting the goods and services that enable growth and development. These linear features connect human settlements together, but have in the process cut through and continue to dissect prime wildlife habitat. At the larger landscape level, these linear features seem inconsequential; the widest highways in India, with 4 to 6 lanes, are less than 30m wide, while broad gauge railways, with two lines, are less than 10m wide. However, they have a disproportionately large impact on wildlife.

Animals do not often survive being hit by cars, trucks or trains, and flattened animal carcasses are a common sight for anyone who travels in India. Sagging transmission lines electrocute both humans and wildlife indiscriminately, while canals can be a one-way deathtrap for any animal unlucky enough to fall in; high embankments can make climbing out impossible.

There are also the more insidious effects. By fragmenting wildlife habitat, linear infrastructure reduces the total habitat available for wildlife, and segregates wildlife populations. Over the course of a few generations, this can lead to inbreeding and loss of genetic diversity for vulnerable species, which will eventually result in their local extinction.

Permitting development while safeguarding wildlife is a difficult task, but not an impossible one. In the case of linear infrastructure projects it is possible to mitigate their impacts on wildlife and the environment, and in the best case to avoid these impacts altogether. This requires civil engineers, spatial planners, conservationists and ecologists to work together, ideally under the common framework of the four-step mitigation hierarchy.

This hierarchy requires that impacts on wildlife are to be avoided, minimised, mitigated and when all else fails, compensated for by offsetting. Working together under this common framework helps reduce conflict and makes collaboration fruitful. Keeping the needs of

wildlife in mind while planning linear infrastructure projects can also help ensure that legal hurdles and societal resistance to development are kept to a minimum.

We need linear infrastructure projects, and we also need our wildlife; taking the time and effort required to make planning wildlife-friendly will ensure India's wild animals will roam the country with the same ease that we can.

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