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## EDITORIAL

### **The curse of 'green and renewable' energy**

There is a huge tragedy playing out in the grasslands and drylands of India and nothing captures this better than the fate of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB). The assault on these landscapes and their ecologies has been relentless and irreparable and is best captured by their characterisation as wastelands in the mainstream imagination.

This fiction of the wasteland has not only ignored the fragile ecologies, unique lifeforms, traditional lifestyles and pastoral livelihoods that characterise these landscapes, it also allowed, and continues to push for relentless intervention that seeks to repurpose them for purportedly 'productive' purposes - agriculture and industry for the longest time and, now, another dangerous fiction of 'green and renewable' energy.

Dangerous, because this green energy kills and is relentlessly killing one of the rarest birds on the planet. The story appears to be playing out like a tragic farce in the field. Gujarat, once a stronghold of the GIB, is left with no more males in the wild and has asked Rajasthan for male GIBs to ensure breeding success. Rajasthan, where a captive breeding program is said to have started off on a successful note cannot or does not want to part with the male chicks. There are many a steps in any case to be taken between successful hatching in captivity and rehabilitation in the wild.

It is a sad irony that while Rajasthan congratulates itself on successful captive breeding, it continues to destroy their habitat and also lose birds at the same time. One 'precious' female GIB was electrocuted recently in Jaisalmer when she hit high-tension overhead wires and the pasture land in the area is soon to be taken over for a solar energy plant.

The story in Gujarat is not very different as the state continues to allocate land for solar and wind energy projects. 60,000 hectares in Kutch have just been allotted to five large corporates for a hybrid renewable energy park with an estimated investment of around Rs 1.35 lakh crore. What this will do to the fragile ecology and also the fragile livelihoods of communities here can only be imagined. Does the GIB and other associated wildlife really stand a chance? Can captive breeding programs really compensate for such huge losses of habitat, not to forget the fact that adult GIBs are routinely electrocuted by electricity wires emanating from such energy parks? What purpose will it serve to artificially breed these rare birds if there is no habitat left for their introduction or if they have to eventually fly into overhead wires and meet a gruesome end? What a curse that would be.

Whatever else might be said, there is no doubt the way things are currently going, the final epitaph of the magnificent GIB will have green and renewable written all over it. And there cannot be a greater farce than that!

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### **ASSAM**

#### **Demand to widen scope of judicial probe into illegal mining in Dihing Patkai forests**

Conservation activists have called for further widening of the ambit of the one-man judicial commission constituted by the state government to probe media reports of rampant illegal coal mining in the Dihing Patkai rainforest belt (*PA Update* Vol. XXVI, No. 3).

While the probe headed by retired Justice BP Katakey encompasses a number of issues concerning illegal coal mining, activists pointed out that the inquiry notification has

been largely Saleki-centric even though it makes a reference of illegal activities in other forests (reserve forests and wildlife sanctuary) under Digboi division. They have asked for the ambit of the inquiry to be widened with equal thrust on probing the large-scale illegal coal mining across a vast swathe of forests in the four divisions in the districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh and Sivasagar.

They said that illegal coal mining and logging is deep-rooted and that illegal logging has been a major concern in all the divisions, especially Digboi and Doomdooma. They informed that by the forest department's own admission, Coal India did illegal mining at Tipong proposed reserve forest (PRF), Jeypore RF of Dibrugarh Division, and Dilli RF of Sibsagar Division, besides Saleki PRF of Digboi division. There has been rampant illegal opencast mining by the mafia at other forests such as Namphai, Tinkopani, and Lekhapani too.

Significantly, the official press release announcing the inquiry had mentioned that the probe was being ordered in view of media reports alleging illegal coal mining and other illegal activities such as logging in the Dihing Patkai range.

Source: Sivasish Thakur. 'Call to widen ambit of probe panel',  
[www.assamtribune.com](http://www.assamtribune.com), 03/08/2020.

## CHANDIGARH

### **Rs. five lakh compensation for death in human-wildlife conflict**

The Chandigarh Administration has notified that a compensation of Rs. five lakh for death or permanent incapacitation would be given in case of human-wildlife conflict in the union territory. It would be Rs. two lakh in case of grievous injury while in the case of minor injury, cost of treatment up to Rs. 25,000 will be incurred by the administration. The Chandigarh chief conservator of forests informed that compensation would also be

offered to the victims of attacks by snakes, monkeys and other wild animals in the city.

The notification has been issued in compliance with a recent order of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Notably, the city of Chandigarh had recorded the highest number of deaths due to snake-bites in 2018 among all union territories in the country. The city had recorded 829 cases of snake-bites and reported 14 deaths in such cases in 2018 while 1294 cases of snake-bites and nine deaths were recorded in 2017, as per the National Health Profile 2019.

Source: 'Rs. 5 L compensation for death in human-wildlife conflict cases to be given in Chandigarh',  
[www.dailypioneer.com](http://www.dailypioneer.com), 13/08/2020.

## CHHATTISGARH/JHARKHAND

### **Coal ministry excludes five blocks in Hasdeo Arand; includes three new**

The Union Ministry for Coal and Mines has accepted the proposal of the Chhattisgarh government to exclude five coal blocks in Hasdeo Arand from commercial mining (*PA Update* Vol. XXVI, No. 4), but has also acceded to include three new ones.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had, on June 17, announced the auction of 41 coal mines for commercial mining by private players following which the Jharkhand government had moved the Supreme Court objecting to the bidding process because the state governments were not consulted. The Chhattisgarh government had also objected and asked the coal ministry not to allow the auction of coal blocks which fall under Hasdeo Arand, Lemru Elephant Reserve and the Mand River catchment area.

The Centre had then requested Jharkhand Chief Minister (CM) Hemant Soren to reconsider his government's stand on commercial mining. Soren, however,

remained firm and insisted that the Centre should have discussed the issue with the state governments. The Union Minister for Coal and Mines Pralhad Joshi also met Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel and said that the latter has agreed to replace the five contentious coal blocks with three new ones, which would be added to the list for auction as per the state government's suggestion.

Thus, the total number of coal blocks put on auction in Chhattisgarh for commercial mining shall be seven instead of nine earlier.

Source: Ritesh Mishra. "No coal mining in Hasdeo Arand": Coal ministry accepts Chhattisgarh govt proposal', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 01/08/2020.

## **JHARKHAND**

### **Palamu TR announces cash reward for information on tiger presence**

Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR) officials have announced a cash reward of Rs. 5,000 for providing credible information about presence or movement of tigers in the reserve. The move is seen as a response to the outcry by wildlife experts about lack of proper monitoring in the reserve.

The announcement that came at the end of July seeks to fulfill two objectives. First, officials wish to confirm if the reserve has tigers. Second, there are reports that field staff members are not discharging their duties properly. In this case, it's an alarm call for them, the field director said.

The TR has recorded no evidence of tiger presence here since February this year when a tigress was found dead in Betla National Park, the tourist zone of the reserve. No tiger was also reported in the latest tiger estimation exercise by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Reserve officials say, however, that they had found tiger scat in May and these had been sent for testing. Those reports are still awaited.

Source: Vishal Sharma. 'Palamu Tiger Reserve offers Rs 5,000 for information about big cats', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 01/08/2020.

## **KARNATAKA**

### **Chamarajanagar district has country's highest elephant population**

The forests of Chamarajanagar district that include the Bandipur and Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Tiger Reserves and the Cauvery and Male Mahadeshwara Swamy Hills Temple Wildlife Sanctuaries have a total of around 3,000 elephants, the highest in the country. The information was provided recently by the Bandipur Tiger Reserve (TR) director T Balachandra, during a World Elephant Day programme organized by the forest department (FD) and the University of Mysore.

