

Vol. XXIX, No. 2

April 2023 (No. 162)

## **LIST OF CONTENTS**

### **EDITORIAL**

### **NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES**

#### **Andhra Pradesh**

Wolves sighted in Nallamala forest after a decade

#### **Bihar**

Proposal to increase rhinos and rhino habitat areas in Valmiki TR

#### **Gujarat**

State rescues 91 whale sharks in two years

#### **Karnataka**

Forest dwellers demand FRA implementation in Nagarhole TR

NBWL seeks revised proposal for Hubballi-Ankola rail line; suggests scrapping double-tracking of Vasco-Castlerock-Tinaighat section

Elephant signal boards to be tested in conflict zones of Kodagu

#### **Kerala**

Scheduled tribes department asks FD to halt rehabilitation scheme; says violates FRA

Enhanced allocation for tackling human wildlife conflict; overall budget decreases

#### **Madhya Pradesh**

72 tiger and 43 leopard deaths in MP tiger reserves in last three years

FD relocates two tigers to Madhav NP

#### **Maharashtra**

No 50th anniversary celebrations at Melghat TR due to protest threat from MLA

Adivasis from Mumbai Metropolitan Region seek implementation of FRA

#### **Maharashtra/Telangana**

Tigress & cubs migrate from Tipeshwar WLS to Adilabad forests in Telangana

#### **Odisha**

Forest officials arrested for killing forest guard who witnessed elephant carcass burning in Similipal TR

#### **Tamil Nadu**

Court orders FD & Tangedco to conduct joint patrolling to avoid electrocution of elephants

State allows paper manufacturer to cut and use invasive trees from Mudumalai & Satyamangalam TRs

State to notify Thanthai Periyar WLS

#### **Telangana**

FD halts tendu collection in buffer of Kawal TR

#### **Uttarakhand**

NGT holds forest officials responsible for habitat destruction in Corbett TR

### **NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA**

Railways need no permission for development on Railways' land inside forests: MoEFCC

SC warns CEC not to act as appellate authority over SC's orders; suggests appointing younger experts

### **SOUTH ASIA**

#### **Nepal**

Tiger recorded at 3,165 m in Nepal; highest in the country

<b>INTERNATIONAL NEWS</b>	<b>18</b>	Khariakandi village joins network of community-based bird sanctuaries in Bangladesh	
59% of coral reef rays & sharks are threatened globally			
<b><u>IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE</u></b>	<b>21</b>	<b>Nepal</b>	
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>		Bird strike at Pokhara airport; conservationists fear more to come	
Baikal teal & Orange-bellied leafbird sighted in Renuka Ji WLS; first reports for HP		<b>OVERHERD – A visual comment</b>	<b>22</b>
		<b>FROM THE ARCHIVES</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>SOUTH ASIA</b>		<b>PERSPECTIVE</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Bangladesh</b>		Our rapidly concretising coastline...	

**Protected Area Update**  
Vol. XXIX, No. 1, February (No. 161)

Editor: **Pankaj Sekhsaria**

Associate Editor: **Reshma Jathar**

Illustrations: **Ashvini Menon, Siddhi Jadhav, Shruti Kulkarni, Madhuvanti Anantharajan & Peeyush Sekhsaria**

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

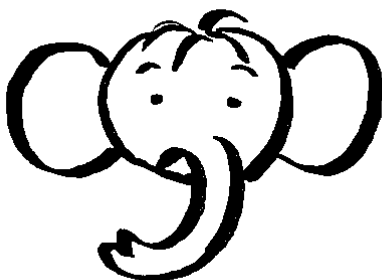
Editorial Address: **C/o Kalpavriksh**, Apartment 5, Shri Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004, Maharashtra, India.

Tel/Fax: 020 – 25654239; Email: [psekhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com)

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

\*\*\*

**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/>

**Paul Hamlyn Foundation**

and

**Donations from a number of individual supporters**

## EDITORIAL

### **One state... many dimensions of wildlife conservation**

The central idea is applicable to and visible in any state or geography of India. We take the example of Karnataka here because it stands out in the list of contents of this issue of the *PA Update*. One story from the state, as you will see, discusses demands for implementation of forest rights, another is about a long standing controversy of railway extension and ensuing forest loss, while the 3rd story discusses the rapidly escalating problem and challenges of human-elephant conflict. At one level the three stories appear distinctly different and independent of each other; at the same time it is evident that they are complexly interlinked via geography, history, the compulsions of politics and the fact that we are discussing protected areas and wildlife conservation.

There are interesting questions that can be asked about their complex inter-relationships: Is infrastructure expansion leading to an increase in human-wildlife conflict? If forests can be sacrificed for infrastructure projects, why so much opposition to forests being given to tribal communities? Will giving away forest land, whatever the reason, not actually lead to increased human-animal conflict? Should needs of wildlife and conservation become an impediment for infrastructure development? Is there an uniformity about these priorities, concerns and trade-offs? Is it (not) the same set of actors who promote destruction of forests for infrastructure even as they oppose grant of forest rights because it will destroy forests? Is technology a solution for problems that are primarily social and political? How can political interests of multiple groups be balanced out with the imperatives of ecology and sustainability? What is the political constituency anyway for wildlife and conservation interests?

It is also an interesting and important detail that it is the same institutional configurations - be it state agencies, research organisations, the media, or the non-governmental sector of various shades - that have to deal with these diverse and complex problems. All its authority and power notwithstanding, is the forest department (FD) equipped, for instance, to deal with all these matters and all of them at the same time? Is too much authority and its historical legacy the bottleneck rather than an asset? Is the media capable, or indeed interested, in going beyond sensationalism and stories that only skim the surface? Are the topics that research organisations take up for research the most important and relevant ones for conservation? Can the same be asked of the issues that the NGO sector picks up for advocacy or for its own research?

How can the FD or anyone else for that matter really ensure long term protection of an elephant population whose habitat has been knifed multiple times by linear infrastructure? What will happen to the tribal communities when the forests they depend on are themselves all gone? What is the training and capacity building these different institutions need? Can technological fixes be anything more than band aid solutions when the wounds lie much deeper? How will that optimum solution actually emerge?

Coherent answers might not be easy to offer, if they can be offered at all. What is important to think about is whether all the relevant questions are being asked in the first place. When conservation becomes an issue articulated in a particular way by a particular set of actors and interests, it eventually ends up doing a dis-service to itself.

The protected area network is a complex mosaic nested within a larger and even more complex network that is geographical, political, social and ecological all at the same time. The three stories from Karnataka highlight this by coming together on the same page. They also underline how conservation means different things to

different actors because all are not impacted in the same way. Documenting and articulating that differential is an important first step in understanding what is at stake.

And that, hopefully, is what the *PA Update* is able to do if only as a small contribution in that direction.

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### **Wolves sighted in Nallamala forest after a decade**



Forest officers in the Nallamala forest have sighted wolves in the Dornala-Atmakur border area after almost a decade. In early February, camera traps captured a pack of wolves in and around the Rollapadu forest area, followed by another pack that was sighted near the Dornala-Atmakur Srisailem forest area.

Wolves were commonly found in and around the Nallamala forest two decades ago. They were very commonly found in all rural grasslands of Andhra Pradesh, especially in parts of Prakasam district-adjacent to the Nallamala forest area. The numbers dropped subsequently on account of multiple reasons such as electric fencing of agriculture fields, extensive use of pesticides and decreasing food sources.

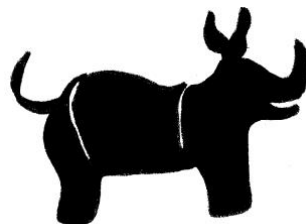
The forest department is now planning to take special measures to protect the recently sighted wolves.

