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### **Protected Area Update**

Vol. XXVII, No. 4, August 2021 (No. 152)

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Produced by **Kalpavriksh** and the **Centre for Policy Studies, IIT Bombay**

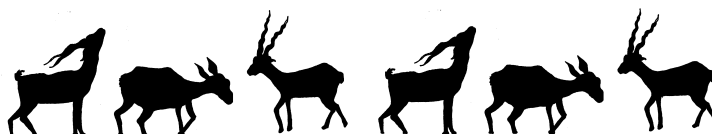
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**Note:** Stories that appear in the *PA Update* are edited version of the original news reports first published in the source mentioned at the end of the story.



### **Publication of the PA Update has been supported by**

**Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust**

**C/o Foundation for Ecological Security** <http://fes.org.in/>

**World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - India**

**and Donations from a number of individual supporters**

### On time and space in conservation

One of the more satisfying experiences of putting together the *Protected Area Update* month after month, year after year, are the unanticipated insights that suddenly come your way. These are like unexpected little rewards and one can highlight two different examples from this issue of the *Update* - one that runs along the axis of time, the other along that of space.

To note that the temporal and spatial dimensions are key elements in and for conservation is to note the obvious. The challenge, perhaps, is how to materialise and mobilise these dimensions. Data and information are central, of course, in understanding patterns, to highlight the possibility of a new trend or indeed to anticipate what might lie ahead of us.

The first insight this time comes from the *PA Update's* sister publication, the *Maharashtra Sanrakshit Kshetra Vartapatra*. Published in Marathi with an exclusive focus on Maharashtra, it comes out every three months and has been around for a year and a half now. Readers of both, the English and Marathi newsletters, will immediately notice how changing the spatial scale of focus changes the volume, quality and nature of information that you get from that geography. It might be an obvious thing to say, but to see this come alive is a very insightful experience. There is more granularity, more depth and more width because the geographic spread is limited. Less, in a sense, allows for more.

Stories borrowed from the latest issue of the Marathi *Update* (see pgs. 10-11) provide an excellent example of this granularity with a range of details on incidents of human-leopard interaction/conflict from across the state in recent times. Maharashtra has seen the death

of 90 leopards in just the last five months; Aurangabad district alone has seen 18 leopard deaths in the last four years and there are also more specific details of incidents from across the state for the last three months. Not only is the leopard more prominently and more frequently visible, across the landscape, one also realises that a lot more information and documentation is more easily available than one would have imagined. One could almost start to see the leopard in new light and the research and management related possibilities this throws up are obviously huge.

The 2nd example - the temporal one - is the story of Manas NP in Assam that the *PA Update* has reported now for nearly three decades. 20 years ago (*PA Updates*, 35 & 31), a large part of the Manas story was largely a negative and depressing one - of militancy related problems, of the park being emptied of rhinos, of forest staff being attacked and of protection infrastructure being destroyed. Things however begin to change and a decade later (See 'From the Archives', this issue pg. 23), the political and administrative systems were working together, poaching was coming down, the rhino was being successfully re-introduced, other animals like the swamp deer were being brought back and the park was taken off the UNESCO endangered list because of the positive developments. And in this issue in 2021 (see pgs. 3-4), we see that tiger numbers in Manas are up by a factor of three in the last decade and the re-introduction of the Pygmy hog is also being done successfully in the park.

This is not to say that the story is all rosy and there are no problems; it is to point out that positive change does happen and long-term documentation helps us understand and appreciate the change and contextualise that possibility. In the case of Manas it might give us hope, in the case of the leopards of Maharashtra it might reveal trends and patterns more clearly and guide further directions for meaningful research and effective management intervention.

## ASSAM

### Another batch of captive-bred Pygmy hogs released in Manas NP

A total of 12 captive-bred Pygmy hogs were released in the Bhuyanpara Range of the Manas National Park (NP) in June under the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP).

Initiated in 1995 by the Assam Forest Department (FD) in association with the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Society, the program released the first batch of 14 individuals in Manas in 2020. With this latest batch of 12 hogs released in Manas the total number of hogs reintroduced into the wild by the PHCP across the state has reached 142. By 2025, the PHCP plans to release 60 more of the hogs in the Manas NP.

Reintroduction of captive hogs in the wild began in 2008, initially in three protected areas. Over the next decade, 35 hogs were released in Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), 59 in the Orang NP, and 22 in Bornadi WLS. The reintroductions in Orang have been particularly successful as the animals have more than doubled in number, and have spread to areas far from release locations.

As part of its rewilding strategy, the PHCP will continue to maintain about 70 captive hogs at its two centres in Assam and breed more hogs for release.

Common once in Nepal, sub-Himalayan India and Bhutan, Pygmy hogs now number just around 250 in the wild.

Source: 'New hope for near extinct pygmy hog species as programme to breed them in Manas National Park gets a fillip', [www.outlookindia.com](http://www.outlookindia.com), 23/06/2021.

### Tiger numbers triple in a decade in Manas NP; census records 37 leopards, many other endangered species



Results of the 12th annual camera trapping survey this year, which covered 876 sq. km of the Manas National Park (NP) and adjoining areas with traps placed at 285 locations, has revealed the presence of 48 tigers here. This included 38 adults, three sub-adults and seven cubs. This is more than three times the count of tigers here a decade ago in 2010.

The survey also recorded 37 leopards in Manas including 31 adults and six sub-adults. Five other species of wild cats - leopard cat, clouded leopard, marbled cat, golden cat and jungle cat - were also found in the park and adjoining areas.

The survey was carried out first in the Bansbari and Bhuyanpara ranges and later at Kahitema, Panbari, First Addition and Bornadi.

The survey also recorded four species of endangered, nine species of vulnerable, four species of near threatened and 11 species of least concern mammals as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List status. Among them are the elephant, hog deer, hispid hare, wild buffalo, rhino, sambar, swamp deer, spotted deer, barking deer, Himalayan black bear, Himalayan serow, goral, black panther and binturong. An increase was also reported in Bengal florican numbers - from 60 in 2014 to 74 this year, while swamp deer numbers went up from 99 a year ago to 129 this time.

Source: 10 In 2010 To 46 In 2021, Rise In Tiger Numbers In Assam's Manas National Park Brings Joy', [www.indiatimes.com](http://www.indiatimes.com), 22/06/2021.

Utpal Parashar. 'Nil to 48 in 20 years; Assam's Manas sees amazing rise in tiger numbers', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 18/07/2021.

### **Aaranyak gifts bicycles to frontline staff of Manas NP**

Wildlife NGO, Aaranyak, with support from David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and Manas Tiger Reserve Authority gifted bicycles to the frontline staff in Kahitema Beat of the Manas National Park (NP) in order to acknowledge their efforts and support their wildlife protection work. The programme was held at Magurjani Anti-Poaching Camp of Kahitema Beat under Bansbari Range.

The staff said that now they don't have to walk for 2-3 hours to reach their camps and to come out for marketing. They also said they can use the bicycles for patrolling.

Source: Assam: Aaranyak gifts bicycles to frontline staff of Manas National Park, [www.nenow.in](http://www.nenow.in), 25/06/2021.

