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## The conundrum of increasing numbers

One of the central leitmotifs of conservation policy and related advocacy has been the crisis of numbers - of the falling population of species and the urgent efforts needed for revival. Governments have formulated specific recovery plans in response, much management intervention is targeted towards this end and a significant number of conservation communication campaigns for the public are pivoted around this narrative. All of this is for good reason, no doubt, considering the crisis that wildlife and biodiversity do face across the landscape.

There is, however, a flip side to this, which, if not a crisis in its own right, certainly throws up a conundrum that is a rather tricky one. What happens when these campaigns, interventions and initiatives actually succeed, when it is not falling numbers of targeted species, but their increased numbers that become the problem? It is not something that researchers and managers are unaware of, but is perhaps an issue that deserves more attention than it appears to be getting at the moment.

It is also not a theme reported very often in the *PA Update* and it is noteworthy then that we have at least three stories this time about the problem with increasing numbers. Significantly, but not unexpectedly, these are all about megafauna - two cases involving the tiger and one the rhino.

Responding to the concerns that tiger populations were falling rapidly, tiger-range nations came together in 2010 and committed to doubling their numbers in a decade. Now, with its tiger population having gone up from 121 in 2009 to 235 in the last census in 2018, Nepal appears on track to be the first nation to achieve that target. In Bardia National Park, tiger numbers have gone up five-fold from 18

to 87 in this period, and not everyone is really happy about this. Conflict has escalated; the price is being paid by communities living in and around those forests. The 2nd story is also from Nepal. An increase in rhino numbers has, like in the above case, led to increasing cases of conflict and damage.

Recent years have also seen an escalation of human-tiger conflict in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, which corresponds to an increase in their numbers here. Reports of tiger attacks on humans are common and the matter has even been the subject of discussion in the meetings of the state board for wildlife. Such stories are not uncommon from other parts of the country too - tigers in certain regions, elephants across their broad range and monkeys, pretty much across the entire country.

A range of solutions - culling, contraception and birth control, habitat increase, relocation of people - have also been proposed, each one having its own respective challenges and implications. An increase in population numbers might look good in census figures, in media reports and in larger policy fora. The experience on the ground like we see in Bardia in Nepal and in Gadchiroli in Maharashtra is not a good one at all. It is perhaps also true that it is only a small set of species that are caught in such a conundrum. What one needs to consider however is the larger implication on conservation and on the narrative of conservation. Success stories, (in whatever way we define success) are not easy to come by and seeing one such turn to a headache is the last thing we would really want.



## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### DELHI

#### **Notice issued for violation of WLPA inside Asola Bhatti WLS**

The Delhi Forest Department (FD) issued a notice in March to the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and Indraprastha Gas Limited (IGL) for laying water and gas pipelines and to the irrigation and flood control department (IFCD) for constructing a road in the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), all in violation of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. Though this was done three-four years ago, it came to light only recently when officials began tracking of violations after they received the forest land map in 2020, following completion of the forest land survey in 2018.

Officials said that the road and pipelines were being laid as part of the Centre's 1986 20-Point Programme, which is aimed at poverty alleviation and improvement in quality of life. A residential colony was to be developed in the sanctuary area under the programme. Pipelines and road were to cater to this colony. A hearing on this has been underway since 2013 by the forest settlement officer. Details have now been sought from DJB, IGL and IFCD about permission received for construction in the area. The DJB staff has however said that the office is yet to receive the letter and the line has not been laid through the sanctuary.

Meanwhile, the FD is in the process of declaring 19 villages in the Southern Ridge area as 'reserved forest' from 'proposed reserved forest'. This is following the National Green Tribunal's directions in January. Officials said that as per a notification in 1994 under section 4 of the Indian Forest Act 1927, the Delhi Ridge is a declared to be a reserved forest. To officially

make it a reserved forest, a notification under Section 20 of the 1927 Act has to be issued now.

Source: 'Delhi: Notice to DJB, IGL and irrigation dept for 'encroaching' Asola sanctuary area',  
[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 29/03/2021.

### GOA

#### **CEC red flags railway expansion, linear projects through Bhagwan Mahaveer WLS, Mollem NP**

The Supreme Court (SC)'s Central Empowerment Committee (CEC) has raised serious concerns about a rail expansion push in Goa and recommended crucial changes to two other proposed projects — a highway and a power transmission line — in the state. These projects had been cleared by the Centre last year despite concerns being raised at various levels since they would cut through Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and Mollem National Park (NP) (*PA Updates* Vol. XXVII, No. 2).

In its report dated April 23, the CEC said that it does not find any justification in doubling the railway track from Castle Rock in Karnataka to Kulem in Goa. It noted the following facts:

- The expansion will destroy the fragile ecosystem of the Western Ghats
- The project will only marginally enhance the capacity of the most inefficient section of the railway network
- The estimate of projected increase in traffic from Karnataka to Goa furnished by the Railways is not based on facts and is without any sound reasoning and as statistics show mostly includes empty rakes returning to Goa
- Despite the change in the government's policy on import of coal the same has not been reflected in the projected traffic from Goa to Karnataka. Recently revised policy of Government of India does not

support import of coal and the new policy encourages use of indigenously mined coal.

The 110-page CEC report also asks the SC to consider revoking the permission granted for the double-tracking project.

It was the Goa Foundation's application that had pointed out the three linear projects involve diversion of about 170 ha forest and sanctuary land. Based on it, the CEC also recommended that the alignment of the Goa-Tanmar Transmission Project for laying of electric lines for additional 400 KV feed to Goa be redrawn and modified along the existing 220 KV line.

On the four-laning of NH 4A from Anmod near the Karnataka border to Mollem, the CEC recommended that the height of the road be increased to minimise animal road kills and man-animal conflict, and suggested modifications.

Source: Mayura Janwalkar. 'Citing ecosystem, Supreme Court panel red-flags Goa rail project; for tweaks in power, road plans', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 27/04/2021.

## **HARYANA**

### **People count 6000 monkeys from their houses for monkey census**

As a part of a larger wildlife census 2021, at least 600 people participated in a three-day state-wide census and documented approximately 6,000 monkeys on a specially designed mobile application, titled 'Wildlife Census Haryana', that was prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). The census was conducted from April 28-30.

An official, who is a member of a joint team of WII and the Haryana Wildlife Department, said that people counted monkeys from their balconies and/or rooftops. A condition was put that the participants in the online survey will not venture out of their houses for the survey. The maximum number

of responses were received from the districts of Panchkula, Yamunanagar, Ambala, Kurukshetra, Gurugram, Rewari, and Hisar.

The wildlife census 2021 was to be held in two parts — line transects survey within and outside the protected areas and census through camera traps. Training the field staff of the state forest and wildlife department has been completed but the increasing number of Covid-19 cases forced authorities to halt the ongoing census.

At least 20 per cent employees of the state forest and wildlife department, especially those working in the field, have been affected by Covid-19 so far. The field survey has been postponed for the time being and a date to resume it has not been decided. The census was much awaited and the state forest department has paid around Rs. 42 lakh to WII for the same, informed an official.

Source: Saurabh Parashar. 'Haryana: 6,000 monkeys documented in three days', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 12/05/2021.

## **JAMMU & KASHMIR**

### **J&K administration opens seven trekking routes in PAs**

The Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) Administrative Council (AC) recently approved development of seven new trekking routes in various protected areas. These routes are in Bahu Conservation Reserve (CR), Sudhmahadev CR, Their Wildlife CR, Tral Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS)-Dachigam National Park (DNP)-Overa-Aru WLS, Thajwas WLS, Khrew Wildlife CR-DNP-Khonmoh CR, and Khrew Wildlife CR.