Noting that Bandipur and Nagarhole TRs have optimal habitat for elephants, Balachandra said that the FD was removing lantana and developing a grassland inside the forest. Similar to Kanha TR in Madhya Pradesh, palatable grass slips planting has been taken up. The government is also improving the elephant corridors between Bandipur and Mudumalai TR in Tamil Nadu by purchasing private lands.

Source: 'Chamarajanagar forests have most jumbos in India: Official', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 13/08/2020.

## **KERALA**

### **Buffer of Silent Valley NP to be declared sanctuary**

The Kerala government is in the process of declaring the entire buffer zone of the Silent Valley National Park (NP) as a wildlife sanctuary (WLS). The proposed 148 sq. km Bhavani WLS will encompass parts of

Mannarkkad and Nilambur (south) forest divisions, which are continuations of Silent Valley. The recommendation was made in a recent meeting of Kerala State Board of Wildlife headed by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Source: 'Kerala to get new wildlife sanctuary in Silent Valley National Park's buffer zone', [www.thenewsminute.com](http://www.thenewsminute.com), 06/08/2020.

## LAKSHADWEEP ISLANDS

### Rampant collection threatens sea cucumbers

Despite the Lakshadweep Islands administration declaring the 239 sq. km conservation area for sea cucumbers six months ago (*PA Update* Vol. XXVI, No. 2), the animal continues to face serious threats amid growing incidents of smuggling for sale in East Asia. On August 13, officials of the Lakshadweep Sea Cucumber Protection Task Force (LSCPTF) seized a large consignment of sea cucumbers worth Rs. one crore from a vacant area near the airport on Agatti Island. Following a tipoff, officials spotted the processed sea cucumbers kept in containers, ready for transport to the mainland. Packed together, the 54 individuals weighed 51½ kg.

A case has been registered under the Wildlife Protection Act and investigations were underway to arrest the offenders.

On January 15, earlier in the year, a special protection force comprising police and forest officials of the island administration had seized 172 sea cucumbers weighing 234 kg from an unnamed island located about 80 nautical miles off Kavarathi. Four persons allegedly forming part of an international marine animal trafficking syndicate have been arrested.

On January 23 the force claimed to have arrested a kingpin of the international trade and seized from him a consignment of 52 dead sea cucumbers weighing 10 kg. On

February 12 too the special protection force had seized 1,716 sea cucumbers weighing 882 kg from a shipment allegedly kept ready for smuggling.

In March, the Central Bureau of Investigation took over the investigation, based on the recommendations of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) of India. The Covid-19 lockdown has slowed the investigations, evidently prompting the smugglers to act again. Adverse weather conditions and the limited infrastructure available with the administration pose a severe challenge to the prevention of wildlife offences in Lakshadweep, said an LSCPTF official.

Other than the sea around Lakshadweep islands, the Gulf of Mannar at the confluence of the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal is also home to sea cucumbers. As a result, many fishermen from the southern Tamil Nadu regions are also reaching Lakshadweep to hunt the species with the assistance of the local fish workers.

As per the information available with Kochi-based Central Marine Fisheries Institute, sea cucumbers in the deeper sea areas are being targeted now as those found in shallow coastal waters have already been removed.

Source: KA Shaji. 'Govt Sets Up 'Anti-Poaching Camps' in Lakshadweep Amid Sea Cucumber Smuggling', [www.thecitizen.in](http://www.thecitizen.in), 19/08/2020.

## MADHYA PRADESH

### MP proposes 11 new TRs and sanctuaries; Balaghat to be seventh TR in state

The Madhya Pradesh (MP) Forest Department (FD) has sent 11 proposals for notifying new tiger reserves (TRs) and wildlife sanctuaries in the state for the better protection of the big cats in areas other than TRs. Only 323 of 526 tigers reported in the 2018 census were found

in the six TRs in the state; the rest being in reserve forests.

Balaghat district is amongst the sites selected by WWF-India for the Tiger X-2 (TX2) project. The project aims at multiplying the numbers of tigers around the globe till year 2022. Balaghat Forest Circle has around 4,700 sq. km reserve forest connected to Kanha, Pench and Navegaon-Nagzira TRs and has sizable tiger population potential for being the seventh TR in the state.

Source: Ashish Rajput. 'Proposals for 11 new tiger reserves in offing',  
www.thehitavada.com, 01/08/2020.

## MAHARASHTRA

### **SBWL holds meeting after two years; many important decisions taken**

A number of important decisions were taken by the Maharashtra State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) in its recent meeting, it's first in the last two years. The meeting of the 29-member board that was presided over by Chief Minister (CM) Uddhav Thackeray approved a proposal to declare the 2,011 sq. km Angria Bank as a protected area. The proposal sought to declare Angria Bank – a submerged plateau 120 km off the coast of Malvan – as a “designated area” under the Maritime Zones Act, 1976. If approved by the Centre, it will be the first such marine protected zone in India located in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

The Wildlife Institute of India had identified Angria Bank as one of India's 106 important coastal and marine biodiversity areas. The proposed area is approximately 61 km in length and around 50 km in width. The protected status will restrict threats such as overfishing and oil, natural gas and mineral exploration.

Among other proposals accepted during the meeting were laying of an underground optical fiber cable under Mahanet phase 2 in Painganga Wildlife

Sanctuary (WLS), Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (TR) and in Raver tehsil of Jalgaon district and the construction of an integrated bus shed and commercial complex in Navi Mumbai on 1.03 ha of land in Thane-creek Flamingo Sanctuary's deemed eco-sensitive zone.

Other proposals approved by the SBWL included declaration of *Sonneratia alba* as the state mangrove tree and a recovery programme for the Arabian Sea Humpback Whale. The research programme to rehabilitate Arabian Sea Humpback whales, if approved by the Centre, will be conducted over five years – beginning November 2020. The CM has also showed keenness to declare Mogarkasa, near Ramtek, a conservation reserve. He also sought proposals to declare more protected areas.

One of the proposals on the agenda that was not approved was the renewal of the lease for bauxite mining in Minche Budruk village of Kolhapur. The mining site falls next to Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary. On the issue of the controversial broad-gauging of Akola-Khandwa railway line passing through the Melghat TR, the CM said that an alternative route should be explored. In the case of the broad-gauging of the Nagpur-Nagbhid railway line, he suggested an elevated line as an option. Overwhelmed by the drone photography of the railway line and forests in Melghat, the CM said that from now on, development projects will be approved only after conducting drone surveys and receiving environment impact assessment reports.

Another proposal to declare Kanhargaon a conservation reserve was put off following objections by board members, Kishor Rithe and Bandu Dhotre, who noted that Kanhargaon was to be declared a sanctuary as per the in-principle approval granted during the previous meeting of the board held on December 6, 2018.

The CM also directed to set up a study group or committee to reduce human-

tiger conflict in Chandrapur city. Of the 160 tigers found in the district, 20 can be found within a five-m radius of the city. The State Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) had earlier suggested the relocation of 50 tigers from Chandrapur to mitigate. The idea was contested by many wildlife activists, who said it wouldn't work and the space left in the wake of a relocated tiger would quickly be occupied by another one.

The CM also called for the setting up of Transit Treatment Centres (TTCs) for wildlife in every district and appointment of veterinary doctors specialising in wildlife and not in domesticated animals.