### **State committee to verify areas for elephant corridors in Kaziranga**

The Assam government has decided to constitute a committee for on-the-spot verifications of the areas for delineation of nine elephant corridors in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR). Veterinary and animal husbandry minister Atul Bora and health and family welfare minister Keshab Mahanta - in whose constituencies the identified elephant corridors fall - will help and assist the team in conducting the field survey.

The meeting where the decision for the committee was taken discussed the proposed nine identified elephant corridors as well as creation of ecologically sensitive zones in KNPTR to provide safe passage to the pachyderms and to ward off human-

elephant conflicts. The new additional areas of the park together with reserved forests will come under a single integrated entity.

In April 2019, acting on an application by activist Rohit Choudhury, the Supreme Court (SC) had "restrained" all mining activities along the southern boundary of the park and in the entire catchment area of rivers/streams and rivulets originating in Karbi Anglong hill ranges and flowing into the park. "No new construction shall be permitted on private lands which form part of the nine identified animal corridors," the order stated.

The environment and forest department had submitted an affidavit in the SC on the nine identified elephant corridors with geo-coordinates.

Source: Rokibuz Zaman. Panel to identify 9 elephant corridors at Kaziranga park, [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 25/06/2021.

## **DELHI**

### **Delhi Wetland Authority prepares plans to revive, protect 180 waterbodies**



The Delhi Wetland Authority and other agencies are working towards conservation of around 180 waterbodies in the region. They have submitted documents for ecological restoration and conservation of the waterbodies. If a wetland is notified under Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, it gets legal protection and activities like dumping of waste, discharge of

untreated effluents and encroachment are prohibited.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change came out with the guidelines last year for implementing the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017. The guidelines state that for each wetland proposed to be notified, a 'brief document' has to be prepared with information like demarcation of the boundary of wetland that is supported by accurate digital maps with coordinates and validated by ground truthing, ecological character description, an account of pre-existing rights and privileges and modalities for enforcement of regulation.

An official of the state wetland authority said that it has received brief documents for around 180 waterbodies. A committee comprising wetland experts will review these documents. Once finalised, the authority will start its work by prioritising the environmental characteristics of a wetland and start the process of notifying them.

At present Delhi does not have a single notified waterbody. The state wetland authority, which was constituted in 2019 for restoration of wetlands following an order of the National Green Tribunal, has no official data on the number of wetlands and their area in Delhi while it is believed that there are around 1000 natural waterbodies in the region.

Source: 'Delhi: Papers in, wetland authority to revive, conserve 180 waterbodies', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 27/06.2021.

## GOA/MAHARASHTRA

### **Tillari tigress moves from Maharashtra into Mhadei WLS**

A tigress, images of whom were captured by a camera trap in 2018 in Maharashtra's Tillari region, has now taken refuge in Goa's Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The tigress was

camera-trapped in the Mhadei forests on 30 June 2021.

The tigress has been named TT7. Kolhapur forest division chief conservator of forest said that since Tillari forests are contiguous to the Mhadei and Bhimgad WLSs, the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) will take up joint efforts with the Goa FD to protect the tigers and monitor their movements.

Presently, Tillari has the presence of TT2 female and TT8 male tigers whereas the Mhadei forests have one male tiger and one female tigress in addition to TT7.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXVII, No. 3; Vol. XXVI, Nos. 4 & 1, Vol. XXIV, No. 4 and Vol. XXI, No. 3)

Source: Rajendra Kerkar. 'Tigress spotted in Tillari region moves into Goa', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 18/07/2021.

## KERALA

### **Thamarasserry RFO faces imprisonment in assault case related to killing of Nilgiri langurs in Malabar WLS**

The Thamarasserry Judicial First-Class Magistrate Court-II recently (9 July) sentenced Thamarasserry range forest officer (RFO) for three months' simple imprisonment for assaulting an accused in the case of killing five Nilgiri langurs in the Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in 2015. The assault incident itself took place on 16 February 2016, when the then Thamarasserry Deputy RFO and now RFO, Rajeev Kumar MK, along with three forest guards physically assaulted Varghese, a native of Puthuppari Mayilallampara.

As per the complaint of Varghese's son Sajo Varghese, Rajeev Kumar and others physically assaulted Varghese on the day his father was remanded in Kozhikode special sub-jail. Instead of taking Varghese to jail they took him to the forest office and

assaulted him. Varghese, who collapsed following the assault, was then rushed to Thamarasserry taluk hospital and then to Kozhikode hospital, said the complainant. The RFO had pleaded innocent in the incident. The case of forest guards was split to be considered separately.

Varghese was the second accused in the incident of killing five Nilgiri langurs from Appikod in Malabar WLS on 29 December 2015. The department had arrested nine individuals believed to be part of a racket which sold the meat, skull and skin of the langur as aphrodisiacs on the basis of an entrenched myth.

Meanwhile, the court sentence against the RFO has left the forest staff completely disheartened. They said that the poachers who killed an endangered species were easily bailed out but the forest officer was targeted. Thamarasserry range is infamous for poaching incidents including one in which Kootala Mammad, a poacher had killed forest officer P Devadas here on 25 March 2010.

Source: Amiya Meethal. 'Forest officer gets jail for assaulting poacher who killed Nilgiri Langur', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 18/07/2021.

## MAHARASHTRA

### **Proposal for unified control of Bor and Navegaon Nagzira TRs pending with state government**

The proposal for handing over administrative (unified) control of Bor and Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (NNTR) to the wildlife wing has been pending for sometime now with the state government. The 661 sq. km buffer zone of Bor and 1,241 sq. km buffer zone of NNTR was notified in December 2015 and September 2016 respectively but even after all these years these have not been brought under unified control.

P Kalyan Kumar, chief conservator of forest (CCF), Nagpur circle, where the area

concerned with unified control falls, said that the process for unified control is over and the proposal has been pending with the state government. One of the reported reasons for the delay is the COVID-19 pandemic due to which offices worked with low strength. But even before the pandemic, in 2019, the file remained pending when Sanjay Rathod was the forest minister. Also, in the last 18 months three forest secretaries have changed hands and none showed interest in clearing the proposal.

The state's new principal chief conservator of forest (PCCF) (wildlife), Sunil Limaye, has said that he plans to expedite the proposal that was submitted to the state government last June. In 2019, Limaye as APCCF (wildlife-east) had promised to take over the buffer zone of Bor and NNTR in one month.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'For over five years, Maharashtra government sitting over Bor and Nagzira unified control plan', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 15/07/2021.

### **26 human deaths in tiger attacks in Vidarbha this year**

A 62-year-old villager was killed in a tiger attack in the forests of Govindpur Chak village in Sindewahi range of Brahmapuri forest division in mid-July. With this, the number of persons killed in tiger attacks in Chandrapur district this year has gone up to 20. Gadchiroli district has seen five deaths while Yavatmal district had seen one death in tiger attacks this year, taking the total human fatalities in tiger attacks in Vidarbha to 26.

Six human deaths in leopard attacks have also been reported in Chandrapur district this year.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Chandrapur: 62-year-old man killed in tiger attack, third such death in district this month', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 18/07/2021.

## **Lack of manpower affects monitoring of tiger in Gautala WLS**

The lack of manpower in Gautala Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Aurangabad district is hampering monitoring of a tiger, which is the first one to be spotted here in eight decades. The tiger, said to have come here from Tipeshwar WLS, was first sighted in Gautala in March and appears to have now settled down here (*PA Update* Vol. XXVI, No. 3). Officials say there is ample prey here for the big cat. They have also made 125 watering holes and have arranged for a couple of tankers to fill them.

