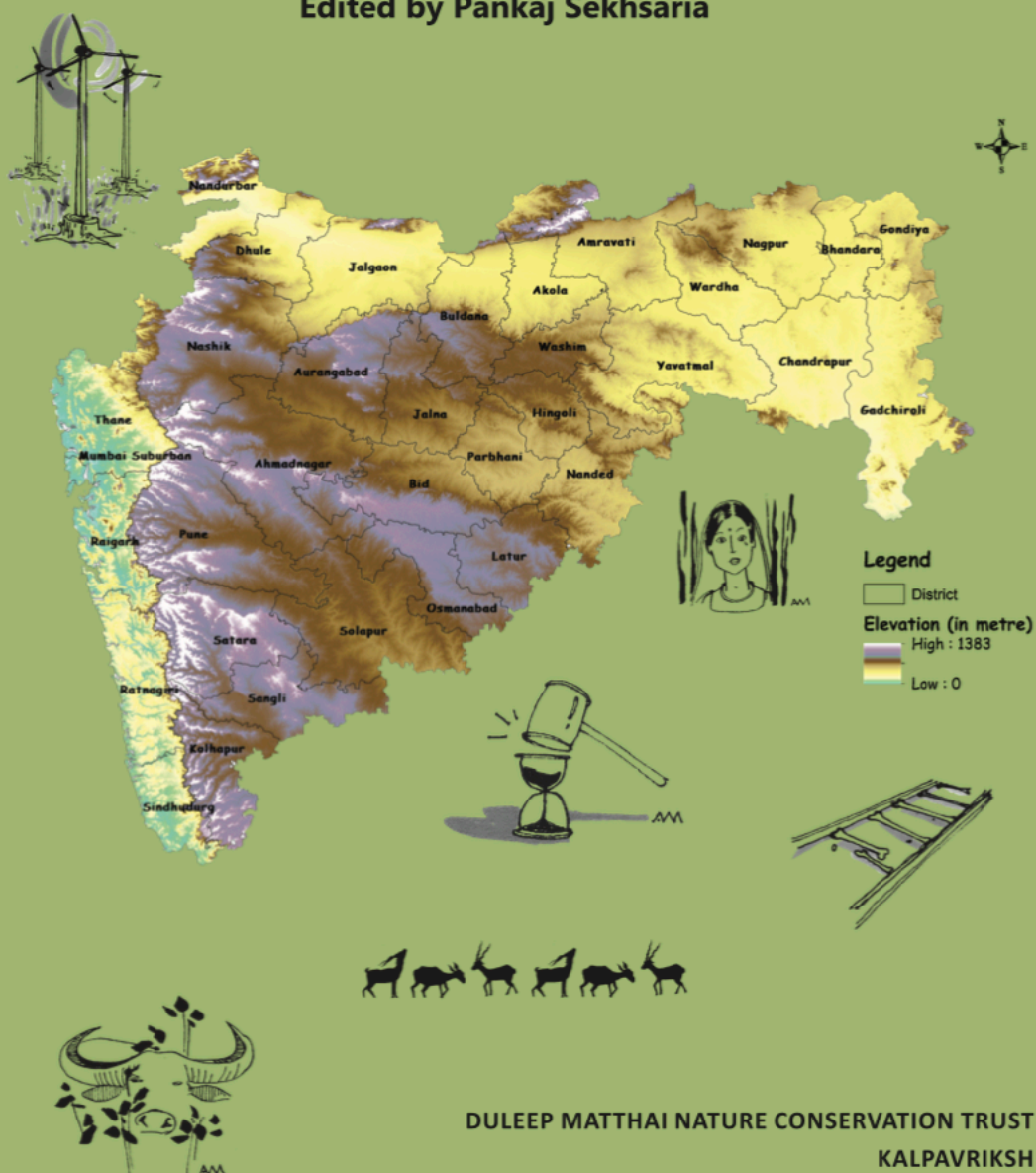


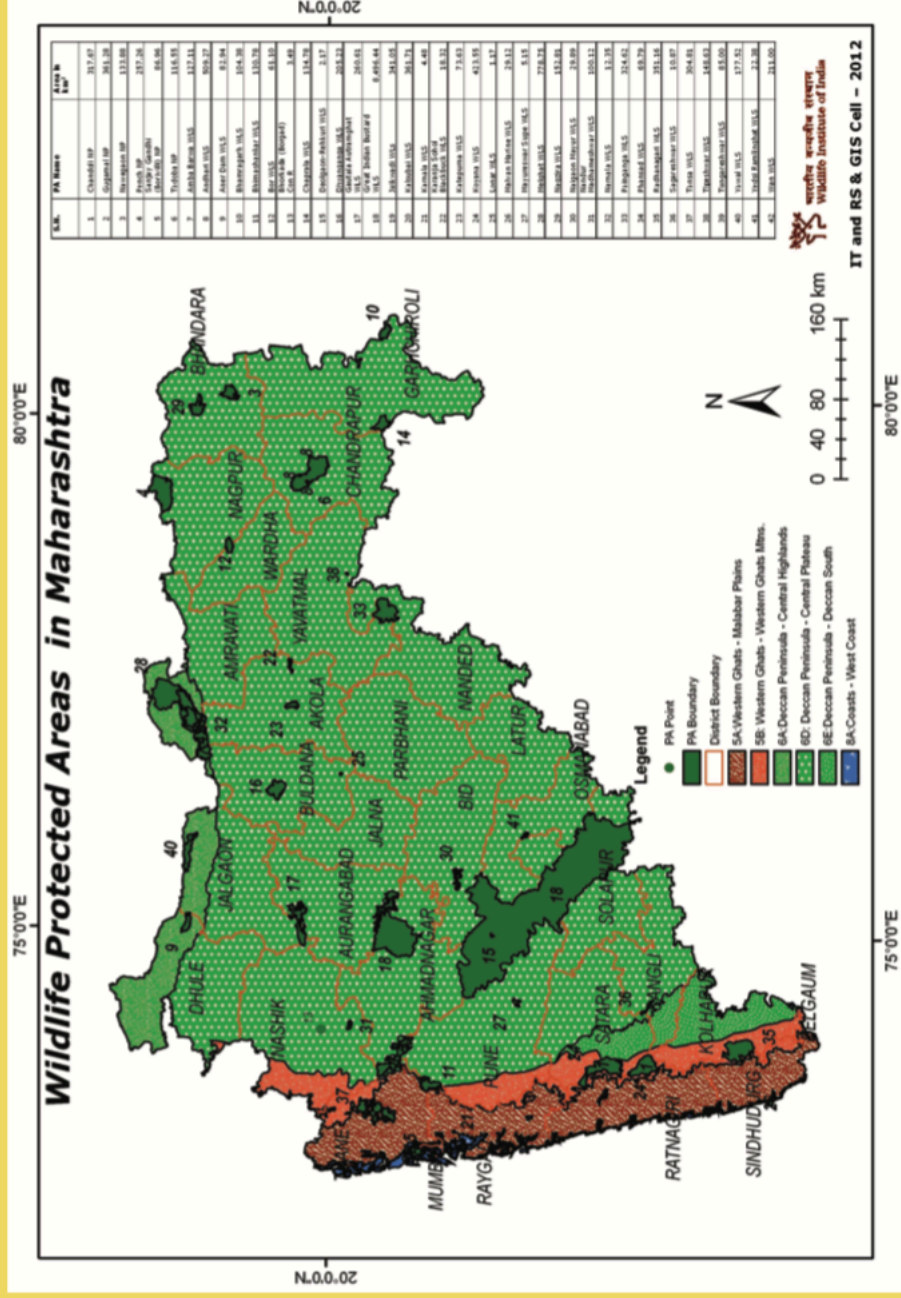
# The State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in MAHARASHTRA

News and Information from the *Protected Area Update 1996–2015*

Edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria



DULEEP MATTHAI NATURE CONSERVATION TRUST  
KALPAVRIKSH  
RAINFED BOOKS



Protected areas in Maharashtra, India.

Source: [http://wilenvs.nic.in/WriteReadData/UserFiles/Image/PAs\\_Map\\_Database/Images/maharashtra.jpg](http://wilenvs.nic.in/WriteReadData/UserFiles/Image/PAs_Map_Database/Images/maharashtra.jpg) (accessed on 21 February 2017).