Online booking of 29 forest rest houses and inspection huts is also to be allowed in Kashmir and Jammu divisions under a common brand and logo from May 1. The Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment has been further directed to set up a user-friendly online portal for booking

identified rest houses on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The AC has also come up with a new policy to regulate the functioning of the houseboats in Dal and Nigeen lakes. The house-boats are required to be registered online, subject to the fulfillment of conservation parameters, within 30 days from the date of notification of the policy.

Source: '7 new treks okayed in J&K protected areas', [www.freepressjournal.in](http://www.freepressjournal.in), 30/03/2021.

## **KARNATAKA**

### **Complaint about encroachment in ESZ of Bannerghatta NP**

The Bannerghatta Nature Conservation Trust (BNCT) has alleged that people are laying claims over parcels of land in the buffer zone of the Bannerghatta National Park (NP). Bannerghatta police, with whom a complaint has been filed, said that the forest department had acquired the land but the person in question had not surrendered it. This person says it was sanctioned from the revenue department and claims it is his private land. Now, the police have approached the forest and revenue departments to survey the land and submit a final report.

The BNCT has said in its complaint that the land, which is within 100 m of the BNP and is a part of the Ragihalli Elephant Corridor, has been nurtured by them for more than 15 years as a wildlife habitat. Over the years, the trust said, it had planted several thousand saplings of native species as recommended by the Indian Institute of Science in its report on the ecologically sensitive zone (ESZ) of the national park. Several of the saplings were gifted in 2019 by the panchayat of Ragihalli. In addition to the plantations, BNCT had at its own expense, laid a one-km long pipe with outlets every 100 m to enable watering of the saplings in

summer. The trust also regularly carries out inspections for monitoring plantations.

During one such inspection, a BNCT member was stopped by a person claiming ownership of that parcel of land. This incident was followed by another person giving the same warning to this BNCT member at the end of April.

BNCT has pointed out that this very same pattern has been brought to police' notice over the past two years.

Source: 'Row over land in buffer zone of Bannerghatta park', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 30/04/2021.

## **KERALA**

### **Farmers in Wayanad WLS welcome hike in financial package for voluntary relocation**

Farmers in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and environmental organisations in the region have welcomed the decision of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change (MoEFCC) to enhance the amount from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 15 lakh for each eligible family under the voluntary village relocation programme of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

Though the relocation project at Wayanad had begun two years ago, it is yet to be completed.

The Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi, had conducted a survey 13 years ago on the relocation of settlers for the voluntary resettlement programme. It had found that as many as 10,604 people from 2,613 families in 110 settlements needed to be relocated. The survey had identified 1,388 people from 880 families in 14 settlements for relocation in the first phase at a cost of Rs. 88 crore. Though the project was launched in 2006, it was rolled out here only in 2011. The government has been able to relocate nearly 560 families so far, including tribal families, from 10 settlements in the sanctuary under the project.

It was a long-standing demand of farmers, environmentalists, and state governments to enhance the compensation as the land value and the prices of construction materials had gone up substantially, said the president of the Wayanad Prakruthi Samrakshana Samiti. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXIV, Nos. 4 & 3; Vol. XXIII, Nos. 6 & 5; Vol. XVIII, No. 2 and Vol. XVII, No. 3).

Source: EM Manoj. 'Settler farmers in Wayanad hail hike in compensation', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 11/04/2021.

## **MAHARASHTRA**

### **Tiger photographed in newly declared conservation reserve in Western Ghats**

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) now has photographic evidence of a tiger for the first time in one of the conservation reserves (CRs) declared in December 2020 along the Sahyadri (Western Ghats). The pictures of a male tiger were obtained via camera traps laid out by the FD following reports of a cattle kill.

Chief conservator of forests, Kolhapur, said that before declaration of the CR, the FD had heard about the presence of a tiger in the region and had tried several times to get evidence. Now, the FD is installing cameras at several other places as it expects the tiger to move up to the Chandoli forest range. It has also issued alerts to local people to immediately contact the FD in case of any conflict with the tiger.

In December last year, the state wildlife board had given the CR tag to the seven ranges — Amboli-Dodamarg, Chandgad, Ajara-Bhudargad, Gaganbawda, Panhalagad, Vishalgad and Jor-Jambhali — along the ghats. These CRs now connect PAs such as the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve, Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary and Tillari.

Source: 'Tiger seen on camera in W Ghats' conservation reserve for first time', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 01/05/2021.

### **Firefly festival at Radhanagari WLS cancelled due to rise in Covid-19 cases**

The firefly festival that is celebrated every year in the month of May in Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) was called off due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Radhanagari WLS has already been closed for public.

The festival is organised every year in the second half of May as trees in the sanctuary get lit up by thousands of fireflies. The Bison Nature Club in Radhanagari has announced that it will upload informative videos about the fireflies and the festival on their Facebook page so people can watch it online.

Source: 'Radhanagari firefly festival called off', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 12/05/2021.

### **Three tiger cubs and sloth bear found dead in Bhandara forest division in May**

Three tiger cubs and a sloth bear were found dead in separate incidents, in mid-May, in Bhandara forest division. Forest officials have claimed all the deaths to be natural.

In the first incident, two month-old tiger cubs, both female, were found dead in a siphon canal of Tekapar lift irrigation project. According to the Bhandara deputy conservator of forest (DCF), the cubs died due to drowning. The siphon well of the Tekapar-Shrinagar canal had water due to rains and it is speculated that the cubs must have fallen inside at night.

However, wildlife enthusiasts and activists claimed that locals had been sighting a tigress with cubs since April 25 in Garada area where the dead cubs were found. Despite having information about this tigress, they noted, the Bhandara range forest officer and the frontline staff did not keep track of the tigress and cubs. They have also pointed out that there are around a dozen such open wells in the area.

The third death, also of a cub, was reported from near Dhanori in Paoni range on the outskirts of Umred-Karhandla-Paoni Wildlife Sanctuary. This was an ailing cub and foresters made an unsuccessful attempt to reunite it with the mother tigress in Sawarla in Paoni range. The DCF said that a tigress with two cubs was being monitored since March 28, when they were first recorded. On May 5, the two cubs were sighted in compartment number 310 near a lake. However, only one cub was visible since May 7. On May 11, forest officials found a cub in a weak and dehydrated condition. The cub was fed and kept at the same place, where it was found, assuming the mother will take it away. The staff kept a watch the entire night, but the cub was found dead next morning.

A full-grown male sloth bear was found dead on Rawanwadi-Dhargaon road. According to the veterinary doctor, the bear died of the venomous Russel's viper's bite.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Three tiger cubs, sloth bear dead in Bhandara', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 13/05/2021.

### **Two women die in separate tiger attacks on same day in Porla forest range in Gadchiroli**

Two women were killed in separate incidents of tiger attacks in Porla forest range in Gadchiroli district on May 10. Experts suspect that the same tiger might have been involved in both the attacks as the incidents occurred just three km apart in two hours.

In the first incident, a woman from Mahadwadi village was killed in the forest. In the other incident, a woman from village Kuradi, three km from Mahadwadi, was killed in compartment number 54 of the same forest range. Both these women were out in the jungle to collect tendu leaves.