Source: Sanjana Bhalerao. 'Maharashtra: State nod to declare 2,011 sq. km Angria Bank as protected area, Centre's approval awaited', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 08/08/2020.  
Vivek Deshpande. 'Uddhav Thackeray directs formation of panel to explore translocation of 50 Chandrapur tigers', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 08/08/2020.  
Vijay Pinjarkar. 'No train via Melghat: CM's final stamp', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 08/08/2020.

### **Maharajbagh Zoo to accommodate surplus tigers arriving at Gorewada**

With tiger occupancy at the Gorewada Rescue Centre (GRC) in Nagpur running full, the Maharajbagh Zoo is being considered by the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) for accommodating its surplus tigers. There are 10 tiger cages in GRC and all are now occupied. Besides, there are 20 leopard cages and the GRC has 27 leopards, including four cubs rescued from Akola recently.

The state's chief wildlife warden (CWW) had issued orders in July to hand over the three-year-old male tiger NT-1 to Maharajbagh Zoo. NT-1 was captured from Talodhi range in Bramhapuri division on July 19 and shifted to GRC on July 20, which is

when all the tiger cages got fully occupied. Also, Maharajbagh Zoo has been consistently demanding a male tiger for pairing.

As per the CWW's order, however, the zoo will not be able to put the tiger on display. A decision whether the tiger will continue to stay in the zoo or will be released in the wild again depends on the expert committee constituted for the purpose.

Maharajbagh Zoo was devoid of a male tiger after the tiger named Sahebrao was shifted to GRC in 2016. Later in 2017, tigress Lee was sent to the GRC for loan breeding but Lee killed all the four cubs sired by Sahebrao. In between, tigers in FD captivity were sent to Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP), Mumbai, and Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park, Pune while Maharajbagh Zoo was left with a lone eight-year-old female Jaan. Also, reportedly, GRC is unable to upgrade the tiger crawl area suggested by the Central Zoo Authority in 2015, and shifting of tigers will help GRC to take up repair work.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Gorewada full, one tiger shifted to Nagpur zoo', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 05/08/2020.

### **Court intervenes in the delayed declaration of Dodamarg-Sawantwadi as ESA**

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) told the Bombay High Court (HC) that despite the Centre's intention to declare the Dodamarg-Sawantwadi wildlife corridor in Sindhudurg as an eco-sensitive area (ESA), the Maharashtra government has not sent a proposal even after seven years.

A bench comprising of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice AS Gadkari, while hearing interim applications by NGOs Vanashakti and Awaaz Foundation seeking implementation of previous orders citing threat to the corridor's biodiversity, directed petitioners to explain the maintainability of their petition and explain why it should not be transferred to the National Green Tribunal.



The petitioners have alleged that the Maharashtra government was delaying the matter.

To curb environmentally destructive activities in the Dodamarg-Sawantwadi corridor, the court had in 2012, 2013 and 2018 directed for the declaration of the ESA and also ordered the belt be a 'no tree-felling zone' (*PA Updates* Vol. XXVI, Nos. 4 & 3; Vol. XXV, No. 4; Vol. XXII, No. 5; Vol. XXI, No. 3 and Vol. XX, No. 5). The HC had, in early August, asked the MoEFCC to file their response on steps taken to comply with previous orders.

MoEFCC in its affidavit stated that it cannot take an independent decision to declare the corridor an ESA, and a proposal based on ground level information and land records has been sought from the state government for consideration. Further, it suggested that the state should consider including the wildlife corridor in the proposed Western Ghats ESA as it will ensure that a single notification can cover both Western Ghats and Sawantwadi-Dodamarg.

Maharashtra has proposed a total area of 15,359 sq. km for the draft Western Ghats ESA, which excluded 11.4% of the originally proposed area by the Centre. The proposal left out crucial wildlife corridors including the entire Dodamarg taluka.

The state chief wildlife warden said that the Wildlife Institute of India was appointed to assess the exact boundary of the corridor, based on which a proposal would be sent. However, the study, first proposed in early 2019, has not started yet.

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'Willing to declare south Konkan wildlife corridor as ESA, but state needs to send proposal first: Centre tells HC', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 08/08/2020.

### **140 butterflies recorded in Matheran; 77 new records**

Researchers from the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Somaiya Vidya

Vihar University have found nearly 140 butterfly species belonging to six families at the hill station of Matheran. The species include 77 new records for Matheran. In the research paper published in *Biodiversity Data Journal* the researchers have said that this research emphasises the fact that the butterfly diversity in the region is quite stable.

Revisiting the butterflies of Matheran after 125 years with the introduction to the novel colour barcode for depicting seasons and the activity of the Indian butterflies is an outcome of eight years of fieldwork by Mandar Sawant, Dr. Nikhil Modak and Sagar Sarang.

Source: TN Raghunatha. 'BNHS research records 140 species of butterfly', [www.dailypioneer.com](http://www.dailypioneer.com), 10/08/2020.

### **Railways become death trap for wildlife near Tadoba Andhari TR**

Even as wild animals continue to die due to frequent train hits on the Gondia-Ballarshah section, the South East Central Railway (SECR) has failed to take any wildlife mitigation measures, especially on the track that falls in the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

According to the official data, more than 50 wild animals including five tigers, three sloth bears, two leopards, four hyenas, four gaurs, over 20 wild boars, several nilgais and a deer have died in train hits here in the last decade or so. In June, when the lockdown was in force, 13 wild boars died in a train hit. All these deaths have occurred on the Ballarshah-Junona-Sindewahi-Talodi-Nagbhid-Brahmapuri section. The death toll may be even higher if the section near Navegaon National Park is taken into consideration. Besides, several wild animal deaths go unrecorded.

After the death of three tiger cubs on November 15, 2018 in Junona area by a speeding train (*PA Updates* Vol. XXV, No. 1 and Vol. XXIV, No. 6), outgoing Chandrapur

chief conservator of forests (CCF) SV Ramarao had ordered a survey on mitigation steps to be suggested to SECR and accordingly had recommended a five-pronged strategy. The survey team identified at least 19 railway poles where trains should run with a caution of 40 kmph. These patches fall under Junona, Mamla, Babupeth, Lohara, Mindala, and Brahmapuri. The CCF had also suggested new underpasses in most vulnerable forested ranges of Mamla, Junona, Sindewahi, Chichpalli, Talodhi, Balapur and Nagbhid ranges in Brahmapuri and Chandrapur divisions.

None of the measures are apparently being followed and no mitigation steps like underpasses are being taken. The Gondia-Chandrapur-Ballarshah section has 60 km of the railway line passing through dense forest patches inhabited by wild animals.

SECR's official said, however, that train drivers have been instructed to restrict speed on tracks in the Tadoba landscape. They have also been told to blow the whistle continuously and blink lights on forest stretches so that animals are alerted. There is, however, no special plan for physical mitigation measures at the moment.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Rail tracks in Tadoba ESZ sound death knell for wildlife',  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),  
19/08/2020.

### **STPF staff in Pench TR not paid salaries for six months**

99 members of the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) in the Pench Tiger Reserve (TR) have not been paid salaries for the last six months. 73 of them are forest guards and 26 are forest watchers. 62 of them have been recently transferred and they are concerned that they will not be entitled now to their pending payments. The last they were paid was in March and that too only 25% of their monthly dues. Pench deputy director

Amlendu Pathak said that they submitted a proposal to the forest ministry for release of grants in July, but it had not been released yet.

On September 2, the government released Rs 4.42 crore towards salary grants for Tadoba-Andhari (Rs 1.48 crore), Melghat (Rs 1.54 crore), and Navegaon-Nagzira (Rs 1.39 crore) TRs. These three reserves could get grants as they sent a separate proposal for salary payment, while Pench had sent a consolidated proposal.