Source: IVNP Prasad Babu. 'After 10 years, Indian wolves sighted in Andhra's Nallamala Range', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 06/03/2023.

### BIHAR

#### **Proposal to increase rhinos and rhino habitat areas in Valmiki TR**

The Bihar government has announced that it will dedicate efforts to increase the population of



rhinos in the State by 3% annually. The target is to be achieved by increasing the rhino-bearing areas within the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (TR) in the West Champaran district by 5% in the next two years.

The announcement comes as a part of the Chitwan Declaration signed by the Asian Rhino Range Countries in a meeting held from February 3 to 5. The rhino range countries - India, Bhutan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Nepal - signed the Chitwan Declaration for the conservation of the Asian rhinos and agreed on managing the population of Javan, Sumatran, and one-horned rhinos by achieving at least 3% population growth rate annually.

Patna Zoo currently has 14 rhinos as part of the conservation breeding programme. Their offspring will be reintroduced to the wild. The Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW) of Bihar said that Valmiki TR had been selected as one of the potential sites under the National Rhino Conservation Strategy. The areas of the reserve identified for the reintroduction of the rhinos here are Ganauli and Madanpur.

The Valmiki TR, established in 1990, is spread across an area of 909.86 sq. km. Since 2001 and 2002, the movement of about 15 rhinos has been reported across the TR boundary. For the past two years, the reserve has also been home to an adult free-ranging

male rhino. There were concerns over the fate of the rhino population as two female rhinos had died here due to train accidents between 2006 and 2013. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XVI, No. 1)

Source: Laxmi Mohan Kumar. 'Bihar To Increase Population Of One-Horned Rhinos By 3% Every Year', [www.thelogicalindian.com](http://www.thelogicalindian.com), 20/02/2023.

## GUJARAT

### State rescues 91 whale sharks in two years

The Gujarat State government has rescued 91 whale sharks and paid Rs. 9.31 lakh as compensation to fishermen for the years 2021 and 2022 for the same. The government stated in the assembly that since 2012 it has implemented the whale shark conservation project under which whale sharks are rescued from fishing nets and fisherfolk are compensated for their nets that have been damaged.

50 whale sharks were rescued and released and a compensation of Rs. 5.09 lakh was paid in 2021. In 2022, the number of whale sharks rescued was 41 and compensation paid was Rs. 4.22 lakh.

The 'Save Whale Shark' campaign is run jointly along the Gujarat coast by the Gujarat Forest Department, the Wildlife Trust of India, the International Fund for Animal Welfare and other local NGOs.

(Also see *PA Update* Vol. XXVIII, No. 2 and Vol. XVII, No. 5)

Source: '91 whale sharks rescued in two years in Gujarat', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 01/03/2023.



## KARNATAKA

### Forest dwellers demand FRA implementation in Nagarahole TR

Forest dwellers from across India joined a rally organised between March 15 and 21 by the tribal communities of Nagarahole to demand implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA). Representatives arrived from places as far as Kaziranga National Park (NP) in Assam, Gir NP (Gujarat), Similipal NP (Odisha), Dudhwa NP (Uttar Pradesh), and Achanakmar NP (Madhya Pradesh).

According to the tribal communities of Nagarahole, private coffee estate owners are the stronger force in land grabbing here. The FRA was to be implemented from December 31, 2007. However, 11 days before that Nagarahole was hastily declared a tiger reserve (TR) and the official notification did not mention the FRA.

The rally concluded with a meeting of local villagers in one of the villages inside the Nagarahole NP boundary. They submitted a charter of demands to the divisional forest officer that included the following:

- Indigenous tribal communities of Nagarahole must be brought under the FRA.
- The community must be given resource rights, cultural rights, and habitation (housing) rights within the forest according to the FRA.
- The gram sabha does not recognise Nagarahole as a TR, hence it is a violation of the law to impose it.
- Stop forceful resettlement of people in the name of tiger conservation.
- All communities that have been evicted before the FRA, must be given the right to go back to their lands and have their rights recognised.
- Whatever decisions are taken need to be for the needs of the people of the forest and the wildlife concerns of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples' laws, and provisions in the Indian constitution and international laws, clearly state that they are the people who will

decide what happens to their lands and what happens to their forests.

- Forceful evictions must stop and the law of the land must be implemented and followed.

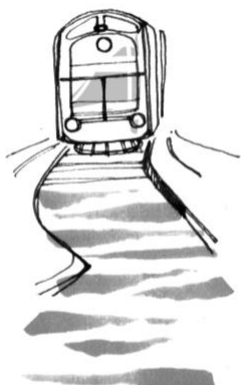
- Tribals' lands and forests cannot be declared as a TR area or a PA without their consent. The constitution states that wherever indigenous communities live, that is a scheduled area.

- Under the fifth schedule of the constitution every scheduled area will have a minister from a scheduled community representing it in the government. However, in the last 15 years, this law has been changed so that now somebody who is not a native of this place can also become a minister.

Since the inception of Nagarahole as a PA, 47 villages have been displaced. Locals are reported to have claimed that forest officials have also killed eight people and permanently injured many more.

Source: Pranab Doley. 'Whose forest? Why Indigenous People from Tiger Reserves Across India Gathered at Nagarahole', [www.thewire.in](http://www.thewire.in), 22/03/2023.

### **NBWL seeks revised proposal for Hubballi-Ankola railway line; suggests scrapping double-tracking of Vasco-Castlerock-Tinaighat section**



The standing committee (SC) of the National Board for Wildlife (SC-NBWL) has directed the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to organise a workshop under the chairmanship of the additional director  
*Protected Area Update* Vol. XXIX, No. 2

general (wildlife) to discuss the Hubballi-Ankola railway line project proposal in detail.

According to the minutes of the 71st meeting of the SC that was held in December 2022 (and shared with the media on January 30, 2023), the committee said that it had found certain discrepancies in the project proposal. The SC-NBWL suggested that the double-tracking of the Vasco-Castlerock-Tinaighat section be dropped, and instead double track be laid for the Hubballi-Ankola route. The SC members said that there was a “need for avoiding deforestation” and hence, avoid double-tracking in dense forest areas like on the Vasco-Castlerock-Tinaighat route. The committee suggested that proposal between Honnavar and Talaguppa may also be dropped since it would pass through dense forests. The members observed that at the end of eight years, which is the construction period for doubling, there will be demand for doubling the Hubballi-Ankola line; it should therefore be given permission instead of double tracking of the Vasco-Castlerock-Tinaighat section.

The SC pointed out that there was a need for an integrated plan for this important tiger corridor area, and that the mitigation measures proposed in the project are not sufficient. It said that the mitigation measures have been proposed based on the railway's convenience and not by considering wildlife movement. The project proposal should have animal passage structures of a longer span. The railway line would cut across several roads connecting villages and there would be the need for temporary roads as well. These additional structures have not been included in the proposal.

It also asked officials of the Ministry of Railways, National Highways Authority of India, Gati Shakti, Karnataka government, and experts from the Indian Institute of Technology, Dharwad; Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru and Central Public Works Department to be included in the workshop.

The Railways needs to submit the proposal in a revised form. The roads which are associated with this railway line belong to

National Highways Authority of India, State Highways and Local Authorities. The mitigation measures proposed in the railway line would not be part of the national highway. Therefore, an integrated approach is required.

The MoEFCC had constituted a seven-member committee on May 30, 2022. The committee carried out a site inspection and heard the views of stakeholders in Uttara Kannada and Dharwad districts from September 26 to 29, 2022. The Committee submitted its report to the ministry on December 26, 2022.