According to the honorary wildlife warden of Gadchiroli, both the incidents were accidental as the tiger did not take away the

kills. The range forest officer (RFO) of Porla range claimed that there is a tigress with grown-up cubs in the area, and it is likely that the cubs made the attacks. The RFO added that ex-gratia aid of Rs. 10,000 each was given to kin of the victims.

Source: Mazhar Ali. 'Two women killed in separate tiger attacks', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 11/05/2021.

### **Deer translocation within Tadoba Andhari TR opposed by conservationists, ex-foresters**

Wildlife experts and ex-foresters have opposed the move of the state principal chief conservator of forest (wildlife) to transfer 100 deer from Jamni in the Tadoba range to Botezari in the Kolsa range of the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) to augment the tiger prey base there. Former honorary wildlife warden (HWW) of Gadchiroli, Uday Patel, has written to the TATR field director demanding the project be scrapped. He has pointed out that there is history of chital presence at Botezari meadows and with poaching pressure from villages like Kolsa and Rantalodi, the relocated deer will not be safe.

Wildlife conservationist Prafulla Bhamburkar also made the same demand in a written statement. The statement said that Botezari was well-stocked with deer even before the village was shifted. The area losing its population even after adding the village area and meadows to the wild is questionable. Also, the current population of deer in Jamni is not an ecological burden or risk to the habitat. Thus, there is no need to remove them from their habitat. Instead, he suggested, the shifted elephant camp must be used to protect the Botezari area as this will help the deer population flourish naturally once again.

Member of the state board for wildlife, Bandu Dhotre, has also said that TATR has sufficient prey base. Even if a



certain area lacks prey population, a study needs to be done for reasons thereof and a plan should be prepared on how the prey base can be improved in such areas. The way it is being done in TATR will cause heavy casualties. The focus should instead be on relocation of villages, he said.

Retired divisional forest officer Deepak Chondekar, who was range forest officer at Kolsa in 2008, too opposed the move. He has put forth the same argument as that of Dhotre.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Move to relocate Jamni deer to Botezari opposed', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 30/04/2021.

### **Kin of van majoors killed fighting forest fire in Nagzira WLS await compensation**

Nearly a month after three van majoors were killed fighting forest fires inside Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), the families of the victims are still waiting for the entire ex-gratia announced by the chief minister (CM). Two NGOs meanwhile have released Rs. 9.75 lakh to them.

On April 9, three forest labourers, one each from Thadezari, Dhanori and Kosamtondi, died after fire-blowers they were carrying exploded. Two others who were injured are undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Nagpur. CM Udhav Thackeray had, on April 10, announced Rs. five lakh compensation for next of kin of each deceased from the CM Relief Fund. Till now only Rs. one lakh each has been released.

Gondia resident deputy collector said that there was a delay in payment of the relief because the district administration had still not received the post-mortem, the police report or detailed report from the forest department (FD).

Another reason for the delay is that the administration is busy tackling the Covid-19 spread and funds are not easily available. The Navegaon Nagzira Tiger Reserve

(NNTR) field director said that the FD will submit papers to the district administration soon. The delay had occurred because of restricted staff strength on account of Covid.

The NNTR Foundation has spent Rs. 15 lakh on the treatment of two injured van majoors. The cost of treatment will be borne by the state government and the money will be later refunded to the foundation.

The kin of the three victims were promised a package of Rs. 10 lakh each. This included Rs. five lakh from CM Relief Fund and another Rs. five lakh was to come from the contribution by NGOs, the local MLA, and forest unions and associations. The total money arranged for so far has only been Rs. 3.5 lakh.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Kin of Nagzira fire victims still await full govt compensation', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 07/05/2021.

### **Tigress released back in Tipeshwar WLS after wire snare injury treatment**

T2-C1, a four-year-old tigress from Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), which had suffered a deep wire snare injury in her front leg, was successfully released back into the wild after 12 days of treatment. The tigress was first sighted in an injured condition inside the sanctuary by patrolling staff on April 18. She was rescued with the help of a wildlife veterinarian on April 21, treated and released back on May 2.

The wire snare around the T2-C1's leg was of a strong rope generally used for rappelling and climbing purposes. The rope was so tightly stuck that if not removed the forelimb would have to be amputated. There was a wound and swelling on the leg and the tigress was unable to stand properly.

This is the second incident in the last two years where a tiger was entangled in a wire snare and successfully released back in

the wild. In May 2019, a male tiger cub was similarly rescued and its snare was removed.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tipeswar tigress released in wild after treatment for snare injury',  
www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com,  
07/05/2021.

## MEGHALAYA

### **Bamboo-dwelling bat species recorded in area adjacent to Nongkhylllem WLS**

A team of scientists led by Dr. Uttam Saikia of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Shillong, and scientists from a few European natural history museums have recently reported a bamboo dwelling bat species - *Eudiscopus denticulus* from the Lailad area adjacent to the Nongkhylllem Wildlife Sanctuary. The finding has been published in the recent edition of the Swiss journal *Revue Suisse de Zoologie*. Aptly called disk-footed bat, it is distinctive in appearance with prominent disk-like pads in the thumb and bright orange colouration.

The discovery has been doubly special for the research team as the bat's DNA profile matched exactly with that of a similar species from Vietnam. The researchers noted that although several bamboo dwelling bat species are common throughout South East Asia, this particular species is known from only a few places. So far, a few localities in Southern China, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar were known to be habitats of this species. Now, a new locality in Meghalaya has been added, leading to a range extension of about 1000 km westward.

The discovery has added an additional genus and species to the bat fauna of India. The ZSI team has been documenting the bat fauna of India for some years now. They have reported several interesting species from Meghalaya and the tally of bat species in the state has now gone up to 66.

Source: 'First disk-footed bat from India reported in Meghalaya',  
www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com,  
20/04/2021.

## ODISHA

### **Dolphin populations increase in Odisha**

As per the final data of the dolphin census conducted in January and February, the dolphin population in Chilika lagoon and along the Odisha coast has doubled compared to what it was in 2020. A total of 544 Irrawaddy, Bottle-nose and Humpback dolphins were sighted this year. The number last year was 233.

The population of Irrawaddy dolphins, which are mostly found in Chilika, has gone up from 146 in 2020 to 162 this year. The rise in their population is being attributed to the eviction of the illegal gheries here. Officials also noted that the Covid-19 lockdown led to fewer tourist boats in lake, which made it conducive for dolphins to move from one part of the lake to another. 39 Irrawaddy dolphins were also sighted in the Rajnagar mangrove division, though their number has come down from 60 in 2020.

Only two humpbacks were sighted in the Rajnagar mangrove area in 2020 while this year the population grew astronomically to 281. However, according to the divisional forest officer of Rajnagar mangrove division, the number is likely to fluctuate in the next census as these humpback dolphins were not part of any riverine systems and cannot be identified as residential mammals. They were spotted travelling along the Odisha coast.

The number of Bottle-nose dolphins also grew this year to 54, up substantially from 23 in 2020.

Divided into 41 units, wildlife activists, academicians, forest department officials, NGO members, boat operators and researchers from the Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai, had participated in the population estimation exercise for dolphins

and other cetacean species. (Also *PA Updates* Vol. XXVII, No. 2; Vol. XXVI, Nos. 4 & 2).

Source: Satyasundar Barik. 'Dolphin boom in Odisha's Chilika lake', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 10/04/2021.

### **528 human deaths in human-elephant conflict in five years in Odisha**

As many as 528 people died and 443 sustained injuries in human-elephant conflict in Odisha in the last five years. The numbers were put out by the Wildlife Society of Odisha (WSO), a non-profit, based on an analysis of information from April 2017 to April 2021.