Apart from salary, these STPF members have also not received ration and tiger reserve allowance for the past one year and neither have they received their uniform allowance. They have also not got medical and TA/DA bills.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tiger protectors without pay for 6 months',  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),  
12/09/2020.

### **Maharashtra's coastal districts to get marine animal rescue centres in a year**

Maharashtra's coastal districts will have their own marine animal rescue centre before next monsoon. The state has, through its Mangrove Foundation, allocated a budget of Rs 65.5 lakh to develop new centres and upgrade existing ones. While two new centres have been proposed at a cost of Rs 20 lakh each in Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri, an existing structure in Alibag will be revamped at a cost of Rs four lakh. Additionally, Rs 10 lakh will be used to upgrade an existing centre in Dahanu while the remaining funds have been allocated for the maintenance of existing centres. The centres will cater to cases of cetacean and sea turtle strandings, injuries, post-mortems, and rescues.

According to data from the state mangrove cell, a total of 110 sea turtles (100 alive and 10 dead) were found washed ashore or trapped in fishing nets between November 2019 and September 2020. Of these, 101 were Olive Ridley, seven Green sea turtles, and two

were Hawksbill turtles. During the same period, 23 cetaceans - nine Indian Ocean humpback dolphins, five Baleen whales, five finless porpoise, and two striped dolphins - washed ashore along the state coastline.

Equipped with two 1,000 litre and five 500 litre tanks, an operation table, medicines, equipment and visiting veterinarians, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) got its first marine animal treatment centre on July 26 at the Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Centre at Airoli, Navi Mumbai. In 2018, the forest department with various non-profit groups began a marine respondent network to coordinate fast response to marine treatment cases but a designated centre was not present.

Only one treatment centre had been functional in Maharashtra in Dahanu, Palghar, for over 10 years. This year, 38 turtles were brought to Dahanu while three were taken to Airoli for treatment. 20 of these 38 turtles succumbed, seven were successfully released after treatment while 11 remain critical and are under the care of the centre.

Dr Dinesh Vinherkar, in-charge of the Dahanu rescue centre, has noted the annual mortality and injury rate of turtles has been much higher this year. Cases involving accidents with boats, propellers or getting caught in fishnets has led to complete blood loss, damage to lungs, decapitated flippers or harm to their digestive tract due to plastic, ropes, rubber and foreign bodies in their stool due to coastal pollution - all leading to floating syndrome (wherein a turtle is unable to swim into deep waters and is brought to shore during high tide).

It is hoped that the district-wise centres will help provide treatment on time and boost further research. Data collected will help understand the causes of stranding and aid future conservation practices.

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'Maharashtra's coastal districts to have marine animal rescue centres before next monsoon', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 13/09/2020.

## **SGNP, Tungareshwar WLS to get wireless communication network in six months**

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) has proposed a wireless communication project for its frontline staff to enhance connectivity across forest areas in Mumbai, Thane and Palghar. The move is intended to help monitor wildlife movement better and strengthen control of forest patches within the 103 sq km Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP), the 85.7 sq km Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Thane and Palghar districts, and improve supervision across fragmented forest patches leading up to the 304.81 sq km Tansa WLS in Thane district.

According to the plan, the stations (small control rooms) will be built at the highest point, mostly atop hills, in Yeoor area of SGNP and near Tungan Phata in Tungareshwar WLS. They will be connected to the primary control room at the SGNP, Borivali office. Additionally, every beat officer and forest guard would be equipped with hand-held wireless handsets.

The project is likely to be executed within the next six months and a survey is currently underway to determine the cost of the project and quantity of wireless devices required.

Currently, a conventional system using mobile phones is used by the department for communication and coordination. Poor network connectivity inside forest ranges has, however, resulted in problems and operation inefficiencies.

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'Maharashtra's SGNP, Tungareshwar sanctuary to get wireless communication network in 6 months', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 10/09/2020.

## **RAJASTHAN**

### **Rajasthan govt. to work on action plan for introduction of cheetahs**

The Rajasthan government will prepare an 'action plan' to explore the possibility of

introducing the cheetah in the state. A proposal to this effect by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) was taken up for consideration in a recent meeting of the state wildlife board where a presentation was also made by WII scientists on why Rajasthan has possible sites for the reintroduction and its potential to have the animal.

The Supreme Court had, in February earlier this year, allowed the introduction of the cheetah under a project which was initiated in 2009 by the then environment minister Jairam Ramesh.

WII has identified two sites in Rajasthan - one each in Jaisalmer and Kota - for cheetah introduction. Shahgarh Bulge in Jaisalmer was among the top sites identified in 2010 by an expert panel constituted by the central government for the purpose; the other two were Kuno Palpur and Nauradehi, both in Madhya Pradesh. The then state government in Rajasthan had expressed reservation over the site saying the region has oil deposits and was also very close to the Pakistan border.

Source: Sachin Saini and Sparshita Saxena.  
'Rajasthan govt to work on action plan for introduction of cheetahs',  
[www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com). 11/09/2020.

## TELANGANA

### **Allow wild boars to be killed, eaten: Jangoan MLA**

Telangana Rashtra Samiti's member of legislative assembly (MLA) from Jangaon constituency, Muthireddy Yadagiri Reddy, has asked the government to give permission to farmers to shoot wild boar damaging crops and also allow for its meat to be consumed. At present, only professional shooters can cull wild boars and that too after seeking permission of the divisional forest officer.

The MLA had recently entered into a verbal fight with forest officials over phone wherein he supported local people for killing the wild boars in Narmetta of Jangoan. He

said that the forest officials picked up the locals and imposed a fine of Rs. 25,000 each for culling three wild boars. He alleged further that the officials demanded Rs. one lakh for not filing a case. Out of fear, the local people paid Rs. 50,000.

It was also pointed out that when a wild boar is killed, the compounding fine is Rs. 25,000, while when crops are destroyed it is a measly Rs. 4,000 per acre.

Forest officials, however, said that the people they picked up were poachers and were caught with the wild boars.

Source: U Sudhakar Reddy. 'TRS MLA asks govt to allow farmers to kill wild boars',  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),  
19/08/2020.

## UTTARAKHAND

### **Corbett TR to restrict entry of visitors below 10 and above 65 years**

Following the new guidelines released recently by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Corbett Tiger Reserve (TR) has decided that tourists above the age of 65 years and below 10 years will not be allowed to visit the reserve. This is primarily to ensure safety of tourists in the context of the coronavirus epidemic.

The NTCA has, additionally, also increased the viewing distance of wildlife in protected areas including tigers. Tourists were earlier shown tigers from a distance of 50 m but now this has been increased to 500 m.

Source: Ankur Sharma and Sparshita Saxena.  
'Those above 65, kids below 10 years not allowed to visit Corbett Tiger Reserve', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com),  
10/09/2020.

## WEST BENGAL

### Two elephants electrocuted in Buxa TR

Two wild elephants were electrocuted at the Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR), coincidentally, on 12<sup>th</sup> August, World Elephant Day. The forest department filed a complaint against West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (WBSEDCL) with the Kalchini police.

The elephants died when they came in contact with an electric pole that became lethal after a short-circuit at the Bhutri beat under the Hamiltanganj forest range of the reserve. Forest guards out on patrolling found the two elephants apparently slumped motionless and immediately alerted the range office. When a WBSEDCL team disconnected the power line, the forest guards found the elephants — an adult female and a younger female — dead.

An environmentalist based in Siliguri has pointed out that while there are five wildlife anti-electrocution cells in North Bengal, are all inactive.