The authorities are however facing a shortage of manpower to watch the movement of the animal. There are three ranges, namely Kannad, Nagad and Chalisgaon in the sanctuary. The Chalisgaon range, which is spread over 6,500 ha faces a staff crunch as the posts of range forest officer and two guards are currently vacant.

Source: 'Staff crunch affecting Gautala tiger tracking: Maha official', [www.outlookindia.com](http://www.outlookindia.com), 21/06/2021.

## **FD to deploy electric wire detector in five TRs to prevent wildlife electrocution**

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) patrolling teams will now be equipped with a new device that detects live electric wires laid in forest areas for poaching. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India recently handed over 20 such detectors to the state wildlife wing. Four devices each have been handed over to Tadoba Andhari, Navegaon Nagzira and Pench Tiger Reserves (TR), three to Bor and five to Melghat TRs respectively. The detectors are being deployed on a pilot basis and if found useful more devices will be procured.

Produced by a startup company, the device looks like a walkie-talkie and makes a beep sound on detecting a live wire.

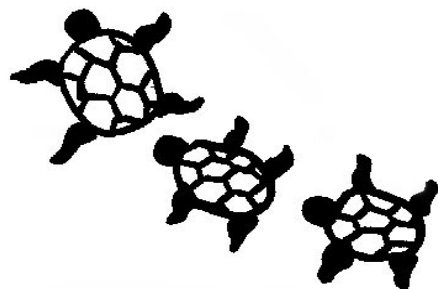
Atal Innovation Centre-Sri Krishnadevaraya University (AIC-SKU), Andhra Pradesh, with WWF India had hosted an innovation challenge in June 2019 to identify solutions to tackle human-animal conflict. Participants from academia and industry presented ideas, in which Kuppam Engineering College was selected for prototype development of the device. The prototype was tested in select TRs following which certain modifications were suggested and incorporated into it.

A startup company, Kuppam Electro Solutions Private Limited, incubated at AIC-SKU is now manufacturing 100 such units of live wire detectors to be delivered to WWF India. Further orders are expected from south-east Asian countries which face a similar problem.

Currently, the cost per unit has been kept at Rs. 10,000 but if there are bulk orders, it can come down to Rs. 8,000.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. In a first, Nagpur forest department to use live wire detectors to check poaching, [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 25/06/2021.

## **Increase in Olive Ridley nesting on Maharashtra's beaches in 2020-21**



Olive ridley turtles nesting on Maharashtra's beaches seem to have benefitted greatly from the lack of human presence during the COVID-19 related lockdown.

According to the forest department (FD) data, the number of nests in 2020-21

were 475, with 50,799 eggs and 23,706 hatchings as compared to 228 nests with 27,254 eggs and 12,149 hatchings in 2019-20 and 233 nests with 23,131 eggs and 12,601 hatchings in 2018-19.

High human presence on Maharashtra's beaches in Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, it is now being presumed, may have allowed the turtles to nest only sporadically. However, during the lockdown, with fewer humans on the beaches, the turtle nests were safe from other predators, especially, dogs whose population seemed to have thinned out along with the humans.

Source: Lyla Bavadam. 'Olive ridley turtle nests almost double during lockdown in Maharashtra's beaches', [www.frontline.thehindu.com](http://www.frontline.thehindu.com), 19/06/2021.

### **SGNP, Tungareshwar WLS have many Waghoba shrines representing worship of big cats by local communities**



A recent study has documented a number of Waghoba shrines in the forests of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park

(SGNP) and the Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). Waghoba refers to big cats (tigers and leopards) whose worship is widely prevalent among the indigenous Warli community.

While leopards today populate the landscape, anecdotal evidence and government records show the presence of tigers in the region. The study by Ramya Nair, Dhee, Omkar Patil, Nikit Surve, Anish Andheria, John Linnell and Vidya Athreya in 2018-19, documented oral narratives related to Waghoba and negotiation of shared spaces in relation to big cats in multi-use landscape in Thane, Palgarh and the suburbs of Mumbai. A total of 150 such shrines were reported.

The article 'Sharing Spaces and Entanglements with Big Cats: The Warli and Their Waghoba in Maharashtra, India', which is based on the study, was published in *Frontiers in Conservation Science* in April this year. It discusses the cultural and societal context within which co-existence is embedded and of the shaping of human-leopard relationship in the landscape.

Source: Clara Lewis. Mumbai: Ethnographic study of Warli tribe documents 150 Waghoba shrines, [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 27/06/2021.

### **Ashram continues illegal construction inside Tungareshwar WL6**

Nearly a year after parts of the Sadanand Baba Ashram, located inside the Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), were razed on the directives of the Supreme Court (SC) (*PA Updates* Vol. XXV, No. 5 and Vol. XIV, Nos. 4 & 3), environmentalists have complained that illegal extensions are still being carried out in the area.

Debi Goenka of the Conservation Action Trust (CAT), following his visit to the sanctuary on 26 June, reported that the road from Parol to the ashram is still being used by vehicles to ferry devotees and the ashram trustees have also built two sheds within the ashram premises post demolition.

CAT had moved the SC stating that the encroachment by the ashram was a threat to wildlife in the sanctuary. The court had then called for razing parts of the ashram. Director, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, under whose jurisdiction the sanctuary is located said that forest officials will visit the site and would demolish any encroachment that may have come up.

Source: Yogesh Naik. 'Environmentalists complain ashram in Tungareshwar WLS constructing illegal extensions, [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 29/06/2021.

### Human-Leopard Interaction Incidents in Maharashtra, May-June 2021

District	Taluka	Incident	Source
Ahmednagar	Pathardi	Forest department captures a leopard at Javkhed Khalsa; fourth leopard captured in four months in the taluka	www.loksatta.com, 22/06/2021
	Shreerampur	Dead leopard found near Taklibhan-Karegoan road	www.lokmat.com 04/06/2021
	Parner	Two injured in leopard attack at Kalas; the leopard found dead in the morning; death by starvation, says forest department	maharashtratimes.com, 20/05/2021
Amaravati	Chadur Railway	Shepherd injured in leopard attack at Manjarkhed Kasba farm	www.lokmat.com, 31/05/2021
Aurangabad	Kannad	Injured leopard cub found at Hatnur	maharashtratimes.com, 14/05/2021
Gondia	Sadak Arjuni	Leopard poached in Sindhipar forest range; two arrested	www.loksatta.com, 12/05/2021
Nashik	Igatpuri	Three-year-old girl dies in leopard attack near Khedbhairav	maharashtratimes.com, 24/06/2021
	Deola	Injured leopard found near Meshi-Dongargaon road	maharashtratimes.com, 07/06/2021
	Niphad	Leopard captured at Bhuse; two more leopards roam in the area	maharashtratimes.com, 29/06/2021
	Malegaon	Leopard captured in Kalwadi area	maharashtratimes.com, 18/06/2021
Pune	Ambegaon	Leopard & two cubs stay at Avasari budruk village; devour 100 poultry birds and a hunting dog in a fortnight	www.esakal.com, 16/06/2021
	Daund	Leopard kills nine goats and a sheep at Deokarwadi-Magarwadi	www.esakal.com, 16/05/2021
	Junnar	Leopard attacks farmer in Belhe village	www.esakal.com, 11/05/2021
Mumbai	Mumbai Suburban	Leopard roams in New Dindoshi Colony in daylight; fear among residents	www.lokmat.com, 15/06/2021
Yavatmal	Umarkhed	Leopard found dead at Ambavan near Umarkhed city	maharashtratimes.com, 08/05/2021
Sindhudurg	Sawantwadi	Forest department saves leopard that fell into well and releases it back into wild	maharashtratimes.com, 30/06/2021

## Nineteen leopard deaths in four years in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra

19 leopard deaths have been reported in Aurangabad in the period of four years from May 2017 to May 2021. Road accidents and falling in open wells are the causes for many of these deaths.