The proposal for wildlife clearance for the Hubballi-Ankola new railway line project was received by the ministry from the Karnataka government in 2017. The project involves the diversion of an area of 595.64 ha of forest land for the construction of a new broad gauge railway line from Hubballi to Ankola passing through tiger corridors connecting Kali Tiger Reserve (TR) with the Sharavathi Wildlife Sanctuary. Elephants have been observed lately to be using this corridor.

Though this project also comes at an environmental cost, it has potential benefits in terms of the need for connectivity between coastal areas and the hinterlands, observed the SC-NBWL.

Over 80% stretch of the Hubballi-Ankola project, originally conceived in 1998, passes through dense forests. Out of 995.64 ha of land required for the project, 595.64 ha is forest land. The proposed 168 km passes through forests between two major protected areas – Kali TR and Bedthi Conservation Reserve. The project would need the cutting down of 2.34 lakh trees.

The SC has therefore recommended that the project proposal in the present form should not be considered. It may qualify for consideration only when all gaps, discrepancies and issues raised by the committee members are addressed. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXVI, No. 3; Vol. XXIV, No. 5; )

Source: ‘National wildlife panel directs Environment ministry to hold talks on Hubballi-Ankola railway project in Karnataka’, [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 31/01/2023.  
Gauree Malkarnekar. ‘Wildlife board suggests scrapping of double-tracking Vasco stretch’, [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 01/02/2023.

### **Elephant signal boards to be tested in conflict zones of Kodagu**



The Kodagu Forest Division is testing elephant signal boards to address the increasing human-elephant conflict in the district. Boards with elephant signage have been placed in five conflict zones across Meenukolli and Anekadu forest limits. The boards function as an early warning system for commuters and are automated with infrared signals. The infrared beams have been placed at an optimum height to detect the presence of elephants. When the infrared detects the movement of wild elephants, the signal boards light up and warn the commuters to slow down or pause.

Further, once the movement of elephants is detected, the signals are pushed to the SMS server system and forest staff can track and monitor the movement of the animals. The solar-powered beams and signal boards can also be connected with direct current in case of the absence of sunlight. The units have been custom-made and are proven to be weatherproof.



These boards have been erected by A Rocha India, a conservation research organization, with support from the forest department after availing details on the traditional elephant routes from the ground forest staff and the local community. The signal boards are still in its R&D stage. They were first tested in Bannerghatta and over 50 detections of elephant movement have been recorded; now the organization has extended this facility in Kodagu.

Source: Prajna GR. 'Kodagu forest department tests Elephant Signal Boards to address wildlife conflict', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 31/01/2023.

## **KERALA**

### **Scheduled tribes department asks FD to halt rehabilitation scheme; says violates FRA**

The Kerala scheduled tribes development department (STDD) has taken strong exception to a voluntary tribal rehabilitation scheme of the State's forest and wildlife department (FWD) under the Rebuild Kerala programme. The STDD has noted that the scheme had been conceived unscientifically and without consulting the vulnerable tribal groups. The STDD noted further that the scheme violated provisions of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA).

The scheme was recently renamed as Navakiranam project for rehabilitation and resettlement of the tribal communities living in deep forests in isolated pockets. 479 tribal families are being rehabilitated from 19 forest divisions and wildlife sanctuaries in the State as part of this scheme. The STDD asked the FWD not to proceed with the scheme in its current form, as it is being implemented as a random land purchase and allotment scheme and without considering the legal rights of the

tribal communities who are being rehabilitated out of the forest.

Tribal welfare funds to the tune of Rs. 7.4 crore, loaned to the FWD as a temporary measure, were used for purchasing land for the scheme and these funds are yet to be returned. Field officers have reported that the scheme is violating Section 4 (2) of the FRA. The FWD is reported to have transferred Rs. 52.88 lakh to private individuals and land sellers without actual registration and transfer of the property for rehabilitation, which is irregular.

Also, an audit of the STDD funds had remarked that the tribal welfare funds are not meant for implementation of such projects.

Source: KP Sai Kiran. 'A 'voluntary' tribal rehab scheme without any consultation in Kerala', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 06/03/2023.

### **Enhanced allocation for tackling human wildlife conflict; overall budget decreases**

To address the intensifying human-wildlife interface outside protected areas, Kerala has made an allocation of Rs. 50 crore for the installation of fencing, construction of elephant-proof walls and trenches, modernisation of rapid response teams (RRTs), and conducting a study on reducing human-wildlife conflict in the State. This is substantially more than the allocation made in 2021-22, which was Rs. 13 crore.

Meanwhile, compared to the allocation in the last fiscal, the overall allocation for forestry and wildlife conservation has come down. An amount of Rs. 241.66 crore has been earmarked for various schemes for 2023-24 while the outlay for the year 2022-23 was Rs. 281.31 crore.

An allocation of Rs. 50.5 crore has been made for the regeneration of denuded forests. The main objective of the scheme is to convert the degraded forests of acacia, eucalyptus, wattle, and teak plantations to natural forests and thereby improve the



biodiversity and ecosystem services. An amount of Rs. 28 crore has been allocated for preventing encroachments and identifying the forest boundary with the application of modern technology and equipment. The budget provides Rs. 10 crore for the conservation of biodiversity.

While Rs. 5.2 crore have been set aside for 'Project Elephant' including for the elephant rehabilitation centre at Kottur, Rs. 6.7 crore has been allocated for the implementation of 'Project Tiger' for the conservation and management of the Periyar and Parambikkulam Tiger Reserves. An amount of Rs. 4.76 crore has been allocated as the State share for the management of 16 wildlife sanctuaries in the State. Rs. 30.85 crore have also been allocated to increase the compensation provided in cases of wild animal attacks.

Kerala Independent Farmers' Association has appreciated the decision to strengthen RRTs and raise the compensation for death due to wild animal attacks. However, it pointed out that compensation worth Rs. 15 crore has been pending for the past three years.

Source: 'Stress on reducing man-animal conflict in Kerala',

[www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com),

04/02/2023.

'Kerala budget: 50 crore to tackle man-animal conflict',

[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),

04/02/2023.

## MADHYA PRADESH

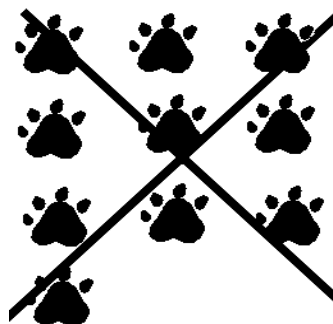
### 72 tiger and 43 leopard deaths in MP tiger reserves in last three years

The three year period from 2020 to 2022 has seen the death of at least 72 tigers and 43 leopards in the tiger reserves (TRs) of Madhya Pradesh (MP). The information was provided by the State forest minister Kunwar Vijay Shah in the State assembly on March 2. These deaths have been reported from the Kanha,

Bandhavgarh, Panna, Pench, Sanjay and Satpura TRs. One death was also reported from the Obedullaganj Forest Division. Bandavgarh TR alone reported 29 tiger and 16 leopard deaths in the three-year period.

21 tiger deaths were reported in the year 2020, while the number was 26 and 25 respectively for 2021 and 2022. The leopard deaths recorded were eight, 14 and 21 respectively for the three consecutive years.

Territorial fights were the cause of tiger deaths in 27 cases, whereas at least seven leopards were killed by tigers. The other reasons for the death of the big cats include electrocution, poisoning, falling in well, getting strangled and natural causes.



Source: 'In last 3 years, 72 tigers & 43 leopards died in Madhya Pradesh', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 03/03/2023.

### FD relocates two tigers to Madhav NP

The Madhya Pradesh (MP) Forest Department (FD) relocated a four-year old male tiger from the Satpura Tiger Reserve (TR), and a three-and-a-half-years old female from the Bandhavgarh TR to the Madhav National Park (NP). The relocation is part of the proposal to re-establish the tiger population in Madhav NP. A total of five tigers (two males and three females) are to be relocated to Madhav from Bandhavgarh and Panna TRs, and the surrounding areas of Bhopal.