Source: ‘Two jumbos electrocuted in Buxa Tiger Reserve’,  
www.telegraphindia.com, 13/08/2020.

### Buxa TR to get six tigers from Kaziranga

The West Bengal Forest Department (FD) is bringing six tigers to the Buxa Tiger Reserve (TR) from Kaziranga National Park in Assam as part of its effort to augment the population of big cats in here.

The tigers are being brought from Kaziranga as the two places have similar habitats the Chief Wildlife Warden has said. Buxa TR is spread over about 390 sq. km of core area and is home of 73 mammal species including leopard, chital deer and wild boar.

Recently, two tigers were also photographed here by camera traps installed by the FD.

Source: ‘Bengal’s Buxa reserve to get six tigers from Assam’s Kaziranga park’,  
www.ndtv.com, 01/08/2020.

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### At least 100 elephants, 500 humans killed in human-elephant conflict every year

According to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), at least 500 people and 100 elephants are killed in the country in human-elephant conflict every year. A document on the best practices of conflict management and a portal for addressing human-elephant conflict was recently released by the minister for environment, forest and climate change, Prakash Javadekar.

MoEFCC data indicates that there are 30,000 elephants in the wild in the country and another 2,700 are in captivity. Their population and distribution is also on the rise as they are migrating to newer areas and also leading to more conflict. The MoEFCC further informed that

- financial contribution to states for payment of compensation and other conflict mitigation strategies had been increased by 30% this financial year, as compared to the previous year
- new elephant reserves have been declared and elephant corridors have also been identified in the past five years to address the problem
- elephants have also been included in appendix 1 of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals to ensure better conservation.

Source: Jayashree Nandi. ‘At least 500 persons are killed in human-elephant conflict every year: Environment min data’,  
www.hindustantimes.com, 10/08/2020.

## MoEFCC regional offices re-organised

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has issued a notification regarding the re-organisation of regional or sub-regional offices of various authorities into 19 integrated regional offices (IROs) of the ministry across the country. The IROs will be established with the re-deployment of resources from 10 regional offices of the ministry, three regional offices of the Forest Survey of India, three regional centres of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), four regional offices of the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) and five regional and three sub-regional offices of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB).

These IROs will have the combined strength, including the MoEFCC's 319 personnel, NTCA's six, CZA's four, and WCCB's 74. A regional official will head an IRO.

The IROs, which will become operational from October 1, will be headquartered respectively in Shillong, Ranchi, Bhubaneswar, Bengaluru, Chennai, Lucknow, Bhopal, Nagpur, Chandigarh, Dehradun, Jaipur, Gandhinagar, Vijaywada, Raipur, Hyderabad, Shimla, Kolkata, Guwahati and Jammu. Besides the assigned work, the IROs will also get additional responsibilities from the MoEFCC.

Source: Jayashree Nandi. 'Environment ministry creates 19 integrated regional offices in a major reorganisation exercise', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 18/08/2020.

## Uttarakhand & Maharashtra record highest leopard poaching incidents

A recent study by TRAFFIC-India 'SPOTTED in Illegal Wildlife Trade: A Peek into Ongoing Poaching and Illegal Trade of Leopards in India' has revealed that of the total of 747 leopard deaths between 2015-2019 in India, 596 were linked to illegal

wildlife trade and activities related to poaching.

The study notes that the highest number of poaching incidents were reported from the states of Uttarakhand and Maharashtra. During the period from 2015 to 2019, there were more than 140 cases of seizures of leopard body parts in Uttarakhand, and about 19 incidents where leopard deaths could be directly linked to poaching. More than 40 cases of seizure of leopard body parts and 16 cases of poaching were recorded from Maharashtra in the same period.

According to the study, among all the derivatives found in illegal wildlife trade, skin remained the most in-demand product, accounting for 69% of all seizures. Claws, teeth and bones were also major items traded. It is also believed that leopard bones are being traded as tiger bones as they have a larger international demand in traditional medicines.

Another concern raised in the paper is the incidents of live animal trade involving leopard cubs in seizures in Chennai and in Maharashtra.

The last formal leopard census in India was conducted in 2014, which estimated the population between 12,000 and 14,000. The results of a recent census of leopard sightings are likely to be released soon by the Wildlife Institute of India.

Source: Shiv Sahay Singh. 'Uttarakhand, Maharashtra had highest leopard poaching in India: TRAFFIC study', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 07.08.2020.

## Karnataka, Maharashtra, MP well-equipped for dhole conservation: study

'A strategic road map for conserving the endangered dhole *Cuon alpinus* in India', a paper recently published in *Mammal Review* by researchers from the Wildlife Conservation Society India, the University of Florida, the Wildlife Conservation Trust, and the National Centre for Biological Sciences has noted that the states of Karnataka, Maharashtra and

Madhya Pradesh (MP) are adequately equipped to ensure conservation of the dhole. The study explored the conservation tenets of retention, recovery and restoration of dholes in India, in the context of large carnivores facing high extinction risk.

The study also notes that Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana and Goa will need to increase financial investments in the forest and wildlife sectors, and reduce the ease of granting forest clearances for infrastructure projects. It found further that improving habitat conditions and prey densities in the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha would “strengthen the link” between dhole populations in the Western Ghats and Central India.

The study recognises regions that need to be prioritised, and thereby offers a primer for designing a country-level plan to conserve dhole populations.

Source: ‘Three States rank high in the conservation of the endangered dhole’, [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 02/08/2020.

### **Camera traps get more domestic dogs than tigers in 17 TRs**

Camera traps used in the latest all-India tiger survey captured more free-ranging domestic dogs than tigers in 17 tiger reserves (TRs). Presence of both dogs and livestock in significant numbers was recorded in at least 30 TRs.

The 17 TRs in which more dogs than tigers were recorded include seven major TRs — Nagarjunsagar-Srisailem (Andhra Pradesh), Sariska (Rajasthan), Pench, Panna and Bandhavgarh (Madhya Pradesh), Bhadra (Karnataka), Sathyamangalam (Tamil Nadu) and Melghat (Maharashtra) — that together house almost 400 tigers. The remaining 10 — Udanti-Sitanadi and Achanakmar (Chhattisgarh), Kawal and Amrabad (both Telangana), Anshi-Dandeli (Karnataka), Sanjay-Dubri (MP), Mukundra (Rajasthan),

Bor (Maharashtra), Palamu (Jharkhand) and Buxa (West Bengal) — recorded few or no tigers.

While officials claimed that these domestic animals were spotted mostly in the peripheral forests away from the core areas, the report itself does not provide any spatial data on how far inside the TRs the dogs and livestock were photographed. The increased presence of dogs and livestock presents the risk of predation and disease transmission to wildlife; also, they compete with wildlife for resources. Abandoned animals constitute a significant part of India’s 200-million cattle population. Studies have revealed that the most abundant terrestrial carnivore – domestic dogs in free-ranging packs, are known to hunt livestock and wildlife.

Source: Jay Mazoomdaar. ‘What camera traps saw during survey: More domestic dogs than tigers in major reserves’, [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 03/08/2020.

### **Railway & small-scale development projects in ESZs of PAs need no approval from NBWL**

Railway projects, small-scale development work involving construction on less than 20,000 sq. m, and hydropower plants under 25 MW capacity will not require approval from the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) even if they are located within eco-sensitive zones (ESZs) of protected areas (PAs). The decision was communicated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to chief secretaries of states and union territories recently via letters dated July 24 and July 16. The NBWL’s nod will be needed only for projects that require prior environment clearance (EC) or are located in areas linking one PA to another.