Range	Date of Leopard Death Incident
Soygaon	06/05/2017
	02/09/2017
	17/05/2018
	27/10/2019
	17/04/2021
	18/04/2021
Nagad	18/02/2018
	26/05/2019
	04/04/2020
Ajintha	16/08/2018
Khultabad	11/11/2018
Jalna Dakshin	29/11/2018
Aurangabad	26/04/2019
	13/04/2020
Vaijapur	22/04/2020
	10/09/2020
Kannad	02/04/2021
	24/04/2021
	01/05/2021

Source – Ravindra Taksal. ‘औरंगाबाद जिल्ह्यात चार वर्षात १९ बिबट्यांचा मृत्यू’, maharashtratimes.com, 18/06/2021.

## 87 leopard deaths in the first four-and-a-half months of 2021 in Maharashtra

Maharashtra has witnessed 87 leopard deaths in the first four-and-a-half months of 2021. 47 of these were due to natural causes, 33 leopards died in road accidents while two leopards were hunted. The forest department said the cause for three others were unknown

According to the data collected by the Wildlife Protection Society of India, nine cases of leopard poaching and seizure of

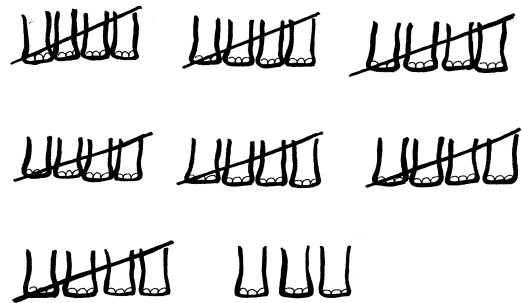
leopard body parts have been recorded in the state since January 2021. In 2019, 110 leopard deaths were recorded in the state while the number in 2020 had gone up to 172.

At the end of 2020, chief minister Uddhav Thackarey had announced the decision of setting up an 11-member committee to study and find solutions to human-leopard conflict in the state. The committee has been set up and it is expected to prepare an action plan for curbing the conflict in the state.

Source: ‘राज्यात दर दोन दिवसाला एका बिबट्याचा मृत्यू’, maharashtratimes.com, 09/06/2021. Dharmendra Kore. ‘अपघात बिबट्यांच्या जीवावर; गेल्या तीन वर्षात झाले इतके मृत्यू’, maharashtratimes.com, 25/05/2021.

## ODISHA

### Elephant deaths due to electrocution on the rise in Odisha



A 10-year-old male elephant was electrocuted after it came in contact with a live wire in Angul forest division on 8 July. At least three other elephants have also died of electrocution in the preceding 34 days in the state. This is the fifth case of electrocution within eight months in the state — and the second in Angul forest division in 24 days. The incident took place at Kantamegha village under Bantala forest range when the tusker came in contact with a live wire trap laid by a poacher to kill wild animals. The body of the tusker

was spotted by local residents the following day, who then informed forest officials.

A female elephant was electrocuted after it came in contact with a live wire on 15 June at Jagannathpur village under the Angul forest division. Another tusker was electrocuted in a mango orchard within Dhenkanal forest division on 10 June, and a female elephant was electrocuted on 21 January after she came in contact with a sagging live wire in Jujumara forest in Sambalpur district. On 1 December 2020 a tusker was also electrocuted within Sambalpur forest division.

The electrocution of seven elephants together near Kamalanga in Dhenkanal district on 27 October 2018 has been recorded as one of the biggest tragedies in the annals of India's wildlife history.

Electric wire trap poaching is a major concern and many elephants have been killed in Sambalpur, Dhenkanal, Angul, Cuttack and Keonjhar districts. Many forest areas also have naked overhead 11 KV and 33 KV power lines.

The state forest and environment minister Bikram Keshari Arukha had said in the state assembly on 19 November 2019 that 732 elephants died between 2009 and 2019 in Odisha and around 11 are killed in the state every year due to electrocution. As many as 119 animals were electrocuted between 2009 and 2019, according to the statistics of the forest and environment department.

According to the 2017 elephant census, Odisha is home to 1,976 elephants - 330 in the Similipal forest division 169 in Dhenkanal, 147 in Angul and 115 in Athagarh (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXVII, No. 3 and Vol. XXV, No. 6).

Source: Ashis Senapati. 'Elephant electrocuted in Odisha: Third death in 34 days',

[www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 09/07/2021.

## **Gharials breed naturally in Odisha after almost half a century**

As many as 28 gharial hatchlings were spotted towards the end of May in the Mahanadi in the Baladamara area near Sattkosia Range. It is the first nesting of the species since it was introduced in Odisha's rivers back in 1975.

Nearly 50 foresters from six forest divisions are monitoring the hatchlings, camping close to their habitat, patrolling the water bodies and spreading awareness across 300-odd villages located close to the river. Six officials are stationed closest to where the hatchlings and the mother gharial are located. The forest department (FD) is using solar-powered CCTV cameras to keep a watch on their movement. Further, the FD has involved local fishermen who are aware of the geography of the region. In early June, the FD announced Rs. 1,000 for anyone rescuing a gharial, and compensation for those whose fishing nets are destroyed by the reptile.

All the gharials introduced over the years in Odisha are now dead. Having waited more than 40 years for their numbers to grow naturally and for them to lay eggs, Odisha introduced 13 more gharials over the past three years in the Mahanadi. Only eight survived. While the FD is still tracking two of them via their radio collars, the other six have moved out of its radar.



Source: Aishwarya Mohanty. 'It's a gharial!

After 45 yrs of wait, Odisha welcomes first hatchlings',

[www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 20/06/2021.

'Odisha emerges as only state as home to all three species of crocodiles',

[www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 22/06/2021.

## RAJASTHAN

### NTCA approves tiger reserve tag for Ramgarh Vishdhari WLS

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)'s technical committee has approved the proposal for converting the Ramgarh Vishdhari Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) into a tiger reserve (TR). The state will soon issue a notification in this regard. It will be the fourth TR in the state after Ranthambore in Sawai Madhopur district, Sariska in Alwar and the Mukundra Hills TR in Kota.

302 sq. km of Ramgarh Vishdhari WLS's area of 1,071 sq. km will be notified as the core while the rest will be the buffer zone. The chief wildlife warden of the state has said that tigers from Ranthambore could be translocated to the new TR after NTCA's approval.

As per a 1985 census, there were nine tigers here and since 2013 at least three tigers are known to have moved out of Ranthambore to the sanctuary.