The FD has constructed three enclosures of 1.3 ha each for the relocated tigers. The newly introduced tigers will be monitored around the clock by the field staff,

and a full-time veterinary doctor has been deployed at the NP for tiger monitoring.

Madhav NP is spread over an area of 354.61 sq. km, and its location assumes conservation significance as it has the potential to connect Panna TR in MP to Ranthambore TR in Rajasthan. The last reported tiger sighting from Madhav NP was in 2012.

Source: 'Tigers Return to Madhav National Park After a Decade',  
<https://newsonair.com>, 11/03/2023.

## MAHARASHTRA

### No 50th anniversary celebrations at Melghat TR due to protest threat from MLA

No celebratory events were held in Melghat Tiger Reserve (TR) to mark its 50th anniversary, reportedly, due to a threat from local MLA Rajkumar Patel to disrupt the event planned at Semadoh. Reserve officials had planned several events with the participation of local tribes for the 22nd of February. These were called off fearing that the protests would create a law and order problem. Melghat was declared a TR on February 22, 1974.

The programmes celebrating 50 years included the opening of a waiting hall at the Semadoh check-post to depict Korku culture and heritage, the release of a biodiversity map, the latest bird survey report, and the opening of an eco-protection hut in Kund. Field staff who have done outstanding work for conservation and protection were also to be felicitated.

MLA Patel said that he didn't let the celebrations happen because several developmental works like roads, small bridges and electricity lines have been stalled due to the TR. In the last 50 years, people cooperated to increase the tiger numbers but they are still deprived of basic facilities, he said. He noted further that all the work is being done on revenue land yet the forest department has stalled many projects. Even 50 years after formation of the TR 24 villages had no power

connection. Therefore, he said, he had decided to stage protests along with tribals.

Patel had on February 16 written to chief minister Eknath Shinde stating that the TR is proving to be a curse for people rather than a blessing. No developmental work is being undertaken due to stringent conditions under the various acts.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Melghat's 50th anniversary fest spoiled by MLA's threat in Maharashtra',  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 24/02/2023.

### Adivasis from Mumbai Metropolitan Region seek implementation of FRA



Adivasis from across the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) gathered at Azad Maidan in Mumbai on 10th March as part of a protest rally seeking fulfilment of land and forest rights. Mumbai Adivasi Mahamorchha, a protest rally was organized by the Kashtakari Shetkari Sanghatana, demanding the government to recognize the rights of Adivasis over forest land. The (non)implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA) was a key topic of contention.

Nearly 2000 adivasis participated in the rally. Majority of them were from three locations - the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP), Aarey Colony, and Gorai - where some of the region's largest adivasi padas are concentrated.

The protestors demanded the issuance of caste certificates for tribals, recognition of customary land rights, denotification of a proposed zoo in Aarey Colony, prevention of wrongful displacement under the guise of slum

rehabilitation, implementation of the FRA and stopping harassment by law enforcement authorities. They also called for relocation of non-advansi residents from forest areas to suitable locations elsewhere, and, demanded creation of marketplaces for advansi farmers and horticulturists to sell their produce, establishment of basic amenities such as accessible roads, primary healthcare centres, electricity and anganwadis for advansi padas.

There are 222 advansi padas in and around Mumbai, but other than Baburpada in Gorai, none have been demarcated and declared as gaathan lands. In SGNP, 500 to 600 families living in Sai Bangodapada are entitled to benefits under the FRA, but the Act has till date not been implemented in Mumbai. There have only been promises from the State government towards guaranteeing them their rights but no action has been taken, said the protestors and tribal rights activists.

Source: Prayag Arora-Desai. 'Advansis hold protest demanding land, forest rights', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 11/03/2023.

## MAHARASHTRA/TELANGANA

### **Tigress & cubs migrate from Tipeshwar WLS to Adilabad forests in Telangana**

A tigress and her three cubs have migrated from Maharashtra's Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) to the forests of Adilabad in neighbouring Telangana. This is the second time within a span of four months that the tigress, which has been identified as the '4' mark female, and its three cubs have been sighted in Adilabad district. The first time was in November 2022.

The male tiger named 'Star', who has sired this current litter of two females and a male, has not been seen in Tipeshwar since October 2022. Another male named Zanjeer, seems to have taken its place during the course. This seems to have become the cause of the tigress's anxiety for the safety of her cubs. The

tigress is reported to have been returned to the sanctuary on her own after her first visit to Telangana.

The district forest officer of Adilabad has initiated measures meanwhile to monitor the movement of the big cat and the cubs as the place is reportedly witnessing human activity. They have set up a base camp and 20 camera traps in the area close to Gunjala from where direct sightings of the tiger family were reported. The forest department has also conducted awareness drives among residents and appealed to them to take necessary precautions when sighting the tigress and cubs. They were also assured of speedy compensation in case of cattle kills.

(Also see *PA Updates* XXIX, No. 1 and Vol. XXVIII, No. 6)

Source: S Harpal Singh. 'A tigress with cubs migrating from Maharashtra to Telangana twice has wildlifers curious', [www.thenewsminute.com](http://www.thenewsminute.com), 09/03/2023.

## ODISHA

### **Forest officials arrested for killing forest guard who witnessed elephant carcass burning in Similipal TR**

The Odisha police on February 16 arrested three forest officials for allegedly killing a temporary forest guard who had witnessed the burning of the carcass of an elephant. The elephant had been reportedly poached in the Similipal Tiger Reserve (TR) in December 2022.

Jenabil ranger in-charge Shiv Shankar Samal, and forest guards Chandrabhanu Behera and Binod Kumar Das, allegedly thrashed and then poisoned 20-year-old Turram Purti after he recorded them burning the carcass of an elephant that had its tusk sawn off. Purti, the tribal protection assistant had recorded the incident on his mobile phone and sent the clip to the senior reserve officials. The three field level staff were then suspended.

In 2022, Odisha recorded 12 cases where forest department personnel were allegedly involved in hiding instances of elephant poaching by burning or burying the carcasses. Action against erring officials was initiated in these cases following directions of the Odisha High Court.

Source: Debabrata Mohanty, 'Three Odisha forest officials held for killing worker over elephant carcass burning: Police', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 17/02/2023.

### **Support the *PA Update***

We continue to need financial support to sustain the publishing of the *PA Update*. Please considering donating for the same or subscribing for yourself, your institutions or gifting subscriptions. For further details please write to [psekhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com)

### **BACK ISSUES OF THE *PA UPDATE***

We have multiple extra copies of recent back issues of the *PA Update*. If you would like to receive some of these copies free of cost for your own use or for further distribution, please write to [psekhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com) for further details.



## TAMIL NADU

### Court orders FD & Tangedco to conduct joint patrolling to avoid electrocution of elephants



The Madras High Court (HC), on February 21, ordered the Tamil Nadu Forest Department (FD) and the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution

Corporation (Tangedco) to undertake joint patrolling in vulnerable forest areas across the State to prevent elephant deaths by electrocution. The joint patrolling would be conducted in eight districts including Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Erode, Krishnagiri, Theni and Tirunelveli.

Referring to a petition over the dismantling of unauthorised brick kilns in Coimbatore district, the HC directed Tangedco to disconnect the power supply by March 1. During the last hearing, the court had given a week's ultimatum to Tangedco to disconnect supply to the kilns.

The special bench also directed the Kerala government to nominate its representative to the special investigation team (SIT) set up for investigating wildlife crimes. The court has also directed the State government to pass a government order (GO) banning use of plastic bags for carrying saplings developed in private nurseries. The government was given time till April 17, 2023, for passing the GO.