# **State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra**

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1996–2015**

**Edited by**  
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**Published by**  
The Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust  
Kalpavriksh  
Rainfed Books

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Illustrations	:	Ashvini Menon
Page layout by	:	Compuprint, <i>Chennai</i>
Printed by	:	
ISBN	:	978-81-923269-3-1
Copyright	:	Copyright for articles in Section 2 is held by the respective authors. First printed in 2019.
Maps	:	Maps in the book are representational and not to scale

#### ACRONYMS USED

ACF	: Assistant Conservator of Forests	IUCN	: International Union for Conservation of Nature
BEAG	: Bombay Environmental Action Group	MoEF	: Ministry of Environment and Forests
BNHS	: Bombay Natural History Society	MoEFCC	: Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change
CF	: Conservator of Forests	NBWL	: National Board for Wildlife
CCF	: Chief Conservator of Forests	NH	: National Highway
CWLW	: Chief Wildlife Warden	NTCA	: National Tiger Conservation Authority
DCF	: Deputy Conservator of Forests	NP	: National Park
DFO	: Divisional Forest Officer	PA	: Protected Area
EIA	: Environment Impact Assessment	PCCF	: Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
EPA	: Environment Protection Act	RF	: Reserve Forest
ESZ	: Eco-Sensitive Zone	RFO	: Range Forest Officer
FCA	: Forest Conservation Act	RTI	: Right to Information
FD	: Forest Department	SC	: Supreme Court
FDCM	: Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra	SGNP	: Sanjay Gandhi National Park
FRA	: Forest Rights Act	TR	: Tiger Reserve
GIB	: Great Indian Bustard	WII	: Wildlife Institute of India
ha	: hectares	WLPA	: Wild Life Protection Act
HC	: High Court	WLS	: Wildlife Sanctuary
IFA	: Indian Forest Act	WTI	: Wildlife Trust of India
		WWF-India	: World Wide Fund for Nature – India



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# CONTENTS

<i>Editor's Note</i>	v
<i>Protected Areas in Maharashtra: A Brief Introduction</i>	vii

## SECTION 1: News and Information

Bhimashankar WLS	3
Bhorgad CR	8
Gautala Autramghat WLS	9
Kolamarka CR	9
Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary	10
Dnyanganga WLS	14
Jaikwadi Bird Sanctuary	15
Kalsubai-Harishchandragad WLS	15
Karnala WLS	16
Lonar WLS	17
Mahabaleshwar ESZ	18
Mahendri Reserve Forest	20
Mansingdeo WLS	20
Matheran ESZ	22
Muniya CR	25
Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary	26
Radhanagari WLS	27
Rehekuri Blackbuck Sanctuary	28
Sagareshwar WLS	29
Sanjay Gandhi NP	29
Sewri Wetlands	51
Tansa WLS	53

Thane Creek WLS	54
Tipeshwar WLS	56
Tungareshwar WLS	56
Umred-Karhandla WLS	58
Yawal WLS	59
<b>TIGER RESERVES AND TIGERS</b>	
Bor TR	61
Melghat TR	62
Nawegaon-Nagzira TR	76
Pench TR	82
Sahyadri TR	86
Tadoba-Andhari TR	93
General Tiger Related	113
<b>GENERAL NEWS FROM MAHARASHTRA</b>	120
<b>SECTION 2: Analysis and Perspective</b>	
1. Media Reporting on Protected Areas in Maharashtra: A Thematic Analysis <i>Trupti Narayan and Pankaj Sekhsaria</i>	153
2. Coverage of Conservation and Wildlife in the Marathi Print Media: A Practitioner's Perspective <i>Reshma Jathar</i>	173
3. Dividing Lines: Tribal Rights and Tiger Reserves <i>Shiba Desor</i>	177
4. Rocky Plateaus: Little Understood Treasures of the Western Ghats <i>Aparna Watve</i>	185
5. Community Conserved Areas in Maharashtra <i>Neema Pathak Broome with Sneha Gutgutia, Shruti Mokashi, Kavya Chowdhry, Sarosh Ali and Rupesh Patil</i>	194
<b>SECTION 3: Protected Area Update 140 (August 2019)</b>	205
Index	229

## EDITOR'S NOTE

For 24 years and still running, the *Protected Area Update* (PAU) has religiously presented a consolidated account of India's wildlife and protected area (PA) network. Published six times a year, it carries in a tightly edited format, news and information of what is happening in, to and around these national parks and sanctuaries that have been at the core of India's wildlife conservation strategy. It is based almost entirely on what the English media in India reports on wildlife and is, perhaps, the most comprehensive account of the developments in the PA system for over two decades now. With roughly 7,000 stories and news reports carried over this period it is evident that the PAU is a huge and valuable database. Thus far, however, the newsletter has appeared in a fixed, standardized format: it is published every two months, the reporting is organized state wise and the primary unit of the information is the protected area.