Source: Sachin Saini. 'Rajasthan all set to get its 4th tiger reserve', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 23/06/2021.

## TAMIL NADU

### FD set to release tusker Rivaldo back into the wild

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department (FD) is gearing up to release tusker Rivaldo into the wild. Rivaldo was captured in May and kept in a kraal at Vazhaithottam in the buffer zone of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (TR) for treatment. The decision was taken after veterinarians and ecologists who were tasked with examining the elephant found that the trunk injury, which Rivaldo was carrying for nearly a decade now, has become a permanent disability but he has learnt to live with it. They concluded that no possible treatment can be given in such cases. In July 2012, Rivaldo

lost 30 cm of his trunk after it got caught in a snare set out to kill wild boar.

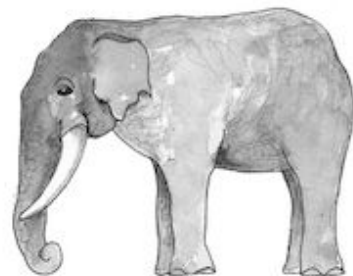
As per Section 11 of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, a captured elephant cannot be kept in captivity unless the chief wildlife warden (CWLW) is satisfied that such an animal cannot be rehabilitated in the wild and the reasons for the same are recorded in writing.

In this case, the CWLW said that there is no reason to keep Rivaldo in captivity since the vets categorically concluded that no treatment can be given to him to improve his health condition. In such a case, there is no use of putting the elephant inside the kraal, breaking his natural spirits. Further, the CWLW said that Rivaldo is a bull elephant, whose presence among the wild population is crucial.

An order has been issued for the soft release of the tusker into the forest with a specified list of standard operating procedures. The FD has to identify a location within the buffer zone for the soft release. It should be developed into an enclosed location with solar energy fencing. The elephant would be radio collared before releasing him from the kraal.

Source: 'Tusker Rivaldo to be released into forest soon', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 18/07/2021.

SV Krishna Chaitanya. 'In a first, Tamil Nadu forest department decides to release jumbo Rivaldo back in the wild', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 17/07/2021.



## **Camera trapping reveals good striped hyena numbers in forests near Sathyamangalam TR**

Camera trapping by the forest department has revealed good striped hyena numbers in the Sirumugai and Mettupalayam forest ranges under the Coimbatore forest division adjacent to the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (TR). This area which is along the eastern slopes of the Nilgiris is also a link to the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

The two forest ranges have also reported tiger presence and they are linked to the Moyar valley and Sigur plateau which have hyena populations. Presence of hyenas have been recorded in Coimbatore forest division from 2016 when camera traps were first installed to monitor animal movements here.

Source: Wilson Thomas. 'Striped hyenas increasingly sighted in Sirumugai, Mettupalayam ranges', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 17/07/2021.

## **TELANGANA**

### **14 tigers recorded in Amrabad TR**



According to the monitoring that was carried out during the phase-IV of the tiger census 2020- 21, there are 14 tigers in the

Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR). The number reported in 2019 was 12. This makes Amrabad TR home to the highest population of tigers in Telangana.

A total of 43 species of wildlife were recorded here according to the annual census report released by the forest department.

Source: 'Tiger count goes up in Amrabad Reserve of Telangana', [www.dailypioneer.com](http://www.dailypioneer.com), 18/07/2021.

## **UTTAR PRADESH**

### **NGT directs UP to notify Hastinapur WLS boundaries within six months**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government to issue notification within six months specifying the boundaries of the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The counsel appearing for the UP government submitted that a committee for rationalisation with the Commissioner of Meerut as Nodal Officer had been appointed on 17 November 2020 after the proposal was approved by the environment ministry. The counsel for the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change confirmed that the proposal received from the state was duly approved in the 59th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife.

The NGT directed commissioner, Meerut to ensure that the rationalisation process for the proposal is completed within three months and report submitted to the state government. It also directed the additional chief secretary, forest and environment, UP, to ensure that further action is completed within the next three months.

The NGT had, in 2019, directed the central and the UP governments to issue notification specifying the boundary within six months. It was hearing a plea seeking execution of its 2019 order directing issuance of requisite notification for the sanctuary under section 26A of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Advocate Gaurav Bansal, who has filed the plea, stated that the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has recently done a survey of the sanctuary and had reported high human presence and forest fires here. These, the report said, were negatively impacting endangered species like the swamp deer and hog deer found here. It had also reported a decline by 10% in the swamp deer population in the sanctuary area over the last 24 years due to habitat conversion and degradation.

Source: 'NGT Directs UP Govt to Specify Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary Boundary Within 6 Months', [www.new18.com](http://www.new18.com), 13/06/2021.

## UTTARAKHAND

### **Corbett and Rajaji TRs to remain open all year for tourism; experts raise concerns**

Uttarakhand state forest minister, Harak Singh Rawat, announced in late June that the Corbett and Rajaji Tiger Reserves (TRs) will now remain open for tourism all year round. Scientists and environmental activists have expressed concerns over the move saying that it would impact the ecosystem.

The TRs are usually open between November 15 and June 15, shutting visitors out during monsoon months, which coincide with the breeding season of the animals. Concern has been raised on the impact tourism will have on breeding, also leading potentially to an increase in human-wildlife conflict. Increased traffic and constant plying of vehicles on soil roads inside TRs would also erode the soil in the long run, said a senior scientist at the Wildlife Institute of India. Monsoon is also when the flora of the TRs is rejuvenated. Besides natural restoration, the forest department needs time for maintenance work, another official said.

Source: Shivani Azad. 'Corbett, Rajaji to stay open all year, experts flag threat to tigers' mating season, [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 25/06/2021.

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### **MoEFCC invites bids to amend the Indian Forest Act 1927**

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has invited bids

from consulting agencies, firms, joint ventures and consortiums, in an attempt to amend the Indian Forest Act (IFA) - 1927. The MoEFCC released the second expression of interest (EOI) for the same in the third week of June; the first had been released in April.

The government is hopeful of completing the process of amendment this year. An official however noted that though the ministry had received applications by academics, they have no experience of ground realities and the shortcomings of the IFA. MoEFCC is looking for firms with experience in litigation related to the IFA.

The EOI published on 22 June states that the Centre is presently undertaking a review of legislation implemented by different ministries to bring them at pace with contemporary needs. The deadline for this is 2 July, and the selected bidder is expected to complete the work in a maximum of seven months.

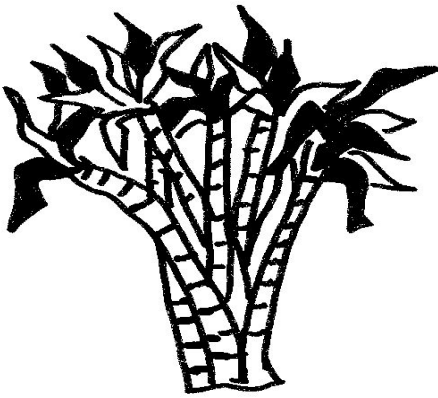
The amendment to the colonial-era IFA will focus on de-criminalising relatively minor violations of law, expeditious resolution of cases by compounding small offences, rationalisation of penalties, preventing the harassment of citizens, de-clogging of the criminal justice system, and promoting public and private participation in ushering in ease of doing business.