Source: 'Forest dept, Tangedco told to hold joint patrols to curb elephant deaths by Madras HC,' [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 22/02/2023.

### State allows paper manufacturer to cut and use invasive trees from Mudumalai & Satyamangalam TRs



The Tamil Nadu State government has in a major policy decision agreed to allow Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Limited (TNPL) to remove invasive trees from inside the Mudumalai and Satyamangalam Tiger Reserves (TRs) for use in manufacturing paper. The drive started in January this year.

Additional chief secretary of the State environment, forests and climate change department informed that based on economic feasibility, TNPL has shown interest to remove two out of seven prominent invasive species – Wattle (*Acacia* sp.) and *Senna spectabilis*. As per rough government estimates, close to 42,000 ha is invaded by these two species.

To start with, TNPL is cutting and removing *Senna spectabilis* trees from within the two TRs. Orders for removal of Wattle are expected to be issued soon as well. TNPL is, however, not allowed to remove the trees with the roots. Trees will be cut close to the surface and will be debarked so as to ensure no fresh shoots develop.

A TNPL official informed that as many as 5,500 tonnes of Senna wood were extracted from 120 ha of land. It is estimated that about 25,000 tonnes of Senna wood is present, of which 20,000 tonnes will be retrieved before onset of monsoon and the remaining will be cleared by next summer. However, he admitted that *Senna spectabilis* is not the preferred wood for paper manufacturing and it will be used after mixing it with other wood.

The field director, Mudumalai TR, informed that the removal work was carried



out in Singara and Masinagudi areas. The forest department (FD) has adopted natural regeneration methodology. It will observe the area closely for a year and see how the ecosystem is developing without any direct intervention.

Accurate published estimates of area under invasive alien species across the entire State are presently unavailable. According to one estimate done by an expert committee constituted by the Madurai bench of the Madras High Court, the area under invasive alien species is 2,68,100 ha. In another estimate done by the FD, the area affected was estimated to be 3,18,041 ha.

A 2020 assessment revealed that 262 sq. km (69%) of montane grasslands in Palani Hills and 180 sq. km (58%) of montane grasslands in Nilgiris have been lost due to exotic trees and agricultural expansion.

Source: SV Krishna Chaitanya. 'TNPL begins uprooting of invasive trees to counter ecological concerns', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 25/03/2023.

### **State to notify Thanthai Periyar WLS**

The Tamil Nadu Government will notify the Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) over 80,567 ha in the forest areas of Anthiyur and Gobichettipalayam taluks in Erode district.

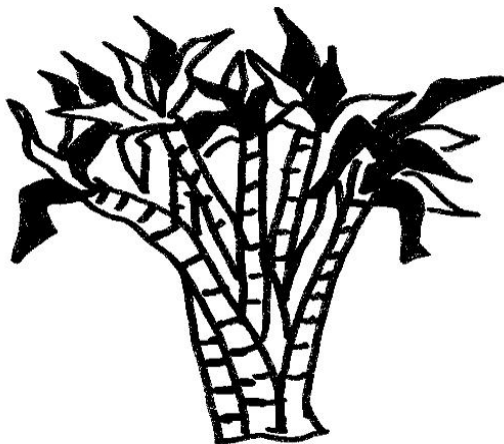
It will include reserve forest areas in Anthiyur, Bargur, Thattakarai and Chennampatti. The announcement was made during the State budget session on March 20. It will be the 18th WLS in the State.

The conservator of forest (CF) and field director of Satymangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) said that the forest department (FD) will send a detailed proposal for the same to the State government after consultation with all stakeholders. Tribals living in the areas to be notified as a WLS can continue to enjoy their rights given under the Forest Rights Act since tribals living in six settlements have already got titles, the CF said.

He also informed that after the notification of the WLS, the FD will get more funds to strengthen the protection of wildlife. The FD has recorded nine tigers in part of the proposed sanctuary area. The funds will also be used for mitigating human-animal conflict in these areas, especially in Bargur hills.

The area to be notified as a WLS is close to Malai Mahadeshwara, BRT and, Cauvery WLSs in Karnataka. It will also act as a connection between the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve and Cauvery South WLS.

Source: S Senthil Kumar. 'Tamil Nadu's 18th wildlife sanctuary to come up in Erode', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 21/03/2023.



## TELANGANA

### **FD halts tendu collection in buffer of Kawal TR**

The forest department (FD) is not allowing the collection of tendu (beedi) leaves in the buffer zones of Kawal Tiger Reserve (TR) and the tiger corridor in Adilabad and Asifabad districts, citing possible human-wildlife conflicts due to the increased movements of tigers in the area. Also, in some places, the leaf collectors especially, women are afraid to enter the forest area due to the increased tiger movements.

The areas where leaf collection is not allowed include Bejjur, Penchikalpet, Dahegam and Kagaznagar, Sirpur (T) mandals in Kagaznagar Forest Division as tiger movement has been reported here. This is also resulting in substantial revenue losses tendu leaves collection has already been stopped in the core area of the reserve. According to the forest minister Indrakaran Reddy, the State government had set 2.27 lakhs of standard bags as the target for the collection and selling of tendu leaves this season, and with the deadline of May-end.

Recently, Koneru Konappa, a member of legislative assembly appealed to the forest minister to permit the collection of tendu leaves in the villages located in the forest areas that come under the buffer zone of the Kawal TR and the tiger corridor between Maharashtra and Telangana in the Sirpur (T) assembly constituency. The minister said in response that the government would take a decision after taking the expert opinions into consideration.

A senior forest officer said that the tendu collection would affect tiger conservation efforts since a large number of people enter forests where tigers are frequently sighted. Further, he pointed out that tendu leaves are collected in summer when the tigers roam from one place to another in search of water which leads to conflict.

Source: Pillalamarri Srinivas. 'No tendu collection in tiger reserve: Foresters', [www.deccanchronicle.com](http://www.deccanchronicle.com), 12/03/2023.

## UTTARAKHAND

### **NGT holds forest officials responsible for habitat destruction in Corbett TR**

A committee constituted by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), in its observations published on March 13, asserted that widespread tree-felling and illegal construction work has led to extensive and irreversible damage to the wildlife habitat in the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR). The committee's report states that forest officials are responsible for the same. Although most of the officials involved in the case have been transferred from their posts, the NGT panel has recommended strict action against them, as well as the establishment of objective parameters that can act as guiding principles for habitat management.

According to the Forest Survey of India (FSI), around 6,093 trees were felled for construction activities in the reserve. The number was challenged by the Uttarakhand Forest Department but the NGT panel, which visited the site on January 6 and February 6 this year, found that there was widespread evidence of tree-felling and that there are no reasons to doubt the estimates of FSI.

The committee also found evidence of illegal watering holes, elephant-proof walls, and road constructions, which it said, have been undertaken without any administrative and financial approval and without any budgetary provisions. The committee recommended that the elephant-proof walls, which it said seemed to be "constructed just for the sake of construction," should be removed to allow for the free movement of wildlife.

It also recommended that the construction work for the tiger safari should resume under the supervision of a committee led by State government officials and experts to ensure "due diligence" is followed while implementing the layout plan.



Illegal constructions such as administrative buildings, forest rest houses, and a residential complex for senior forest officials inside the reserve came to public notice after a writ petition was filed in the Delhi High Court in 2021. Several committees have since investigated the site and the extent of construction activity inside the reserve in violation of permits and forest laws. One such committee's findings came more than a month after the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) said in 2021 that Uttarakhand's former forest minister, Harak Singh Rawat, was largely responsible for illegal tree felling and construction activity' within the reserve.