Around a quarter of these casualties (118) occurred during the summer between April and June. Elephants feed mainly on fruits during this period due to the scarcity of fodder and water in the forest areas. This is the time villagers also go to the forest to collect non-timber forest products such as mahua flowers, mango, jackfruits and cashew. Lakhs of tribal women also collect kendu leaves during the summer season. These factors together have been leading to the conflict incidents.

As many as five persons died in the state and the same number sustained injuries in the first two weeks of April this year. On April 14 a person from Bargarh district's Khalliamunda village was killed in an elephant attack. A week before that, on April 7, two persons, including a woman, were trampled to death by an elephant at Ramachandrapur village in Chhendipada forest range in Angul district.

WSO has appealed to the wildlife wing of the state forest department to launch an awareness drive among the people in the high conflict forest divisions in the state including Angul, Dhenkanal, Athagarh, Rairakhol, Sambalpur, Athamalik, Keonjhar and Deogarh.

Source: Hrusikesh Mohanty. 'Over 500 died in human-elephant conflict in Odisha in last 5 years', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 16/04/2021.

### **Mahendragiri proposed as the 2nd BR in Odisha**

The Odisha government has proposed a second biosphere reserve (BR) at Mahendragiri in the southern part of the state. Spread over Gajapati and Ganjam districts in the Eastern Ghats, the area of the proposed reserve is 4709 sq. km. The feasibility report prepared by the BR committee for the proposal has been submitted to the state government.

According to the report, Mahendragiri is inhabited by the Soura and the Kandha tribes. The hills here have diverse vegetation representing 40 per cent of the reported flora of Odisha, with around 1,358 species of plants. Twenty-nine of the 41 species of threatened, medicinal plants found in Odisha, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, are found in the proposed BR area. The fauna found here includes 27 species of mammals, 165 species of birds, 23 species of snakes, 15 species of amphibians, three species of turtles and 19 lizards.

At a workshop titled Integrated Development of Mahendragiri Hill Complex organised by the Orissa Environmental Society, several environmentalists had recently urged the Odisha government to send an urgent proposal to the Centre to declare Mahendragiri a BR. They have pointed out that almost all criteria to accord Mahendragiri the status of a BR had been completed.

The Similipal BR Odisha's first BR had been notified on May 20, 1996.

Source: Hrusikesh Mohanty. 'Odisha government proposes state's second biosphere reserve at Mahendragiri', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 30/03/2021.

## **TAMIL NADU**

### **Wild dogs seen in forests surrounding Udhagamandalam town**

Wild dogs have been seen with increasing frequency in the last few months in the forests surrounding Marlimund Lake that borders Udhagamandalam town. These sightings, according to conservationists, highlight the importance of such small forests bordering major towns in the Nilgiris, and the need to sensitise residents to preventing problematic human-animal interactions.

Assistant conservator of forests, Nilgiris division, said that while the lake is under the control of the Udhagamandalam municipality, forest staff has been informed of the presence of around 10-15 wild dogs in the area. It is unclear if they are just passing through or if they have moved into these forests permanently. The forest department plans to use camera traps to learn more about the behaviour of the wild dogs in the area.

Residents have also recorded a sloth bear making its way into the town from the lake recently. A number of sambar carcasses, with signs of having been hunted by wild dogs, were seen around the lake. Leopards too have been seen in the area.

Source: Rohan Premkumar. 'Asiatic wild dogs surface in forests around Udhagamandalam town', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 04/05/2021.

### **Illegal constructions in Naduvattam area adjoining Mukurthi NP**

Illegal construction of buildings and a road cutting through the forest has been reported in the Naduvattam area, adjoining the Mukurthi National Park (NP). It is feared that these activities if allowed to continue will lead to more constructions of commercial and residential properties, potentially endangering the existence of hundreds of native species of flora and wildlife. The Naduvattam area

serves as a crucial corridor for wildlife connecting Mukurthi NP, the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and Gudalur.

According to forest officials, a road, measuring 125 m in length was illegally constructed through a patch of land notified to be declared as a reserve forest in Pykara forest range in Nilgiris forest division. The owner of a property in the area, who is alleged to be drawing water illegally from the surrounding Shola forests to construct the buildings, built the road that would serve as an access road to the building site.

Following media reports about these developments, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) took notice and ordered an investigation to be conducted by the district collector and the district forest officer. The forest department then set up a small outpost cutting off access to the road and also begun plantation along the road to prevent future use. A case has been booked against the landowner for encroaching on government land.

Meanwhile, the status of the land on which the buildings are coming up is itself under investigation. Complaints have been received from people in the area that the owner of the property has illegally acquired these lands.

Source: Rohan Premkumar. 'Ecologically-sensitive corridor adjoining Mukurthi National Park under threat from illegal construction', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 11/05/2021.

### **Four forest divisions to get native Chippiparai dogs to check wildlife crimes**

Four forest divisions in Tamil Nadu will get dogs of the native Chippiparai breed to detect wildlife crimes. Four puppies of the breed were bought recently by the forest department in March and handed over to the Tamil Nadu Forestry Training College in Theni district. These four dogs will be deployed, from June,

in the forest divisions of Coimbatore, Pollachi, Nilgiris and Gudalur.

They are being currently trained by the trainers with the Tamil Nadu police department and Indian military. R Rajmohan, principal of the training college said that the dogs could easily sniff sandal and teak, and skins of various wild animals. Further he said that the native breed could be taken to the forest where it could easily be put up in a place for 15 days without much trouble whereas the imported breeds needed more medication and maintenance.

The Coimbatore forest division has appointed two anti-poaching watchers as the sniffer dog handler and helper. The duo will take care of the dog and familiarize them with the Madukkarai, Boluvampatti, Coimbatore, Periyanaickenpalayam, Karamadai, Mettupalayam and Sirumugai forest ranges in the division.

Source: 'Chippiparai dog squad to check wildlife crimes', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 16/04/2021.

## TELANGANA

### **Eight lions at Nehru Zoological Park infected by Coronavirus**

Eight Asiatic lions at Hyderabad's Nehru Zoological Park have tested positive for the Coronavirus. The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) informed the forest authorities that the RT-PCR tests of these lions were positive. Four male and four female lions, housed in the 40-acre safari area, were tested after displaying mild symptoms. On April 24, caretakers noticed that these lions developed symptoms like dry cough, nasal discharge, and loss of appetite and soon alerted the veterinary team. The vets took oropharyngeal swab samples of the felines and sent them to CCMB.

The CCMB will carry out detailed investigation of the samples for genome

sequencing to find out if the strain came from human beings.

Source: Abhinay Deshpande. 'Eight Asiatic lions test positive in COVID-19, first in India', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 04/05/2021.

## UTTAR PRADESH

### **Changes in Girwa river flow impacts gharial nesting in Katarniaghat WLS**

A study conducted by a team of researchers from Delhi University, Wildlife Institute of India, Madras Crocodile Bank Trust and Uttarakhand Forest Department (FD) has found that reduced flow in the Girwa river and growth of vegetation at the riverbank nesting sites has adversely impacted gharial nesting in the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS).