The July 16 letter clarifies that proposals related to projects within a notified ESZ and those that require prior EC will require NBWL’s nod. It adds that proposals near PAs that do not have a notified ESZ will

require an NBWL nod only if the proposal requires prior EC and is located within a 10 km radius of a PA. Proposals for projects to be located in a corridor connecting one PA to another will also require NBWL's approval. Rest of the projects are exempted from NBWL's consent.

The MoEFCC clarifications go a step further and say smaller projects, which do not fall under the purview of Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, do not need to seek wildlife clearance no matter whether they are located in buffer zones. Inland waterways and railways are also exempted from prior EC and hence will also be exempted from NBWL's approval even if they fall in ESZs of PAs.

The ESZ of 10 km radius around a PA was meant to be a "shock absorber" and transition zone from areas of high to low protection for wildlife and biodiversity, as per the ministry's 2011 guidelines. The 2002 Wildlife Conservation Strategy also recommends a 10 km buffer around sanctuaries. The Supreme Court, in December 2006, directed all states and union territories to follow the strategy while hearing a plea over a delay in declaring ESZs.

However, in August last year the ministry had published a memorandum saying projects outside the boundary of a notified ESZ of a PA but within its 10 km radius will not need prior clearance from NBWL. Such proposals will get EC from the ministry's expert appraisal committee, which will also ensure "appropriate conservation measures in the form of recommendations."

The memorandum nullified previous office memoranda of February 2007 and December 2009, which made NBWL's approval mandatory for projects within a PA's 10 km radius.

Source: Jayashree Nandi. 'Wildlife nod not required for railway projects: ministry', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 04/08/2020.

## **More than 480 ha land in PAs diverted for development projects in 2019**

A total of 481.56 ha of land in protected areas (PAs) was diverted for developmental projects by the standing committee (SC) of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) in 2019. The information was published recently in a paper "Analysis of Wildlife Clearances in India, 2019 (January-December)" by the Legal Initiative for Forests and Environment, Delhi.

The SC of NBWL considered a total of 156 projects in 2019, of which 68 projects such as irrigation, railways and mining were to be carried out within PAs. Only one of these was rejected. Three railway projects – Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (bullet train, Maharashtra), Castle Rock-Kulem-Madgaon Railway Doubling Project (Goa) and Sakri-Biraul- Kusheshwar Asthan Railway (Bihar) – accounted for 53 per cent of the total forest land diverted. At least 87 per cent (418.70 ha) of the total diversion was for linear projects, seven per cent (35.83 ha) for irrigation, four per cent (17.5 ha) for infrastructure facilities and rest two per cent (9.52 ha) for mining and quarrying.

Diversions for linear projects included railway projects (256.05 ha of forest land), roads (69.59 ha), transmission lines (46.04 ha), bridges (20.19 ha), tunnels (19.43 ha) and pipelines (7.39 ha).

The paper has pointed out that the SC has issued guidelines with respect to construction/repair of roads passing through PAs. It recommended maintaining of status quo of the roads passing through core/critical tiger habitat (CTH) of tiger reserves (TRs) and within one-km zone of the CTH. The guidelines notwithstanding, the SC approved construction of roads within CTH of Rajaji TR and their upgradation within Melghat TR.

Source: Ishan Kukreti. 'Nearly 500 ha forest land in protected areas diverted in 2019', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 06/08/2020.



## IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE

### GUJARAT/RAJASTHAN

#### **Gujarat needs male GIBs; Rajasthan says translocation not possible**

With only female Great Indian Bustards (GIB) remaining in Gujarat, the state has once again indicated the need for the re-introduction of male GIB chicks from Rajasthan. According to the Rajasthan officials, however, translocation is not currently possible and it will depend on the future results of their conservation breeding program.

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) had, in March 2016, launched the project 'Habitat Improvement and Conservation Breeding of Great Indian Bustard: An Integrated Approach' in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Rajasthan Forest Department and NGOs with the financial support from the Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority.

10 eggs of the GIB have hatched under the project till date. However, the state does not have male chicks available right now. Also, conservation breeding of the GIBs is at present building up the founder population. Reproduction of the founder population will take five years. If the next generation's production is as expected, then the state will be able to consider Gujarat's or any other state's demand, said the additional principal chief conservator and chief wildlife warden of Rajasthan.

In 2016, there were 25 GIBs in Gujarat but now only five-seven birds (all females) have been reported here. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XXV, Nos. 6 & 5).

Source: Dinesh Bothra. 'Gujarat seeks male Great Indian Bustard chicks from Rajasthan', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 16/08/2020.

### MAHARASHTRA

#### **Kanjur landfill pollution killing fish near Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary**

Toxic leachate from the Kanjurmarg dumping ground and stagnant water is said to have recently killed fish over a two-hectare mangrove forest very close to the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary in the eastern suburbs of Mumbai between Bhandup and Kanjur. The issue was highlighted by the Shree Ekvira Aai Pratishthan (SEAP) that has also filed complaints with various state bodies and the Bombay high court-appointed wetland grievance redressal committee.

Hundreds of dead fish were found floating in and along the edges of the creek. It was noted that the natural tidal flow appeared blocked resulting in stagnant water and this was having an impact on the biodiversity here. Nandkumar Pawar of SEAP also noted that untreated toxic chemicals drained from the dumping ground have been killing fish here at regular intervals.

Mangrove Cell range forest officer Nathuram Kokare said that an investigation into the matter would be undertaken.

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Mumbai generates 5,400 tonnes of solid and approximately 24 tonnes of biomedical waste. Of this, 60% of the waste is sent to Kanjur while the remaining goes to the other dumping ground in Deonar.

BMC's additional municipal commissioner, Suresh Kakani said that they were not dumping any garbage beyond the land that belongs to the corporation and there was no question, therefore, of leachate entering the creek area. The corporation undertakes scientific waste disposal at the 121-hectare Kanjurmarg dumping ground, which is

adjacent to the 1,690-hectare sanctuary but has been left out of the proposed eco-sensitive zone.

Until earlier this year, the landfill was spread across 68.5 hectares but the BMC expanded the size of the landfill by acquiring an additional 52.5 hectares. The move was challenged in the high court. The petitioners argued it was done in violation of Coastal Regulation Zone norms and threatened the safety of the sanctuary. The court had allowed the expansion in December saying BMC had acquired all necessary clearances. The Supreme Court in February directed the high court to close the issue within three months, and BMC was allowed to begin dumping waste across the entire 121 hectares.

Source: Badri Chatterjee, 'Soil pollution from Kanjur landfill killing fish less than 500m from flamingo sanctuary', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 16/09/2020.

## RAJASTHAN

### GIB dies after hitting live wires in Jaisalmer

In an incident that occurred on the 16th of September, a female Great Indian Bustard (GIB) died after it hit high-tension wires near Sanvata village in the Degrai pastureland in Jaisalmer district. The dead bird was found by the Degrai Oran Sanrakshan Samiti president Sumer Singh Bhati and wildlife enthusiast Radheyshyam Pemani under the 220kv wires passing near the village.

They said that the network of high-tension wires from windmills in this area is proving fatal for these GIBs. Other such incidents have also been reported here but the state government and district administration have not taken any steps. The pastureland has also been allotted for solar plants, which will further affect the environment and wildlife here.

Desert National Park deputy conservator Kapil Chandrawal, while

confirming the death of the bird also noted that a high-level meeting had been organised recently in Jaipur to discuss the possibility of putting the high-tension wires underground. The meeting was attended by energy department principal secretary Ajitabh Sharma, forest department principal secretary Shreya Guha and Jaisalmer district collector Ashish Modi. The energy department has reportedly refused the move stating they will have to incur heavy costs if the lines were to be moved underground. It was decided then to put bird diverters on these wires as an alternative and to implement this measure at the earliest. (Also see *PA Update* Vol XXIV, No. 1)

Source: 'GIB dies after hitting live wires', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 17/09/2020.