Rawat had laid the foundation stone for a tiger safari and sanctioned work towards it in 2020 even before the project was awarded final forest clearance. Apart from Rawat and then divisional forest officer Kishan Chand, the committee held nine forest officers including district forest officer Akhilesh Tiwari, conservator of forests/director Rahul and chief wildlife warden Jabar Singh Suhag responsible for allowing the work to go through. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXVIII, Nos. 6 & 4)

Source: Simrin Sirur. 'Tree felling, construction in Corbett caused 'irreversible damage' — NGT panel slams forest officials', [www.theprint.in](http://www.theprint.in), 13/03/2023.

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### **Railways need no permission for development on Railways' land inside forests: MoEFCC**

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has clarified that the Railways does not need permission to develop infrastructure on Railways' land in forest areas. It issued this clarification after its contradictory order dated March 10, 2022 on the issue created confusion in many States.

The confusion of the State governments is understandable with contradictory orders being issued by MoEFCC since 2016 on the issue, stated the MoEFCC. However, it has now clarified in the latest letter issued to the States and Union Territories that the Railways ministry has the right to develop projects in forest land and it need not obtain permission from the central government under the Forest Conservation Act (FCA).

The MoEFCC's various orders in the matter are as follows:

November 2016: If conversion of metre gauge to broad gauge lines is allowed within forest land in the right of way (RoW) of the railway line, which is already under non-forest use before October 25, 1980, then the FCA may not be applicable.

However, if additional land beyond the existing alignment of metre gauge railway track is required for any non-forestry activities, then FCA clearance would be required.

December 2017: Even land owned by the Railways in forest areas is forest and cannot be used for anything else without the consent of the Central government.

May 2019: Noting the objections of the State governments in taking approval and the Railways' difficulties in completing key track work, non-forest use of forest land by the Railways is allowed and the provisions of the FCA are waived off.

Circular dated March 10, 2022: The Wildlife Protection Act will not be applicable on the Railways in RoW. The decision has been taken after consultation with the Ministry of Law and Justice and will apply to the Railways only.

Letter dated February 22, 2023: The order issued in March 2022 has given the Railways the right to develop projects in forest land and they need not obtain permission from the central government under the FCA.

Source: 'Railways does not need to seek permission to develop infrastructure on its land in forest areas: Environment Ministry', [www.theweek.in](http://www.theweek.in), 27/02/2023.

## SC warns CEC not to act as appellate authority over SC's orders; suggests appointing younger experts

The Supreme Court (SC) on March 24 warned the central empowered committee (CEC) not to act as an appellate authority by sitting in judgment over orders passed by the SC. It also, sought suggestions on appointing younger experts to the CEC. A bench of justices BR Gavai and Vikram Nath said that once an order is passed by the SC, it is not appropriate for the authority constituted by this court (the CEC was created by the SC on May 9, 2002 in this case) to give a report which questions the order of the SC.

The comments of the SC against the CEC comes in the matter where the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) had come to the SC seeking permission for construction of a convention centre at Patnitop in Jammu. On February 24, the SC had allowed construction of the new convention centre in place of the existing dilapidated Club Building of J&K Tourism Development Corporation. While doing so, the SC said that the application is allowed, subject to obtaining clearances from the statutory authorities concerned.

On March 13, the five-member CEC gave a fresh report to the SC indicating that the forest area around Patnitop is the only surviving forest in the area and it was not in favour of allowing the construction of the convention centre at the proposed site. It further suggested that the Patnitop development authority should be asked to look for an alternate site outside the forest area.

The bench said that CEC is an authority constituted under orders of the SC. Once the court has passed an order there is no need for CEC to give a report.

Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta appearing for the J&K Administration informed the SC that the March 13 report of CEC was not endorsed by all members and their dissent was not brought on record. The statement by SG was supported by one of the CEC members, Mahendra Vyas, who was in the court. Senior advocate ADN Rao

representing the CEC clarified that the committee never tried to overlook the court's orders and, in the past, views of dissenting members were shared with the court. The bench directed that if there is a dissenting or separate view by any member that may too be brought on record.

Advocate K Parameshwar assisting the court as an *amicus curiae* informed the court that out of five members of the CEC, only two or three are active as the others have crossed the age of 75 years. Another member is based abroad now. The SG supported the view stating that the committee members are overburdened and this composition has been in place for the past two decades.

The court said that there is no doubt the CEC has rendered a yeoman service in matters concerning protection of forest and environment. However, in the interest of its effective functioning, it would be appropriate to have relatively young experts who can contribute in a more energetic manner.

Source: Abraham Thomas. 'SC tells forest expert panel not to act as 'appellate' authority over its orders', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 24/03/2023.

## SOUTH ASIA

### NEPAL

#### Tiger recorded at 3,165 m in Nepal; highest in the country



Camera traps have captured tigers roaming at an elevation of 3,165 m in eastern Nepal's lower Himalayas. It is the highest tigers have ever been recorded in the country. Previously, a tiger was caught by a camera placed at an elevation of 2,511 m. The highest a tiger has ever been recorded is in Bhutan, at

4,400 m. No clear image was captured in that case, however.

Nepal's tigers are found in the country's southern flood plains, ranging up to the foothills of the Chure range. The temple in Dadeldhura is located in the Mahabharat range that is in the lower Himalayas, further north and even higher in elevation than the Chure range. However, in 2020, the Dadeldhura temple priest told a forester, who was on his regular patrol, that he sees a tiger roam in the hills. The forester requested the WWF's Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) programme to set up camera traps in the area. The TAL program agreed and set up 62 camera traps between March and April 2020. The network of camera traps photographed 23 species of animals including many that were previously thought to be confined to lower-elevation habitats. These included creatures like the goral, striped hyena, sambar deer, and Indian pangolin.

Researchers note that many factors may have played a role in creating a favorable environment for so many mammals to survive in the area, which also provides a contiguous habitat between protected areas in Nepal and India, such as Shuklaphanta National Park and Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary. At 1,143 sq. km, the forest cover as a proportion of Dadeldhura's total area is the highest of any of Nepal's 76 districts. The district's gradient also gives rise to a rich range of vegetation, from subtropical to subalpine. Another factor is the recovery of forests as a result of successful community-led forestry programs. The study also suggests that as the tiger population has increased in its core habitats in the southern plains, these high-altitude forests may serve as a refuge for tigers looking for unclaimed space.

Source: Abhaya Raj Joshi. 'The tiger in the snow: Cameras capture abundance of life in a Himalayan refuge', [www.news.mongabay.com](http://www.news.mongabay.com), 13/01/2023.

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### 59% of coral reef rays & sharks are threatened globally



A study published in the journal *Nature Communications* has revealed that almost 59% i.e. 79 of the world's 134 coral reef-associated rays and sharks (chondrichthyans) are in one of the threatened categories on the IUCN Red List. Overfishing appears to be the biggest cause for the population decline, followed by climate change, habitat loss and degradation, residential and commercial development, and pollution, says the study.

The authors have reported that population was declining for 94 coral reef shark and ray species; of the two groups, rays were more threatened than sharks. Samantha Sherman, lead author of the study, said that they developed a Red List index to track the progress toward international biodiversity targets over the past half century. They found 14 species fit the 'critically endangered' category, 24 species were 'endangered', and 41 species belonged in the 'vulnerable' status. The study identifies the coral reefs of northern Australia and Southeast Asia as having the richest population of both sharks and rays. Notably, the authors found that sharks faced the most threat in the western Atlantic, while rays were most vulnerable across Asia and southeast Africa.