MoEFCC had released a draft amendment to IFA in 2017 and another draft amendment in 2019, which had several contentious clauses in its definition of forests. One of the main concerns of tribal groups and activists was that the proposed amendment gave more powers to forest officers, including in the use of firearms, and greater immunity from prosecution. The draft was withdrawn following protests.

Experts, however, have questioned the legal framework of the amendment. The IFA has a 100-year legacy. It has shaped the ownership, access to, and distribution of forests and forest produce. It also manifests

itself in the political contestations between various government departments, the forest bureaucracy, holders of forest rights and forest workers. Its amendment is as much about reconciling law as it is about realigning power equations, said a legal researcher at the Centre for Policy Research.

MoEFCC is working to bring about radical changes in the country's environmental laws, including the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. It is also preparing a draft environment management law that will subsume the Air Act of 1981, Water Act of 1974, and Environment Protection Act of 1986, and serve as an overarching law for all infrastructure and industry projects.



Source: Jayashree Nandi. Govt. moves ahead with plan to amend Indian Forest Act, [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 28/06/2021.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### **35% of tiger range in India, 40% of lion range in Africa and 70% of elephant range in Africa & Asia outside PAs: Report**

A new report, “A Future for All – A need for Human-Wildlife Coexistence”, by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has found that 35% of India's tiger range, 40% of the African lion range and 70% of the range of

African and Asian elephants currently lie outside protected areas (PAs).

According to the report, conflict between people and animals is being experienced all over the world from China's wandering elephants raiding farms for food and water to wolves preying on cattle in Idaho, USA. It has also identified this conflict as one of the main threats to the long-term survival of some of the world's wildlife species.

India faces an increasing challenge of human wildlife conflict, which is driven by development pressures and an increasing population, high demand for land and natural resources, resulting in loss, fragmentation, and degradation of wildlife habitats, said the report.

The report also points to the increase of pandemics as a subset of this human wildlife conflict. “The COVID-19 pandemic – sparked by a zoonotic disease that very likely originated in wild animals and then spread to people... Zoonosis, diseases transmitted from wildlife to humans and vice versa... is driven by the close association of people, their livestock, and wildlife and by the unregulated consumption of wild animals. With closer and more frequent and diverse contact between animals and people, the probability of animal microbes being transferred to people increases. As wildlife-borne infections increase, the probability of outbreaks – and pandemics – grows as infectious disease spreads...” stated the report.

Source: Esha Roy. ‘WWF-UNEP report: 35% of tiger ranges outside protected areas’, [indianexpress.com](http://indianexpress.com), 10/07/2021.

### **Two distinct species of *Eupetaurus* squirrels reported in the Himalayas**

Two gigantic woolly flying squirrel species from the high Himalayas have been reported by Australian and Chinese scientists. The new species have been named the Tibetan woolly flying squirrel (*Eupetaurus tibetensis*) and the

Yunnan woolly flying squirrel (*Eupetaurus nivamons*). Details were published in Oxford Academic's *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society* on 31 May.

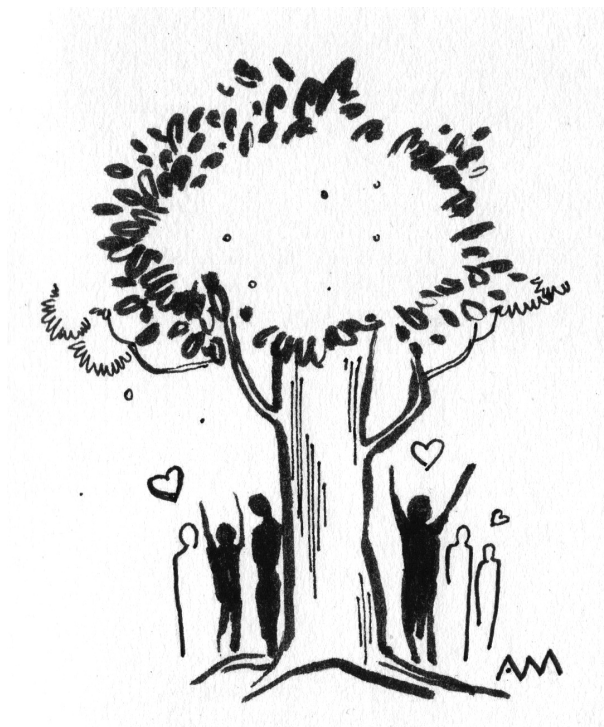
After a careful review of museum specimens and published records, the scientists discovered that the *Eupetaurus* genus occurs in three distinct regions in the Himalayas: a) northern Pakistan and north-western India particularly Uttarakhand, b) south-central Tibet, northern Sikkim and western Bhutan, and c) north-western Yunnan, China. Genetic and morphological comparisons of these specimens also revealed that they are distinct species.

Scientists have known of the woolly flying squirrel, *Eupetaurus cinereus*, which is among the rarest and least studied mammals in the world, for a long time. For much of the 20th century it was thought to be extinct, until

it was rediscovered in 1994 in northern Pakistan.

According to this latest research, the recent discovery of the species in Uttarakhand in north-western India demonstrates that it might have a considerably wider distribution in India than previously realized. Further, it indicates that protection and conservation in India is fundamental for the long-term survival of *E. cinereus*. The study has also identified habitat loss owing to large-scale clear cutting of forests, particularly the destruction of high-elevation pine woodlands as a major threat to *E. cinereus* and the expansion of agriculture, small-scale logging, infrastructure development and human settlements as lesser threats at present.

Source: Jayashree Nandi. '2 new species of Himalayan gigantic woolly flying squirrels discovered', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 09/06/2021.



## IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE

### HIMACHAL PRADESH

#### De-siltation begins for Khajjiar Lake

Based on the technical advice from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has begun work on de-silting the Khajjiar Lake situated in the Khajjiar Kalatop Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The State Council for Science, Environment and Technology has sanctioned Rs. 48 lakh for the task.

The work has been taken up as the lake is down to one fourth of its original size due to siltation, weed infestation, a faulty flushing mechanism, indiscriminate grazing and subsequent soil erosion. The WII, in its report, advised taking up the restoration work in stages involving de-silting, de-weeding, reducing influx of nutrient and floating debris, maintenance of water level, management of the meadow and comprehensive ecological assessment to frame a management plan.

The forest officials pointed out that the disposal of the dredge material will be done in an environment friendly manner. Most of the de-silting has to be done manually and not through machines as the lake has natural undulations that provide habitat complexity.

Local people have been supportive of the restoration work because a sizeable number are dependant on tourism here for their livelihood.

Source: Pratibha Chauhan. 'De-siltation of Khajjiar lake begins',  
[www.tribuneindia.com](http://www.tribuneindia.com), 20/06/2021.

### MAHARASHTRA/ MADHYA PRADESH

#### Sarus crane population decreases in Vidarbha and Balaghat

A joint estimation conducted over a week in June by SEWA, an NGO, and the Gondia forest division has recorded 88 Sarus cranes in Vidarbha in Maharashtra and Balaghat in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh. 47 birds were found in Balaghat followed by 39 in Gondia and two in Bhandara. This is lower than the total of 104 birds that were counted in 2020. The numbers then included 56 in Balaghat district, 45 in Gondia, two in Bhandara and one in Chandrapur.