### NGT raps Rajasthan for inadequate measures in Sambhar lake

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has rapped the Rajasthan government for inadequate remedial measures in Sambhar lake where thousands of birds died last year (*PA Update* Vol. XXVI, No. 1). It has ordered the chief secretary to furnish a report of monitoring the water body before the next hearing in January 2021. The lake, the largest inland saline water lake in India, hit the headlines late last year after almost 22,000 migratory birds died there and sparked alarm among environmentalists and ornithologists. The birds died due to animal botulism, a neuromuscular illness.

The NGT passed the order in a hearing in response to an application filed in the matter by Jaipur-based Wild Creatures Organisation and Delhi-based the Ecology, Rural Development and Sustainability Foundation (ERDS Foundation). The NGT had, during a hearing on March 17, ordered the state government, among other things, to prepare a comprehensive management plan.

The State Wetland Authority (SWA) told the NGT on June 23 that a comprehensive environment management plan had been prepared by the environment department but was yet to be approved by the authority. It noted that the meeting of the authority could not be held because of the COVID -19 related crisis.

The NGT noted in the August 27 order that the problem of management of waste and sewage, removal of encroachment and disposal of sodium sulphate waste/ sludge generated from salt refining units still remain to be fully tackled.

Source: Rakesh Goswami, 'NGT raps Rajasthan on the knuckles for inadequate measures in Sambhar lake',  
www.hindustantimes.com, 09/09/2020.

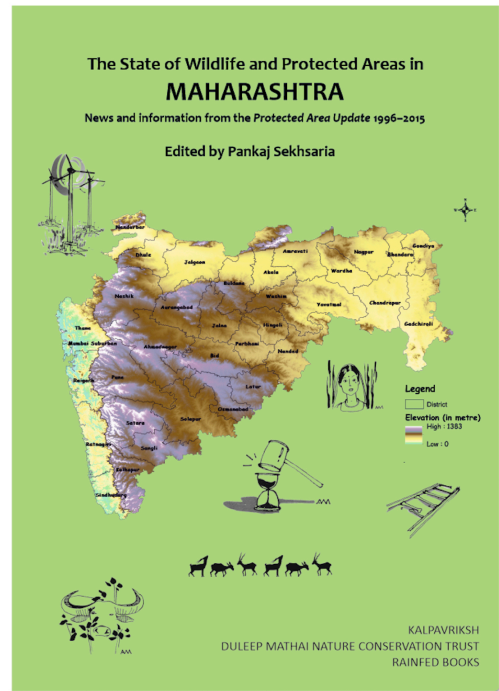


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## Contemporary research in & around protected areas: An overview

An assortment of research findings from across the country

### **1. Living with Leopard *Panthera pardus fusca* (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae): livestock depredation and community perception in Kalakkad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, southern Western Ghats.**

**Author(s):** Bawa Mothilal Krishnakumar, Rajarathinavelu Nagarajan, Kanagaraj Muthamizh Selvan.

**Keywords:** Attitude, human-wildlife conflicts, leopard, depredation, KMTR, livestock kill

**Summary:** A study/survey on people's attitude towards livestock depredation by leopards in 19 villages along the eastern boundary of Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, Tamil Nadu was conducted between December 2016 and December 2018. About 68% of the total 656 respondents exhibited a positive attitude towards conservation of leopards while 22% were unclear about it.

**Link:**

<https://threatenedtaxa.org/index.php/JoTT/article/view/5206/6880>

### **2. A threat assessment of Three-striped Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* (Mammalia: Rodentia: Sciuridae) from roadkills in Sigur Plateau, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Tamil Nadu, India.**

**Author(s):** Arockianathan Samson, Balasundaram Ramakrishnan, Jabamalainathan Leonaprinacy

**Keywords:** Deciduous forest, ecology, habitat loss, mortality, vehicle movements

**Summary:** In Tamil Nadu's Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, a study to assess the threat from roadkills of three-striped palm squirrels was undertaken from January 2014 to December 2016. A total of 497 three-striped palm squirrels killed on the road were recorded, with an overall rate of 0.09/km, on the 40 km stretch of the Udhagamandalam -

Masinagudi state highway passing through the reserve. The number of kills differed according to the habitat (thorn forest - 387; dry deciduous forest - 110) and season (winter - 176; summer - 156; post-monsoon - 83; monsoon - 82).

**Link:**

<https://threatenedtaxa.org/index.php/JoTT/article/view/3378/6892>

### **3. Habitat selectivity by the Forest Owlet *Athene blewitti* in Nandurbar District, Maharashtra, India.**

**Author(s):** Jayant Kulkarni & Prachi Mehta

**Keywords:** Anthropogenic pressures, Conservation, Forest Owlet, Habitat Selectivity, Nandurbar, Mewasi, Taloda, Toranmal

**Summary:** An intensive survey to reassess the distribution and habitat preferences of the owl was undertaken in the Nandurbar and Mewasi Forest Divisions from August 2016 to January 2017. The results indicate that Forest Owlet prefers Teak Mixed Forest, semi-open habitat mosaics of forests, agriculture and scrub, and locations with sparse bamboo. They prefer a hilly terrain and elevation between 250 to 550 m asl and topography of valley, hill slope, and plateau. The bird avoided roads and areas with high levels of tree cutting and showed a neutral response to habitation and livestock. The study found the degradation of forests in Nandurbar District to be a serious threat to the survival of the Forest Owlet in the district.

**Link:**

[http://indianbirds.in/pdfs/IB\\_16\\_2\\_Kulkarni\\_Mehta\\_ForestOwletHabitat.pdf](http://indianbirds.in/pdfs/IB_16_2_Kulkarni_Mehta_ForestOwletHabitat.pdf)

#### **4. People's Perception on Human - Wildlife Conflict in the Fringe Areas of Nilambur Forest Divisions, Kerala, India.**

**Author(s):** Riju P. Nair, E. A. Jayson

**Keywords:** Human-Wildlife Conflict, Crop Damage, Nilambur Forest Divisions

**Summary:** 25 panchayats in the forest fringes of Nilambur forest divisions of Malappuram district, Kerala were surveyed from January to March 2016 to analyze people's perceptions of the human - wildlife conflict and their attitude towards conservation. A negative attitude was recorded as a result of economic losses on account of crop loss by wildlife. Timely compensation and mitigation measures are suggested for attitudinal change towards wildlife conservation.

**Link:**

<http://bnhsjournal.org/index.php/bnhs/article/view/131800>

#### **5. Role of Marine National Park for Sustainable Livelihoods of Artisan Fisherfolk - A case study of MNP, Jamnagar.**

**Author(s):** Rohit Magotra, Pushkar Pandey, Mohit Kumar, Mohit Kumar Gupta, Asha Kaushik, Jyoti Parikh

**Keywords:** Gulf of Kachchh, Marine National Park (MNP), Fisherfolks, Sustainable Livelihood, Community Based Management

**Summary:** Artisanal fisherfolk (N=199) from six villages in and around the Gulf of Kachchh Marine National Park (MNP) were surveyed to determine the effects of management practices in MNP, on the fishing communities.