A riverine-reservoir in the sanctuary hosts a breeding population of gharial, which though small, is only second in ranking to the much larger Chambal population in Madhya Pradesh. A flood-related natural channel shift in the Karnali River upstream in Nepal in 2010, reduced seasonal flow in the Girwa stretch where gharials nest. Subsequently, there was a notable rise in woody vegetation at open sites where gharials previously nested. The number of nesting sites declined by 70 percent while the number of nests dropped by 46 percent from 2015 to 2019.

For the study the team sampled vegetation at the nesting sites from 2017 to 2019 and used satellite data to quantify changes in riverside vegetation from 1988 to 2019. They also documented changes in gharial nesting sites distribution from 2015 to 2019 using information collected during nesting surveys and secondary data.

Recently, vegetation was removed from nesting banks and sand was added by shifting sand to extend riverbanks in the sanctuary. This proved successful, the researchers noted, as "the artificial sites were readily adapted for basking and nesting and

the number of nests doubled in just one year”. Though the researchers have been working together with the FD here for six years and the idea of restoring nesting habitat was jointly agreed upon and executed, they said that providing artificial assistance cannot be kept up because it is not resourceful and feasible in long-term. A larger continuous habitat is needed and this can be achieved by a “cooperative initiative by the two countries in the Karnali basin—India and Nepal—to develop a collaborative conservation agenda for this important riverine landscape while it is still largely intact and free-flowing,” stated the study.

Source: Neha Jain. ‘Gharial nesting threatened by woody vegetation on riverbanks’, [www.india.mongabay.com](http://www.india.mongabay.com), 03/05/2021.

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### **Centre issues advisory to close down PAs due to Covid 2nd wave**

Responding to the second Covid-19 wave spreading across the country the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) issued an advisory asking all tiger reserves, national parks, and wildlife sanctuaries to close down till further orders. It has also asked all state chief wildlife wardens to take preventive measures to stop potential transmission of the virus from humans to animals.

The letter issued to state chief wildlife wardens by the deputy inspector general of forests, wildlife, on April 30 has also asked for the restriction on movement of people to PAs, for the constitution of a task force/rapid action force with field managers, veterinarians and frontline staff to manage the situation, to create a 'round-the-clock' reporting mechanism and enhance disease surveillance, mapping and monitoring.

On the advisory on virus transmission threat, Maharashtra Animal and Fishery Sciences University (MAFSU) vice-chancellor Ashish Paturkar said that there are chances of virus spread from humans to animals. The present mutated virus can infect animals too if infected people come in contact with animals. MAFSU has been told to collect data on whether animals have been affected by the virus.

Source: Letter by DIGWL, MoEFCC dated 30/04/2021, File No 8-32/2020WL Vijay Pinjarkar. ‘Union forest ministry shuts all national parks, sanctuaries across India’, [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 01/05/2021.

### **Conservation biologist Krithi Karanth wins WILD Innovator Award**

Krithi Karanth, director and chief conservation scientist at the Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS), was recently awarded the WILD Innovator Award. The award, in its inaugural year, has been given to 10 women around the world. It is given by USA-based Wild Elements Foundation and comes with a prize of US \$100,000.

The citation states that Karanth was chosen for “researching human dimensions in wildlife for over 20 years”. In her 23 years as a conservation scientist, Karanth has focused primarily on human-wildlife conflict due to India’s shrinking wildlife habitats and human populations living in close proximity to wildlife.

As a first step towards minimising this friction Karanth launched Wild Seve (Seve is Kannada for service) in 2015 as a helpline and task force that helps people register and process claims for compensation. Typically, a CWS staff member visits the scene within 48 hours to document the damage and help file paperwork. They then track the claim until it is paid out.

Wild Seve currently covers 600 villages and settlements around the Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks and has processed nearly 18,000 claims worth about Rs. six crore. In 2018, CWS collaborated with the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy to analyse which regions were least-served by existing government compensation policies. It turned out that Nagaland still didn't compensate for human deaths in cases of man-animal conflict, and seven other states didn't compensate for crop loss.

CWS also reviewed what states such as Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra were doing right and better compared to other states. Then it came up with comprehensive recommendations for what Karnataka could do to improve its policy.

In 2019, Karanth won the Rolex Award for Enterprise, for her work to reduce human-wildlife conflict in India. In 2020 she received an Eisenhower Fellowship.

Source: Natasha Rego. 'Peace-keeping force: Krithi Karanth wins award for work on human-animal conflict', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 07/05/2021.

### **Two Indian foresters selected for the International Ranger Award 2021**

Ramanathapuram forest range officer, S Sathish, and Mahindra Giri of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand have won the International Ranger Award 2021 given jointly by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Switzerland, World Commission on Protected Areas, International Ranger Federation and Global Wildlife Conservation and Conservation Allies.

This is the first edition of the award and was awarded to 10 officials from across the world. The choice was made from 600 entries from 100 countries. The prize involves a uniform patch and a cash prize of \$10,000 for the forest department to support the awardee's work.

Sathish was selected for his work in marine conservation in the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park and Palk Bay region. He is also part of the park's scuba diving team that was set up in 2017 under the guidance of the wildlife warden.

Source: Susan Joe Philip. 'Ramanathapuram Forest Range Officer S Sathish on winning the International Ranger Award 2021', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 20/04/2021.

## **SOUTH ASIA**

### **Nepal**

#### **Rhino numbers on rise in Nepal; concerns over carrying capacity**

Nepal's population of greater one-horned rhinos, estimated at 752 in 2015, has grown by more than 100 since then. Official figures of the latest count released recently suggest that of the total, 694 animals were counted in and around Chitwan National Park (NP), 38 in Bardia NP, 17 in Shuklaphanta NP and three in Parsa NP. Nepal has been counting its rhinos every five years since 1994. The count then was 466. The most recent census was slated to take place in 2020, but the Covid-19 pandemic delayed it.

Jointly conducted by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Department of Forests (DoF), WWF-Nepal and National Trust for Nature Conservation, the operation involved 57 domesticated elephants and a team of 350 park technicians and staff.

Government officials and conservationists have now stressed the need to expand the habitat as the growing numbers in hemmed-in reserves won't be sustainable going forward. They fear an increase in conflict as big animals like the rhino and tiger are forced to move seeking new territory.

A case in point is the 932 sq. km Chitwan NP, which has nearly 90% of Nepal's rhino population. It has only pockets of habitats for the rhino, which is further shrinking due to the natural invasion of the khair, sisso and sal trees. A high density of the rhino population, therefore, is usually found in the border areas of the park. Crop raiding by rhinos in the adjoining crop fields sometimes result in human casualties. Foraging animals also face retaliatory action from the angry farmers.

Source: Basant Subba. 'Rhino conservation in Nepal: Now, focus on habitat expansion', [www.thehimalayantimes.com](http://www.thehimalayantimes.com), 20/04/2021.  
Ethan Shaw. 'Good news: Nepal's rhino numbers on the rise', [www.earthtouchnews.com](http://www.earthtouchnews.com), 15/04/2021.

### **Ten people killed in tiger attacks in Bardia NP in nine months**

Ten people have been killed in tiger attacks in the Bardia National Park (BNP) in the last nine months. The most recent attack was in late March when a 62-year-old woman was killed. No such attacks were reported here in the decade before 2019, and the current spate has instilled fear among the villagers living in the municipalities of Madhuban, Geruwa and Thakurdwara.

The BNP authorities have placed a number of restrictions on residents to prevent these incidents. Pedestrians and two-wheel vehicles have not been allowed to use the highway in the Amreni-Chisapani section of the park since January. Sections of the buffer zone around where tiger sightings have been frequent, including the Khata biological corridor and Samjhana community forest, have also been closed off. In Geruwa municipality, where three of the 10 killings happened, a 20-km wire fence has been put up around the village.