The count was carried out by more than 23 teams that surveyed 80 locations in Gondia and 70 in Balaghat.

Taking the declining numbers into account, SEWA, which is monitoring the birds since 2004, has called for policy-level interventions to save the bird. It has noted that small wetlands in the region are vanishing fast and illegal excavation of sand from riverbeds is destroying their roosting places. Besides, cranes are also facing threat from pesticides and electrocution due to power-lines. Destruction of their eggs is also one of the threats.

"We have over 80 'Sarus Mitras' and also honour farmers for their efforts to save these birds. Yet, a conservation action plan is needed to save sarus," said Mukund Dhurve, honorary wildlife warden of Gondia.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. Sarus cranes number goes down in Gondia,  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),  
25/06/2021.

## ODISHA

### Removal of illegal prawn *gherries* from Chilika Lake resumes

Removal of illegal prawn *gherries* in the Chilika Lake resumed on 24 June 2021 after being briefly halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic (*PA Updates* Vol. XXVII, No. 2). Around 29 of the 97 acres of prawn culture pond areas in Ganjam region were demolished on the first day using low-intensive explosives. The eviction drive was also carried out in Puri and Khorda districts.

An affidavit filed by the Chilika Development Authority in the Odisha High Court (HC) on 8 March 2021 stated that over 15,500 ha of the lake have been illegally encroached upon by prawn culture enclosures and ponds. In a fresh order dated 22 June 2021, the HC directed the state government to submit a report on the status of the removal of prawn *gherries* and the criminal cases registered against illegal prawn farm operators by 27 July in Chilika Lake and Bhitarkanika.

Meanwhile, Ganjam district administration has filed a case against 31 persons for developing prawn *gherries* by violating the Environmental Protection Act, 1986 and Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984.

Source: Hrusikesh Mohanty. 'Odisha resumes evicting illegal prawn *gherries* in Chilika', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 25/06/2021.

## UTTAR PRADESH

### FD to seek help from WII & WWF India for conservation of Dhanauri wetland

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has decided to seek help from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India to expedite the process for the conservation of the Dhanauri

wetland and for declaring it as a Ramsar site. An official said that officially notifying Dhanauri as a wetland, declaring it a Ramsar site and also a bird sanctuary are the three major tasks pending.

The FD had proposed to declare the water body as a wetland in 2018 and a Ramsar site a year later in 2019. Forest officials had been gathering relevant information including the wetland's actual size, remote sensing images, number of stakeholders involved and number of farmers that own the land in the zone of influence. Forest officials said the work had slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Noida-based bird watcher, who led a legal battle for conservation of Dhanauri, has said however that the FD has been lethargic. It had been sitting on the matter for over seven years, when the bird-watcher and his team first approached FD for its conservation. The National Green Tribunal, in a March 2015 order in the case, had ordered to initiate the process of conserving the wetland.

Spread over 101 ha in Greater Noida and once home to over 211 species of birds, the Dhanauri wetland, a major Sarus Crane habitat in Gautam Budh Nagar, has suffered habitat loss and drop in bird populations over the years. In January 2021, the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2021, held by Wetlands International South Asia and the FD, found a four-fold drop in bird numbers here as compared to 2020. The AWC 2021 found only 1,344 birds against 6,227 birds in January 2020.

In April this year, the FD had to rush to fill the wetland using borewells after it ran dry for the first time.

Source: Kushagra Dixit. 'Field survey at Dhanauri wetland soon to declare it Ramsar site, says forest dept', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 27/06/2021.

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



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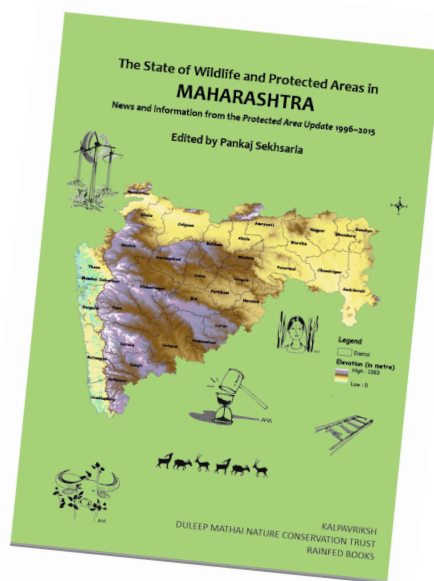
- **Section 2:** *Analysis and Perspective:*

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

### **1. Temporal heterogeneity in primary and secondary metabolic products of medicinal plants of Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary in Rajasthan, India**

**Author(s):** Arti Soni, Pawan Kumar Kasera

**Keywords:** Medicinal Plants, Tuber, Plant metabolites, Phenol, Sitmata Wildlife Sanctuary

**Summary:** Monthly variation in accumulation of primary and secondary metabolites was studied in three tuberous medicinal plants, viz., *Arisaema tortuosum* (Wall.) Schott, *Chlorophytum tuberosum* (Roxb.) Baker and *Curculigo orchoides* Gaertn., growing in Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan. Phytochemical investigation of the tubers collected during June-October 2015 to 2017 revealed maximum production of different metabolites in July, suggesting it to be a suitable month for harvest.

**Link:** <https://doi.org/10.3329/bjb.v49i3.49527>

### **2. A study of species diversity, abundance and occupancy of mammal community in Bandhavgarh-Sanjay Corridor in the Central Indian Landscape using Camera Traps**

**Author(s):** Tirth Vaishnav, Sharad Kumar, Kedar Gore

**Keywords:** Bandhavgarh-Sanjay corridor, Camera traps, Mammal diversity, Wildlife corridors

**Summary:** A camera trapping survey in the forests between Bandhavgarh and Sanjay Tiger Reserves in Central India revealed the presence of 24 wild mammalian species. The relative abundance and occupancy differed with species. This study proved the functionality and viability of the corridor between two reserves.

**Link:**

<http://jbior.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/6.-JBR-52-64.pdf>

### **3. Avian Survey at Haiderpur Wetland in Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh, India**

**Author(s):** Ashish Kumar Arya, Kamal Kant Joshi, Arachna Bachheti, Vinod Raturi, Ved Prakash Dubey, Parul Bhatnagar, Rekha Rawat

**Keywords:** Haiderpur Wetland, Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary, Migratory Bird, Uttar Pradesh, Wetland

**Summary:** In Haiderpur wetland, which is a part of Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh, avian surveys (2017-2019) using line transects and point count methods resulted in the sighting of 226 bird species belonging to 54 families.

**Link:**

<https://connectjournals.com/03843.2020.34.107>

### **4. Two new species of *Euphaea* Selys, 1840 (Odonata: Zygoptera: Euphaeidae) from northern Western Ghats, India**

**Author(s):** Shriram Dinkar Bhakare, Vinayan P Nair, Pratima Ashok Pawar, Sunil Hanmant Bhoite, Kalesh Sadasivan

**Keywords:** Additional morphological characters, Damselfly, Endemic, Maharashtra, Taxonomic key

**Summary:** Two new endemic species of damselflies - *Euphaea thosegharensis* Sadasivan & Bhakare, sp. nov. and *Euphaea pseudodispar* Sadasivan and Bhakare sp. nov. were described from the Western Ghats of Satara District in Maharashtra.