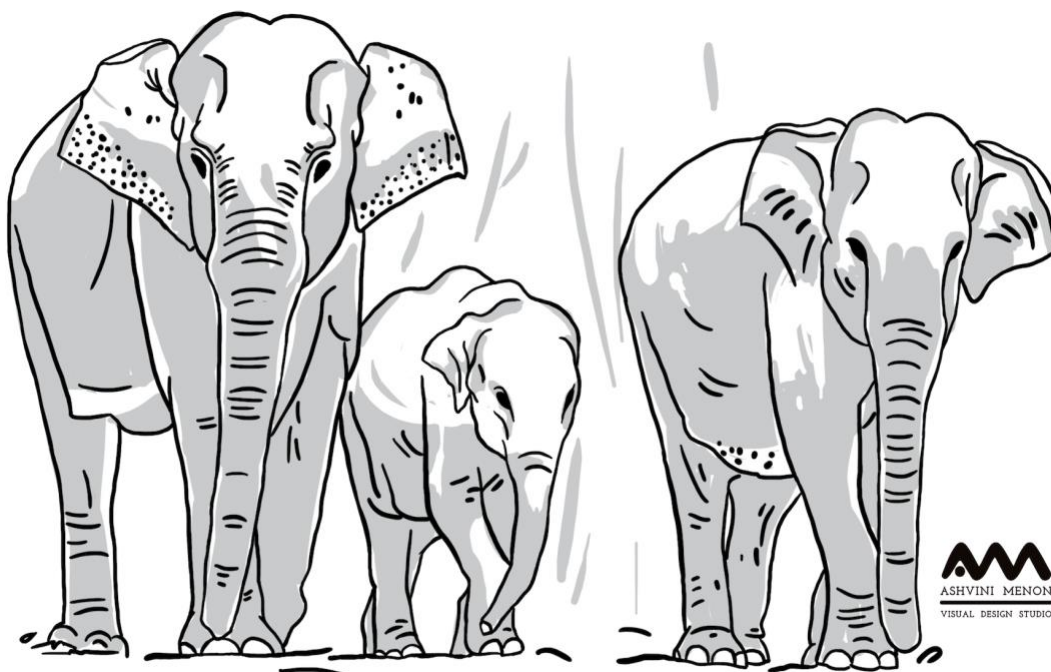
The extinction risk is highest for widely distributed large species, such as the

bull shark (*Carcharhinus leucas*) and reef manta ray (*Mobula alfredi*) both found in the waters of more than 60 countries. The risk is particularly pronounced in countries with higher fishing pressure and weaker governance, according to the study.

The authors have called for better control and management across all scales of fisheries to achieve population recovery, coupled with strong enforcement and effective marine protected areas at regional and global levels of government. In addition, improving

education and diversification of rural livelihoods in regions with overexploited reefs could help reduce fishing pressure on threatened species, suggested the authors.

Source: Basten Gokkon. 'More than half of reef sharks and rays threatened with extinction, study shows', [www.news.mongabay.com](http://www.news.mongabay.com), 17/01/2023.

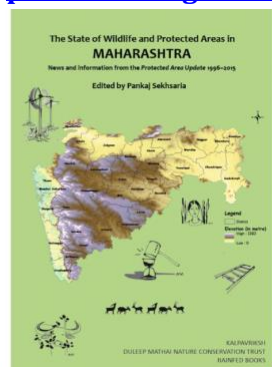
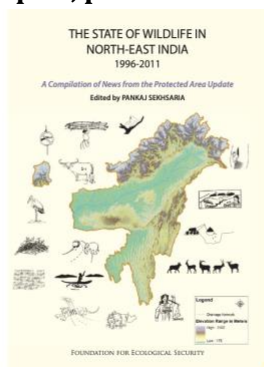
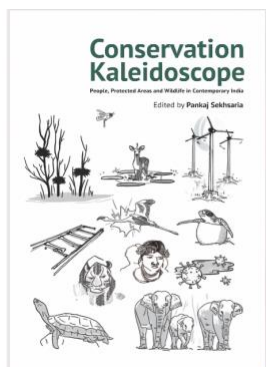


## Books from the *PA Update* stable

The set of 3 available for a special 25% discounted price of Rs. 1000

- 1) *Conservation Kaleidoscope: People, Protected Areas and Wildlife in Contemporary India*, 2021, 450 pp, 140 line drawings., Price: 650
- 2) *The State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra: News and Information from the Protected Area Update 1996-2015*, 2019. 250 pp, 100 line drawings, Price: Rs. 400
- 3) *The State of Wildlife in North-East India 1996-2011: A compilation of news from the Protected Area Update*, 2013, 330 pp, 100 line drawings, Price: Rs. 300

For more details and to order copies, please write to [psekhsharia@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsharia@gmail.com)



---

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

Edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria

Published by

Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust, Kalpavriksh and Rainfed Books,

### Contents:

#### - Editor's Note

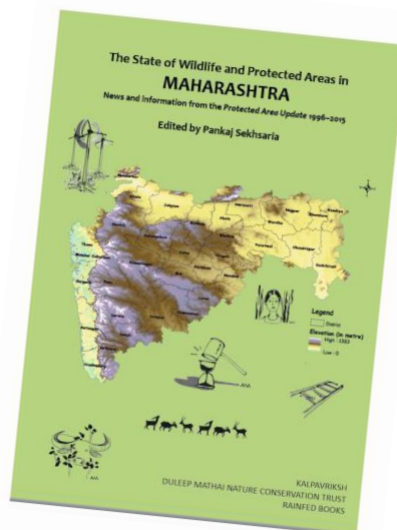
#### - Protected Areas in Maharashtra – a brief introduction

#### - Section 1: News and Information from protected areas

#### - Section 2: Analysis and Perspective:

- 1) Media reporting on the protected areas in Maharashtra
- A thematic analysis (Trupthi Narayan and Pankaj Sekhsaria);
- 2) Wildlife coverage in the Marathi Print Media – a practitioner's perspective (Reshma Jathar);
- 3) Dividing lines- tribal rights and tiger reserves (Shiba Desor);
- 4) Rocky plateaus: Little understood treasures of the Western Ghats (Aparna Watve) and
- 5) Community Conserved Areas in Maharashtra (Neema Pathak Broome with Sneha Gutgutia, Shruti Mokashi, Kavya Chowdhry, Sarosh Ali and Rupesh Patil)

ISBN: 9788192326931, Price Rs. 400; xi+235pp, 100 line drawings by Ashvini Menon





## IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE

### HIMACHAL PRADESH

#### **Baikal teal & Orange-bellied leafbird sighted in Renuka Ji WLS; first reports for HP**

The Baikal teal and Orange-bellied leafbird were sighted recently in the Renuka Ji Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), making this the first record of their sighting in Himachal Pradesh (HP). The birds were recorded during the avian monitoring exercise conducted on January 21 by the sanctuary's wildlife range team.

The Baikal teal breeds in the far-east on the edges of Tundra and has made its way through the Asian flyway to reach the Renuka Ji wetland while the characteristic habitat of Orange-bellied leafbird is in the North-East India.

Siberian ruby-throat, Green-tailed sunbird, Small niltava, Fire-tailed sunbird and Water rail are some of the other bird species spotted for first time in Renuka Ji Lake and the sanctuary in the recent past.

Source: Ambika Sharma. 'Two rare bird species sighted at Renuka Ji wildlife sanctuary', [www.tribuneindia.com](http://www.tribuneindia.com), 04/02/2023

### SOUTH ASIA

### BANGLADESH

#### **Khariakandi village joins network of community-based bird sanctuaries in Bangladesh**

Khariakandi village has successfully reversed the trend of hunting birds and become part of a network of some 100 community-based bird sanctuaries across Bangladesh. According to

the Bangladesh Bird Club, a third of these community-based bird sanctuaries are located in the western and northern districts of Rajshahi, Naogaon, Chapai Nawabganj, Dinajpur and Panchagarh, while the rest are scattered across wetlands throughout the country.