The BNP has also halted tourist activities like walking safaris to ensure the safety of tourists and guides, and park officials have barred people from entering the forest alone to collect fodder and wood.

The Geruwa river, which forms the western boundary of BNP, is an important source of water for wildlife, while the forests along the riverbank provide habitat. Over the past few years, the Geruwa river has been changing its course as a result of 15 years of mining of rocks and sand near the Chisapani headwaters. The water levels too are said to have declined drastically. Droughts during the dry season have led to wild animals entering human settlements in search of water while low water levels have made it easier for villagers to cross the river and enter the forest.

In response to the ongoing water crisis, the park management has constructed around 152 artificial ponds and solar pumps since 2015. Still, it hasn't been proven sufficient to address the ongoing issue. With the ongoing construction of the Ranijamara irrigation canal and the multi-basin irrigation and hydropower project at Babai upstream of the park, the crisis is likely to be aggravated, pointed out the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), an NGO in Bardia. The local community has demanded to halt the mining to improve the flow of water in the Geruwa river.

In one survey, a large proportion of people in Bardia stated that poverty was a primary reason for entering forests. They depend on the forests to gather firewood, fodder and timber. Covid-19 has exacerbated the situation. Additionally, a lack of tourists and the halt of walking safaris has meant a loss of income for local guides. While there is no clear scientific evidence of Covid-19 and its link with wildlife conflict, it is quite obvious that when people go back to the villages, because of their movement and presence, their chances of interacting with the wildlife increase, said a wildlife crime researcher.



Park authorities are preparing for a carrying capacity assessment for tigers in BNP. In addition, a team of conservationists from NTNC, BNP, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Michigan State University have launched a study into the movement and behaviour of tigers in the park. The team plans to install radio collars on the tigers to track their activity and identify tigers causing conflict. Meanwhile, the park authorities, in collaboration with NTNC and the Zoological Society of London, are carrying out campaigns in communities across Bardia district to promote behaviour that will help in peaceful coexistence.

Source: Tulsi Rauniyar. 'Why have tiger attacks spiked in Nepal's Bardia National Park?', [www.thethirdpole.net](http://www.thethirdpole.net), 11/05/2021.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### **Indus and Ganges river dolphins are two different species: study**

Scientists have recognised the Indus and Ganges river dolphins as two separate species – raising the number of river dolphin species worldwide to six. River dolphins in South Asia have been considered to constitute a single species, but a study published in March in the journal *Marine Mammal Science*, has concluded that the dolphins in the Indus and the Ganges-Brahmaputra rivers are sufficiently distinct to be classified as two different species.

The research work, which took 20 years to complete, was led by Dr. Gill Braulik

of the Sea Mammal Research Unit at the University of St. Andrews. The research shows that the two river dolphin species have different numbers of teeth, coloration, growth patterns and skull shapes as well clear genetic differences. The research involved a long-term collaboration between the University of St. Andrews, WWF-Pakistan, Patna University in India and the Southwest Fisheries Science Center of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the USA as well as many other researchers in South Asia.

Both the Indus and Ganges river dolphins species are threatened by accidental entanglement and drowning in fishing nets, by the construction of hydropower dams and irrigation barrages, and pollution of their waterways. They are both listed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species.

The population of Ganges river dolphins is estimated at around 3,500 to 4,500 across Bangladesh, India and Nepal and is believed to be declining. Meanwhile, the Indus river dolphins have achieved an impressive recovery over the last 20 years, with numbers going up from approximately 1,200 in 2001 to more than 1,900 in 2017, despite huge challenges, including an 80 per cent decline in the extent of their range. While almost all Indus river dolphins are found in Pakistan, a tiny population is also found in the Beas – a tributary of the Indus – in India.

Source: 'Indus, Ganges river dolphins declared separate species', [www.dawn.com](http://www.dawn.com), 24/03/2021.



## NOW AVAILABLE

### The State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra News and Information from the Protected Area Update 1996-2015

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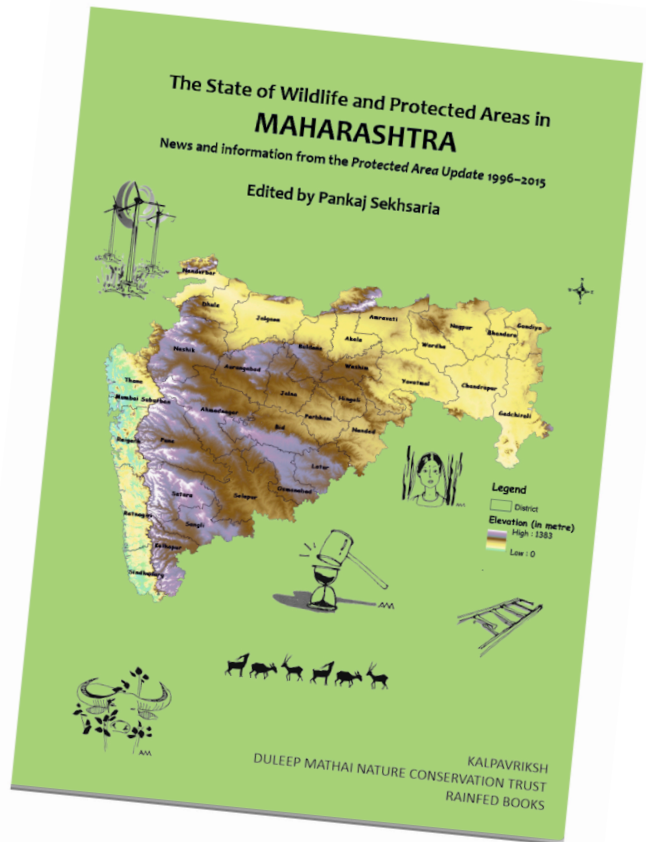
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## IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE

### NATIONAL NEWS

#### **SC directs states to lay low voltage power lines underground in GIB habitats**

The Supreme Court (SC) recently directed the state governments of Gujarat and Rajasthan to lay all low voltage power lines underground in the Great Indian Bustard (GIB)'s preferred and potential habitats as identified by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII). The three-judge bench of Chief Justice AS Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian have allotted one year's time for the completion of the task. They also ordered that all the future power lines must go underground in the areas identified in the order. Till they are made underground, bird-diverters should be installed on the power lines, said the bench. Further, to assess the feasibility of laying high voltage transmission lines underground, the SC has constituted a three-member committee comprising Rahul Rawat, scientist at Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Sutirtha Dutta, WII Scientist; and Devesh Gadhavi, deputy director, The Corbett Foundation.

The orders were passed in response to a plea filed in 2019 by MK Ranjitsinh, retired IAS officer, requesting the court to take necessary action to save the declining population of the GIB.

WII, had noted in its 2018 report "Power Line Mitigation" that every year one lakh birds die due to collision with power lines. Surveys conducted by WII in the Thar covering 80 km of power lines and repeated seven times over a year found 289 carcasses of around 30 species, including the GIB.

The Union Ministry of Power has contended in its affidavit that the underground high voltage line is not technically feasible due to several factors such as high cost and high downtime to repair any failed cable. The

petitioners, however, pointed to various instances of cables laid underground in the country. They referred to the invitation of public comments for laying underground cable transmission line of 220 KV by the Government of India, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. In another case, it specifically contended that the 10 km long power lines were made underground by GETCO for the safety of Greater Flamingos in the Khadir Region of Kutch.