**Link:**

<https://ecoinsee.org/journal/ojs/index.php/ees/article/view/118>

#### **5. A preliminary checklist of spiders (Araneae: Arachnida) in Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, Panchmahal District, Gujarat, India.**

**Author(s):** Reshma Solanki, Manju

Siliwal, Dolly Kumar

**Keywords:** Araneidae, orb-weavers, Oxyopidae, Panchmahal District, Salticidae, stalkers, Theridiidae, Vadodara District

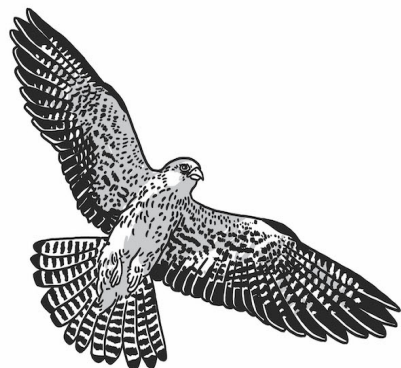
**Summary:** A study undertaken from July 2012 to October 2015 in Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat, recorded 138 species of spiders belonging to 90 genera and 29 families. This baseline study documented seven feeding guilds, 21 species and 17 genera for the first time from Gujarat State and the Theridiid genus *Cephalobares* was recorded for the first time from India.

**Link:**

<https://www.threatenedtaxa.org/index.php/JOTT/article/view/3094>

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Put together by Anand Pendharkar and Aradhya Sardesai of the Sprouts Environmental Trust, Mumbai, (Email: [sproutsenvttrust@gmail.com](mailto:sproutsenvttrust@gmail.com)) this new section with present excerpts and an assortment of scientific research in and around PAs across India in every issue of the *PA Update*. This, it is hoped, will help highlight the often-neglected scientific basis necessary for balanced conservation decisions and also act as a repository or ready-reckoner for recent wildlife research publications in and around Indian PAs.



**FROM THE ARCHIVES - 10 years ago**  
***PA Update 87, October 2010***

**GUJARAT**

**Details of wildlife cases filed by Amit Jethva**

Right to Information (RTI) and wildlife activist from Gujarat, Amit Jethva, was shockingly murdered outside a Ahmedabad court room in July 2010 (*PA Update* Vol XVI, No. 4). The investigation into his murder is going on and some arrests have been made in the matter. Close relatives of a local MLA are said to be linked to the murder.

Amit Jethva had initiated a number of cases related to wildlife conservation through the Gir Youth Nature Club (GYNC). Following are some details where the Legal Initiative for Forests and the Environment (LIFE) was representing GYNC before the Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee:

**IA No. 1243** – regarding the operation of many mining leases within a 5 km radius of the Girnar Wildlife sanctuary and also the encroachments in the area by religious institutions in connivance with politicians and influential people by construction of huge ashrams.

The application had also noted that in October 2005 a 2.5 km cement road of 10 ft width had been constructed in Datar Hill of Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

**IA No. 829** – regarding an encroachment in the form of an ashram in the Kantala Beat of Tulshishyam Range of Gir East Forest Division. The ashram, named Hanumangala Ashram was using timber from the forests for fuelwood.

**IA No. 803** – regarding an encroachment in survey no. 290 of Mitiyala Wildlife Sanctuary, which is an important corridor of the lion from Gir to Palitana.

Source: Ritwick Dutta and Rahul Choudhary.

Email dated 30/07/2010.

**KERALA**

**Five ‘Biodiversity Heritage Sites’ for state**

Kerala is set to declare five areas as ‘Biodiversity Heritage Sites’ (BHS) under the provisions of the Biological Diversity Act 2002. These sites were identified by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board and include Kalasamala at Kunnankulam, Thrissur; Connolly's Teak Plantation in Nilambur, Malappuram; Paliyeri Mookambika kavu at Karivallur, Kannur; Pathiramanal Island in Alappuzha; and Iringole kavu in Perumbavoor, Ernakulam.

Experts have identified a grove of critically endangered tree species *Syzgium travencoricum* at Kalasamala, while the Connolly's Teak Plantation is considered as the first teak plantation in the world.

The Paliyeri Mookambika kavu houses a unique freshwater swamp ecosystem which is the habitat of *Myristica fauta*, a tree endemic to the Western Ghats. The Pathiramanal Island in Vembanad Lake is home to a number of mangrove varieties, birds and other species and the Iringole kavu is rich in biodiversity aspects.

Unique areas, ecologically fragile ecosystems rich in wild and domesticated species, presence of highly endemic, rare and threatened species and those of evolutionary significance are some of the criteria for sites to be declared as BHS. Management plans will have to be prepared for the sites and a state-level committee headed by the chairman of the State Biodiversity Board will monitor the implementation of the plan.

Source: KS Sudhi. ‘Safety net for five ecosystems’, *The Hindu*, 09/08/2010.

For more information: [www.keralabiodiversity.org](http://www.keralabiodiversity.org)



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## New!

Kalpavriksh is very happy to announce the publication of the *Maharashtra Sanrakshit Kshetra Vartapatra* (Maharashtra Protected Area Newsletter), a new initiative in Marathi that will be focused on issues of conservation and protected area management in the state of Maharashtra. The 24 page newsletter is edited by Reshma Jathar and will be published four times a year. The first issue was published April 2020 and the second issue in July 2020.

If you are interested in receiving the newsletter either as a soft copy or in a print form, please write to us at

[marathipaupdate@gmail.com](mailto:marathipaupdate@gmail.com)

## PERSPECTIVE

### **Megafauna Mania !**

The concern and passion of the ordinary citizen for conservation and welfare of wildlife and natural habitats has never been higher. This has been a culmination of many popular media sources, viz. magazines, books, newsletters, TV shows and most recently a large amount of over the internet content. The works and life of several individual conservationists too have inspired the youth to take up careers in conservation. Many have joined NGOs, zoos, aquaria, parks and sanctuaries, as members, patrons, docents and/or volunteers. Others can be seen circulating information about nature and wildlife, and engage in recreational activities such as wildlife safaris, trekking, camping, fishing, scuba diving and snorkelling. One would imagine that given so much interest and patronage, nature conservation would have been at the core of our national and international political agendas. That clearly is not the case.

One main reason for this is what might be called the megafauna mania. A large proportion of our wildlife enthusiasts, filmmakers, journalists, research bodies, researchers as well as funding agencies, are enamoured by exotic landscapes of the African Savannah, dominated by large mammals such as elephants, lions, and the cheetah. Following close behind in popularity are local landscapes with local megafauna that includes tigers, leopards, elephants, gaur, and rhinos. Some bird and reptile groups do catch the fancy of these nature aficionados, though marine landscapes, barely find a mention. In recent times, coral reefs have emerged as popular landscapes but these too are dominated by megafauna like whales, sharks, mantas, penguins and albatrosses.

Most of these charismatic landscapes and species are spot-lighted from isolated and sacrosanct protected areas, even as a

substantial portion of the human population resides permanently or temporarily in cities. What we seem to have missed is that our cities - Mumbai, Kochi, Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata, Coimbatore to name a few - are also home to immense micro and macro-biodiversity and that of ecosystems.

It would be easy, fun and very useful to document and popularise many taxa such as butterflies, moths, beetles, dragonflies, damselflies, frogs and toads, lizards, fishes, birds and small mammals (bats and rodents), but only if we paid attention to them. These can indeed be significant living laboratories for children, youth and seniors as well as people with disabilities to get access to biodiversity, in multilingual formats. The varied media of newspapers, FM channels, radio, TV and informal networks present in urban areas could also be leveraged to achieve far greater coverage and focus attention on important conservation challenges.

It's time to shift our focus to these step-children of conservation, to the lesser known landscapes and the lesser known species!

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