Khariakandi village is an ideal habitat for different types of birds. It had been attracting hunters for a long time, leading to a drastic fall in the number of birds. However, some villagers started to send back the hunters from the village and created awareness among the villagers to stop their entry into the village, said Aynal Haque, a member of the village's bird conservation committee. The initiative was formalized in 2017 through the influence of a local NGO, the Bangladesh Resources Council for Indigenous Knowledge (BARCIK). Later on, the local government authority declared the village a sanctuary for birds.

Bangladesh has witnessed an increasing rate of forest loss in recent decades, driven by demand for more land to grow food for an expanding population. That has led to a reduction in wildlife habitat, especially for birds. As per IUCN estimates, there were around 800,000 birds in Bangladesh in 1994; this fell to 233,000 in 2017, and then to 163,000 in 2018. However, no clear count of birds is available for different local species.

Source: Abu Siddique. 'Birds in Bangladesh find a new lease of life in community-run sanctuaries', [www.news.mongabay.com](http://www.news.mongabay.com), 13/01/2023.

### NEPAL

#### **Bird strike at Pokhara airport; conservationists fear more to come**

On January 16, 2023, the day after Yeti Airlines Flight 691 crashed near Pokhara International Airport in Nepal, authorities at

the newly inaugurated airport were alarmed by yet another incident. A plane plying the same Kathmandu-Pokhara route struck a steppe eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) upon approach to the airport. The plane didn't suffer major damage, but the bird was killed.

The incident happened as various international experts suggest a possible link between the Yeti flight 691 crash and the possibility of a bird strike. Pilots familiar with the route have highlighted the last-minute change of approach by the pilot of flight 691, suggesting it may have been prompted by a bird strike. Notably, the opening of the airport had been delayed several times in the past (*PA Update* Vol. XXVIII, No. 5), but following an announcement by Jeevan Ram Shrestha, minister for culture and aviation, flights started on January 1, 2023.

There was a landfill site close to the airport, which drew several threatened species of vultures. It was relocated only a few days before the launch of the new airport. However, birds already accustomed to feeding at the landfill site still keep coming to the area. Besides, there is a polluted river close by that attracts scavenging birds.

Conservationists are reported, in the recent past, to have expressed concerns over the large number of birds, especially vultures, that frequent the area near the Pokhara airport, and the risks posed to both aviation safety and wildlife conservation. A conservationist pointed out that with the relocation of the landfill site, municipal officials also can't collect waste regularly. This means people will throw more waste into the river, attracting more birds to the area, and increase the chance of collision with aircrafts. He suggested that the city now needs a comprehensive waste management plan to prevent vultures and other scavenger birds from hovering around the airport area.

The Pokhara Valley is home to 470 species of birds and all nine species of vultures found in South Asia.

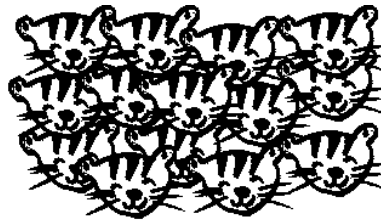
Source: Abhaya Raj Joshi. 'Bird strike warnings resurface amid probe into deadly Nepal plane crash', [www.news.mongabay.com](http://www.news.mongabay.com), 18/01/2023.





**A Ranthambhore Diary: Jan-Feb 2013**

From the facebook page of Dharmendra Khandal, Tiger Watch  
<http://www.facebook.com/dharm.khandal?ref=ts&fref=ts>



**17 Jan**

Kesra Mogya who was responsible for poaching of a number of tigers in and around Ranthambhore dies in a road accident.

**19 Jan**

An example of efficient working of the Forest Department's cattle compensation scheme: compensation of nearly Rs. 20000 paid within six hours of two oxen being killed by a tiger.

**27 Jan**

A tiger is reported to have moved from the Ranthambhore National Park towards the Kailadevi Wildlife Sanctuary in last 2 nights. Following him with some forest guards and ranger RS Kala reveals that he has instinctively used the shortest and safest route to get there. (A detailed account of this can be read at <http://tehelka.com/when-the-tiger-shows-us-the-passageways/>)

**31 Jan**

Government proposes the shifting of one more tiger from Ranthambhore to Sariska.

**4 Feb**

A team of village watchers (supported by facebook friends of Tiger Watch) and forest guards is following a tiger that is moving from the Ranthambhore National Park to the forests of Kuno in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh. The tiger has moved 80 kms already.

**7 Feb**

The Supreme Court passes directions that 5% of the total cost of 478.91 crores (an amount of nearly Rs, 24 crore) of the Chambal-Sawai Madhopur-Nadoti drinking water project on the Chambal River be deposited with the Rajasthan Forest Department for conservation of species such as the gharial and the Gangetic dolphin.

**8 Feb**

Ranthambhore is visited by 45 judges from Delhi.

**11 Feb**

Tiger Watch announces Conservation Leadership course 2013. Dates: 11 to 15 May 2013.

**19 Feb**

- A forest guard gets stabbed by poachers at a poaching site when he was trying to collect information related to poaching.

- Finalisation of the annual 'Fateh Singh Rathore Conservation Award'. Awards to be given on March 1

**1 Mar**

Fateh Singh Rathore Conservation Awards given away in Sawai Madhopur at the hands of chief guest, Dr. Asad Rahmani, Director, Bombay Natural History Society. The awardees include local villagers forest guards, and officials. A total of 26 awards were given.

## PERSPECTIVE

### **Our rapidly concretising coastline...**

There are mounting concerns about India's concerted push for a port-led development model because it is not just about putting a ship on water. A port we know is a land facility, constructed to transfer goods between water and land. It needs berths where vessels can moor, equipment for loading and unloading cargo, space for storing it and an entire railway, road and/or pipeline network to connect cargo transport to the hinterland. Depending on its location, it could also need continuous dredging to maintain a certain depth in the seabed.

This has multiple implications: port limits are declared, no fishing zones that affect traditional fishers are created, communities living by the coast are displaced because land is needed for the construction and the dredging activity destroys the biodiversity irreversibly. As a marine biologist told me once, "Dredging turns a seabed into a cemetery. How and why will the fish be here?"

We have seen this play out in a number of locations. In November 2022, Vizhinjam, in Kerala, erupted in protests for the umpteenth time. The clash was between the fishing community and the state over an upcoming port project led by Adani ports. The fishing community took the state and the port to court on grounds that the port is costing them their livelihoods, the erasure of their homes, and the erosion of their coastline. The court ordered the port to resume construction, and the state labelled the protests "anti-people" and "anti-development."

In January last year, protests erupted in Honnavar, a small, unassuming coastal region in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka, known for having a locally thriving dried fish economy. Three port projects are proposed to come up on the constantly shifting coastal sand spit, all commercial, all public-private

partnerships. Fishers and researchers are convinced they stand to destroy the rich fish breeding grounds, and ultimately, their lives.

The ongoing protests in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra's coastal district against a major refinery project are testament to the fact the development model of this country is not built for or by the will of the people. It is built for the progress of a select few.

Hyperlocal, site-specific studies are the need of the hour. These studies need to involve the lived experience and knowledge of traditional fishers. Journalism needs to cover coastal issues more deeply. Dwindling fish catch is not just a result of climate change or overfishing. It is a result of a systematic destruction of an ecosystem where fish thrive, especially in the near-shore regions.

- **Supriya Vohra** is an independent journalist based in Goa. She has recently started a fortnightly newsletter called Fishy Waters to give consistent attention to coastal issues in India. Subscribe here: [fishy-waters.ghost.io](mailto:fishy-waters.ghost.io)  
Email: [supriyavohra@gmail.com](mailto:supriyavohra@gmail.com)

For private circulation/Printed Matter/BookPost To

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