On the matter of finding ways to mobilise financial resources, the bench has recommended funds from electricity utility/companies having a specified net worth or turnover or net profit under the provision of Corporate Social Responsibility Act. The SC also indicated that under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016 substantial funds are available with the national and state authorities. Rajasthan, for instance, has already set up a Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) in 2009. Rule 5(2)(i) regarding CAMPA permit the use of the state fund for the wildlife conservation. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXVII, No. 1; Vol. XXV, Nos. 6 & 5 and Vol. XXIV, No. 1).

Source: Seema Sharma. 'SC Orders Laying of Cable Transmission Lines Underground in Great Indian Bustard Habitats', [www.leaflet.in](http://www.leaflet.in), 25/04/2021.

### GUJARAT

#### **Sasan Wildlife Division satellite-tags four raptors**

The Sasan Wildlife Division of Junagadh Wildlife Circle recently tagged three eagles and one pallid harrier with solar-powered satellite tags, to generate baseline data to help conservation of the raptor species in the state.

Of the eagles of three different species tagged— Greater spotted eagle, Indian spotted eagle and Tawny eagle – all except the Indian spotted eagle migrate to India in winter and are spotted in good numbers in the grasslands of Saurashtra and Kutch.

Various studies indicate that the population of these birds is declining in their range countries and the tagging will help understand important aspects such as their

migration pattern, breeding and wintering grounds and foraging ecology.

The Sasan Wildlife Division has also tagged Lesser floricans and vultures in recent months as part of different research projects.

Source: ‘Gujarat: Sasan wildlife division satellite tags 3 eagles, 1 pallid harrier’, [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 17/04/2021.

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## READER'S WRITE

### The PA Update 150th issue

- I wish to congratulate you and your entire team for the 150th issue of *PA Update*. I am a recent admirer of the PA Update. I started receiving the PA Update a few months ago. Over time, it has turned into an addiction. The moment I receive the publication, I put aside all other activity to glance through the issue. I salute the team at Kalpavriksh who have so dedicatedly produced this journal. It's indeed a great effort. Hope to remain your admirer in the days to come.

• Amitava Dutta

- Kudos to you and the team for this splendid 150th issue. Thank you once again for asking me to contribute. I am very honoured to be part of this historic event. I am deeply attached to the PA update and will continue to enjoy it.

• Renee M Borges

- Great initiative. Line sketches and illustration have made the earlier sleepy document, a catchy and interesting read please keep going.

• Neeraj Srivastav

## Our 150<sup>th</sup> Issue!



In its 27th year of continuous publication, we are happy to present the 150th issue of the **Protected**

**Area Update**, the bimonthly newsletter on wildlife and protected areas produced by Kalpavriksh.

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

### **1. Ichthyofauna of Dampa Tiger Reserve Rivers, Mizoram, North-Eastern India**

**Author(s):** Lalramliana, MC Zirkunga, S Lalronunga

**Keywords:** Biodiversity hotspot, Conservation, Drainage system, New record

**Summary:** Surveys conducted in various rivers of Dampa Tiger Reserve revealed a high diversity of fish species. Fifty species were recorded of which two were new descriptions. Five species were recorded for the first time at country, state and local levels.

**Link:**

[http://www.jeb.co.in/index.php?page=abstract&issue=202007\\_jul20\\_spl&number=11](http://www.jeb.co.in/index.php?page=abstract&issue=202007_jul20_spl&number=11)

### **2. Studies on the occurrence and distribution of the invasive alien angiospermic plant species in Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, Pilibhit, U.P., (India)**

**Author(s):** Deepak Singh, Alok Kumar Khare

**Keywords:** Angiosperms, Invasive Alien Species, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve

**Summary:** In Pilibhit Tiger Reserve 64 species of invasive plants belonging to 29 families were recorded during field surveys carried out repeatedly in different seasons from 2016-2018. The impact of these invasive species on local flora was discussed.

**Link:** [http://plantarchives.org/20-2/4782-4786%20\(6093\).pdf](http://plantarchives.org/20-2/4782-4786%20(6093).pdf)

### **3. *Ipomoea sagittifolia* Burm. f. – New Record for Rajasthan and Note on Family Convolvulaceae of Todgarh-Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan**

**Author(s):** C S Purohit

**Keywords:** Aravalli, Convolvulaceae, New Records, Rajasthan, Todgarh-Raoli WLS

**Summary:** Of the 28 species from the Family Convolvulaceae collected from Todgarh-Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan, *Ipomoea sagittifolia* is a new record for the state. There were new records and additions of 11 floral

species to the Flora of Aravalli Range and three floristic genera and 25 plant species were added to the Flora of Todgarh-Raoli WLS.

**Link:** <http://ijsrst.com/IJSRST20738>

### **4. Phenological patterns, fruit predation, and seed dispersal in two Endangered trees (*Elaeocarpus* spp.) of Southern Western Ghats, India**

**Author(s):** Karuppa Samy Kasi, Raju Ramasubbu

**Keywords:** Red whiskered bulbul, *Elaeocarpus gaussonii*, *E. recurvatus*, Indian crested porcupine, temperature, rainfall

**Summary:** Phenological patterns, fruit predation and seed dispersal were studied in *Elaeocarpus gaussonii* and *Elaeocarpus recurvatus* at Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary and Kodaikanal Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu. The study discusses the challenges in the mature individuals of both tree species and solutions to raise additional individuals in the forest areas.

**Link:**

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2287884X21000169>

### **5. Wild observations of the reproductive behaviour and first evidence of vocalization in Crocodile newt *Tylototriton himalayanus* (Caudata: Salamandridae) from the Himalayan biodiversity hotspot in Eastern India**

**Author(s):** Ajay Bedi, Vijay Bedi, Sarbani Nag and Robin Suyesh

**Keywords:** Amphibia, breeding, bioacoustics, conservation, Eastern Himalayas

**Summary:** The observations made during the breeding season of *Tylototriton himalayanus*, a recently described salamander species from Eastern India and Nepal, in Darjeeling district of West Bengal resulted in the description of its reproductive behaviour and also reported

the first evidence and description of vocalization.

**Link:** <https://www.salamandra-journal.com/index.php/home/contents/2021-vol-57/2011-bedi-a-v-bedi-s-nag-r-suyesh>

**6. On the epidemiology of helminth parasites in Hangul Deer *Cervus hanglu hanglu* (Mammalia: Artiodactyla: Cervidae) of Dachigam National Park, India**

**Author(s):** Naziya Khurshid, Hidayatulla Tak, Ruqeya Nazir, Kulsum Ahmad Bhat, Muniza Manzoor

**Keywords:** Conservation, Hangul, helminth infection

**Summary:** Examination of 220 fresh faecal samples of the critically endangered Hangul deer from Dachigam National Park disclosed that 89 of them were infected with one or more species of parasitic worms. The prevalence of parasitic infestation differed with seasons.