**Link:**

<https://threatenedtaxa.org/index.php/JoTT/article/view/6579/7511>

### **5. *Sigambra sundarbanensis* sp. nov. (Annelida, Pilargidae) from the Indian sector of Sundarbans Estuarine System, with remarks on parapodial glands**

**Author(s):** Moumita Bhowmik, Priya Ghoshal, Sergio I. Salazar-Vallejo, Sumit Mandal

**Keywords:** Polychaeta, Pilargidae, parapodial glands, estuaries, Bay of Bengal

**Summary:** A new species of annelid worm, *Sigambra sundarbanensis* sp. nov., has been described from the rivers Matla and Thakuran, in the Sundarbans Estuarine System, a World Heritage Site and a Ramsar site. An updated key of the Genera *Sigambra* is also provided.

**Link:**

<https://doi.org/10.5852/ejt.2021.744.1301>

**6. *Perrottetia rajeshgopali*, a new species of *Perrottetia* Kobelt, 1905 (Stylommatophora: Streptaxidae) from the Western Ghats, India**

**Author(s):** Amrut Bhosale, Tejas Thackeray, Ben Rowson

**Keywords:** Carnivorous, land snail, Northern Western Ghats, apertural lamellae, genital anatomy

**Summary:** In the Northern Western Ghats of Maharashtra, researchers described a new species of the carnivorous land snail - *Perrottetia rajeshgopali* sp. nov. It is endemic to Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary in

Kolhapur. The name honours Dr. Rajesh Gopal, a renowned conservationist.

**Link:**

<https://doi.org/10.1127/arch.moll/150/045-054>

**7. A new small-bodied, polymorphic *Cnemaspis* Strauch, 1887 (Squamata: Gekkonidae) allied to *C. monticola* Manamendra-Arachchi, Batuwita & Pethiyagoda, 2007 from the Central Western Ghats of Karnataka, India**

**Author(s):** Akshay Khandekar, Tejas Thackeray, Ishan Agarwal

**Keywords:** Reptilia, dwarf geckos, endemic, South Asian *Cnemaspis*, Western Ghats

**Summary:** *Cnemaspis schalleri* sp. nov. is a new species of gecko described from Sakleshpur in the Central Western Ghats of Karnataka. It has been named after Dr. George Schaller, a renowned wildlife researcher and conservationist.

**Link:** <https://doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.4950.3.5>

This section has been collated by Anand Pendharkar and Aradhya Sardesai (SPROUTS Environment Trust, Mumbai). **Email:** [sproutsenvttrust@gmail.com](mailto:sproutsenvttrust@gmail.com)



## **ASSAM**

### **Manas TR taken off World Heritage danger list**

The UNESCO has upgraded Manas National Park from the list of 'World Heritage in Danger', reflecting the revival of the formerly beleaguered protected area. The decision to remove the 'in danger' tag was announced during the recently held 35th Session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) in Paris. The decision was an outcome of voting by 22 member countries to the WHC. An independent review on the status was done by the IUCN to apprise the committee on the present situation in Manas.

It was in 1992, amidst the civil unrest of the 1980s and 90s, that Manas was declared 'a World Heritage in danger'. The turn around in Manas is believed to be a combination of the resolution of political strife resulting in the creation of the Autonomous Bodoland Territorial Council under the Bodo Accord (February 2003) and the concerted efforts by successive governments and local people assisted by committed NGOs and individuals.

Till date, the WHC has deleted two sites from the World Heritage List. These include the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman, delisted in 2007, and Dresden Elbe Valley in Germany, in 2009.

Source: 'India gets back its pride: Manas no longer 'in danger' of losing World Heritage status', [www.wti.org.in](http://www.wti.org.in), 21/06/11

### **Manas to get more Swamp deer**

The Forest Department (FD) is planning to increase the population of Swamp deer at Manas National Park (NP) in accordance with the suggestion given by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee (WHC).

According to the FD, a plan has

already been charted out for exploring the prospects of translocation of Swamp deer based on deliberations at a workshop held in February. The FD and the Wildlife Institute of India had organized the workshop. The relocation project will be for a period of three years and would be carried out after it gets the nod from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

It is expected that some of the 1200 deer found in the Kaziranga NP will be moved to Manas that has a present population of about 20. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) has insisted that a proper assessment of habitat and number of swamp deer to be introduced will be carried out before actually implementing the translocation plan.

Source: 'After rhinos, forest dept plans to increase swamp deer population in Manas', [www.economictimes.indiatimes.com](http://www.economictimes.indiatimes.com), 02/07/11.

## **NATIONAL NEWS**

### **Nearly 450 tiger deaths in India in last 12 years: NTCA**

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has said that 447 tigers were found dead between 1999 and March 2011 across the entire country. 197 of these were said to have been poached. The information was provided in response to an application filed by PTI under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The highest number of 36 tigers each were poached in 2001 and 2002, followed by 24 each in 1999 and in 2010. According to the reply 20 wild cats were killed in 2003, 17 in 2009, 10 in 2007, nine each in 2000 and 2008, and five fell prey to hunters in 2006.

Source: 'Nearly 200 tigers fell prey to poaching in last 12 years', *The Hindu*, 05/06/11.

## PERSPECTIVE

### **A tribute to Durrell's Corfu trilogy**

If there's one book I can confidently say I loved reading it is the Corfu trilogy by Gerald Durrell. Even today, after three years of reporting about wildlife, one learning that remains warmly etched is about the tiny creatures that escape our notice. There was as much fascination as patience in Durrell's observation of the quiet lives of crab spiders, lacewing flies, earwigs and their nests, blennies and even the smallest of small creatures like cyclops and rat fleas. Of course, there were bigger creatures too like nightjars, porpoises, mallard ducks, terrapins and a host of beautifully coloured birds. How I wished I grew up on an island paradise like Corfu.

The most vivid wildlife-related childhood memory I have is of holding a funeral for a butterfly. A few friends and I placed the dead butterfly in a matchbox and buried it with flowers beneath a big African Tulip tree. It was a solemn event, I remember. More importantly, I realised that as kids, many of us tend to connect with the little creatures almost instinctively. Now imagine what it'd be like if, when kids stepped out, they stepped on mud instead of cement and concrete. The kind of little-creature habitat that Bangalore's soil and rain could provide...

I re-read the trilogy again during the COVID-19 lockdown in May last year. I remembered a Steve Jobs quote: you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward. Now, looking back as a wildlife reporter with more information and clarity about wildlife conservation, I understand why I was so taken in by the book. It almost seems like the book recognised an inherent inclination towards wildlife years before I consciously did so. I care as deeply about wildlife today as I loved the book when I first read it. The book also led to many long walks and conversations in

Cubbon Park, Hebbal lake and Lalbagh and trysts with bird watching.

It is difficult to explain why exactly reading books is a good habit. I'm partial to books even though I understand that the audio-visual media also offer learning experiences. Maybe a person's patience can be defined by the ability to read a fat book or listen to a two-hour podcast or watch a three-hour debate on live television.

But I'm glad I read the Corfu trilogy. I recently learnt that there's a movie (My Family and Other Animals) and a TV series (The Durrells) too. Why do I know that watching these would have left no real impression? Maybe reading books isn't as virtuous a habit as it is made out to be. But there is definitely something there. Maybe reading leads to be a more active sense of pursuit when it comes to learning!

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