**Link:**

<https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.5179.13.1.17517-17520>

**7. First record of the rarely collected ant *Protanilla gengma* Xu, 2012 (Hymenoptera, Formicidae, Leptanillinae) from the Indian subcontinent**

**Author(s):** Punmath Aswaj, Karunakaran Anoop, Dharma Rajan Priyadarsanan

**Keywords:** Eastern Himalayas, Indian ant fauna, Mizoram, Northeast India, Winkler extractor

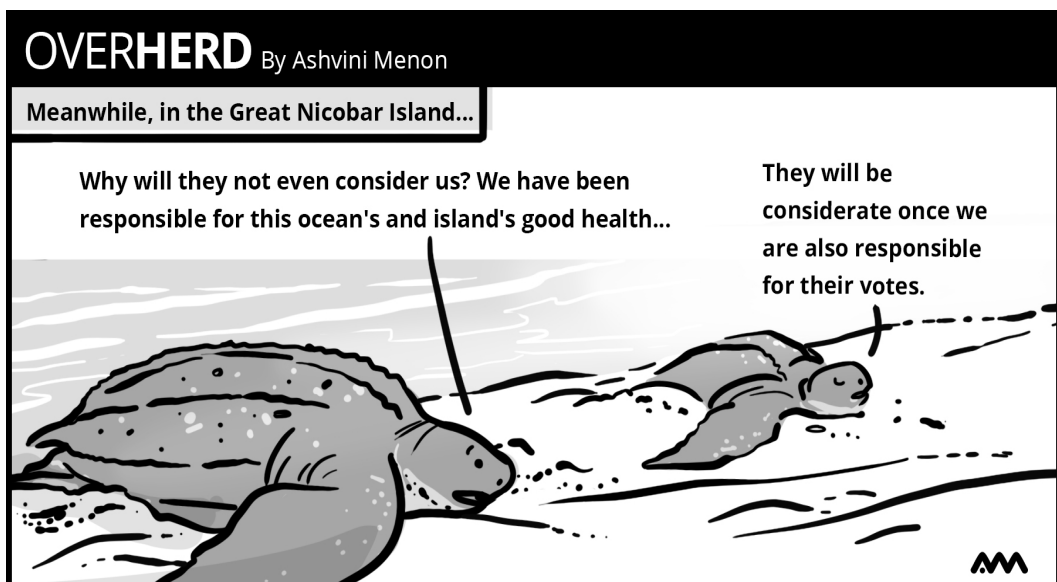
**Summary:** *Protanilla gengma* Xu, 2012 is a rarely collected ant species previously known only from Yunnan Province, China. In April 2019, two worker ants of *P. gengma* were collected from Mizoram's Lengteng Wildlife Sanctuary which represents the first record of this species from the Indian subcontinent.

**Link:**

<https://checklist.pensoft.net/articles.php?id=57103>

This section has been collated by Anand Pendharkar and Aradhya Sardesai (SPROUTS Environment Trust, Mumbai).

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## **FROM THE ARCHIVES - 10 years ago**

*PA Update 91, June 2011*

### **NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA**

#### **11th Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Awards**

The 11th Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation awards were given to five conservationists in a ceremony held in April in New Delhi. Those chosen for the award were Goa based herpetologist and field ecologist Nirmal Kulkarni for his research and conservation initiatives in the Mhadei Bio region, Dr. Dharmendra Khandal for his tiger conservation work, anti-poaching initiatives and efforts for a reform programme for a community of people involved in poaching in and around the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, Dr. M Firoz Ahmed, a wildlife biologist from Assam, Sanjay Gubbi from Karnataka for his work on large mammal conservation and mitigation of human-wildlife conflict through science-based advocacy and Pune based Vidya Athreya for her pioneering research on human-large cat interactions, especially leopards.

Source: Email from Nirmal Kulkarni. 04/04/11.

#### **Army and ITBP help sought for snow leopard conservation**

The Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) has called upon the Indian Army and the Indo- Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) to help in the conservation of the snow leopard. The matter came up during the 2nd meeting of the national steering committee for Project Snow Leopard (PSL) that was held on March 11. It was chaired by Minister of Environment and Forest Jairam Ramesh.

PSL was launched in 2009 for strengthening wildlife conservation in the unique high altitudes of India with the support of local communities, civilian organisations and scientists. The committee reviewed the progress made by individual states in

identifying snow leopard landscapes on a scientific basis and preparing appropriate management plans.

In addition to senior officials from the five snow leopard states, the committee includes scientists and experts from the Nature Conservation Foundation, Wildlife Institute of India, World Wide Fund for Nature – India and the Wildlife Trust of India. All states suggested the need for greater capacity building, improvement of facilities, and providing ‘difficult-area’ incentives to field staff to improve on-ground monitoring and protection.

The Minister also proposed the idea of India hosting an international conference on conservation of snow leopards and mountain landscapes to involve international expertise on the topic.

Source: Meeting of the National Steering Committee for Project Snow Leopard’ Press Note, MoEF, 12/03/11.  
‘Army help sought for snow leopard conservation’, [www.mangalorean.com](http://www.mangalorean.com), 15/03/11.

#### **New draft guidelines for declaration of Critical Wildlife Habitats**

The Ministry of Environment and Forest has released revised draft guidelines for determining critical wildlife habitats as required by the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, based on feedback from a wide set of experts and stakeholders.

Comments and suggestions are invited on the same at [cwhguidelines@gmail.com](mailto:cwhguidelines@gmail.com). Last date for submission is 04.06.2011. The draft guidelines can be accessed at [http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Draft\\_CWH\\_Guidelines\\_May\\_2011.pdf](http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Draft_CWH_Guidelines_May_2011.pdf)

## PERSPECTIVE

### Coastal development and the fate of marine mammals in India

Imagine a seascape and one of the first images which comes to our minds is that of jumping dolphins in clear blue waters. So much so that any advertisement or billboard of a tropical destination now feels incomplete without the cartoons of the two oddly placed dolphins splashing over the surface. Sadly, that is also the extent of the general consciousness about this group of animals in India. And this is of serious concern.

On the one hand the Indian government is more eager than ever to explore the potential of the country's waterways under flagship projects like the Sagarmala Programme; on the other hand, there is barely any consideration that is being given to sentient animals like marine mammals who will be one of the most impacted by any of these projects.

One would think that the environmental impact assessments (EIAs) of such large-scale projects would recommend mitigation measures but that is not the case. The EIA, for instance, of the under construction, International Multipurpose Deepwater Seaport project at Vizhinjam, Kerala, with a 10-km project radius straight into the sea, claims there are no marine mammals in the area. A simple google search will reveal a dozen papers on marine mammals from Kerala with records of at least three species from the coastal waters here. In another more recent case, the EIA of the Mumbai Coastal Road Project, acknowledges the presence of 'Porpoises' but fails to suggest any plan for mitigating the impacts of construction on these animals.

Similar is the case of the Niti Aayog's development plan for Great Nicobar that extends over the idyllic shore of Campbell Bay, the administrative headquarters of the island. Walk on the beach a couple of times and one is most likely to see a pod of dolphins

going about their day. It stands to be seen what the EIA which is now underway has to say about the presence/absence of marine mammals in the area.

To understand the impact of such large projects requires long term monitoring – even after the project is ready. Fatalities of marine mammal populations around deep-water ports is not unreported. Displacement due to concretisation and increase in ambient noise levels are also well-known anthropogenic pressures that affect these animals. Around the world, these are mitigated with constant monitoring by various governmental and non-governmental agencies and with measures such as speed restrictions in areas with higher population densities.

As we encroach more and more into newer spaces, there is a need to acknowledge that we are sharing them with their original inhabitants and not taking over. Sometimes we just need to let those spaces be as they are and other times when we do decide to create a footprint it needs to be done only after fully understanding the place itself.

- **Mahi Mankeshwar** is an independent researcher who has spent time on the islands learning about marine mammals and their habitats in the Andaman sea.

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For private circulation/Printed Matter

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