### Changing the structure

What would happen if the format were to be changed a bit? If this huge set of information was to be reorganized to get a picture from a different vantage point? What if the focus was not the entire PA network over a two-month period, but a single PA or even a state over a period of say 20 years? What if the focus was not a particular protected area but an ecosystem or a particular species? What might be made visible if the news was organized based on the source it came from—in this case a particular newspaper? The possibilities are as varied as they are exciting and this book is our second attempt at doing something on those lines.

*The State of Wildlife in North-east India 1996-2011: A compilation of news from the Protected Area Update*, published in 2013, was the first such attempt. We'd re-organized all

the information along the primary unit of a protected area for all the states of the NE, but with a timeline that changed from the two months of one issue of the PAU to an extended period of a decade and a half. In following one news item after another of each of the PAs we could see what happened month after month, year after year; what developments recurred at what periodicity; what were the issues that were important and what was done about them. It was in some senses an historical account of the place viewed through the lens of contemporary media reporting.

If the reader were to look up the editor's introductory note in that book, it will be evident that this note is virtually the same as that one. And that is because this second book that covers the state of Maharashtra follows a logic and structure similar to that of the first one. The individual PA is again the primary unit and the reporting over two decades of individual PAs is presented here chronologically.

### The relevance?

A key question is about the relevance of an exercise such as this. What does it indeed help achieve considering there are limitations that are evidently visible? For one, this is only an account through the lens of what the English media, mainly the English press, is presenting. Even here the reporting is representative and not complete on account of both lack of access to the full corpus of news published and also limited space of 24 pages that the PAU has available in any case. And finally there is the crucial and prominent gate-keeping function performed by the editorial team that puts the newsletter together.

The claim here, therefore, is not that this is a complete and comprehensive picture of what happened in the PAs of

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

Maharashtra. It is a representative account that offers on the one hand understandings on multiple axes of what indeed has been happening in these PAs over the years and on the other an understanding of the media, its pre-occupations and the choices that it makes. I won't explicate these further here because the first article in Section 2 of the book by Narayan and Sekhsaria goes into more details of precisely these points.

A compilation such as this can only be representative and indicative. Even if some useful insights are provided and this leads to further questions and ideas about the media-wildlife-conservation intersection, it would be a purpose well served.

### **The structure**

Section 1, which is the core of this book is made up of the nearly 300 news items on Maharashtra's PAs that the PAU has carried over the 20-year period from 1996–2015. Section 2 seeks to complement this bare-bones news-reporting by providing analysis and perspective on a range of issues, including many from outside of PAs, that are relevant for wildlife conservation and related policy. The first of these as mentioned already is Narayan and Sekhsaria's detailed thematic analysis of the reportage. In the second piece, Reshma Jathar, a Mumbai-based journalist who writes on wildlife issues for the Marathi press, presents a personalized account from a media practitioner's perspective. This is followed by Shiba Desor's detailed critique of the implementation of the Forest Rights Act in

two of Maharashtra's most prominent tiger reserves—Melghat and Tadoba-Andhari. Aparna Watve follows this up by taking us along into one of Maharashtra's least understood and studied ecosystems, while the last article by Pathak et. al. presents short vignettes of lesser-known community conserved areas (CCAs) in the state along with a brief policy prescription of what needs to be done and what can be done to recognize and conserve these CCAs.

In the very end is the full issue of the August 2019 issue of the *Protected Area Update*, the latest at the time of going to press, to give an idea of what this newsletter is all about and what coverage it gives to other issues and other parts of the country.

### **Conclusion**

There are number of people and organizations that need to be thanked for making this compilation possible. I would like, in particular, to thank CR Bijoy, Nitin Rai, Ghazala Shahabuddin, Ajit Menon and Swapna Prabhu for helping review and provide valuable input for the articles in Section 2.

The three organizations that have been most important for this book and indeed in the journey of the *PA Update* itself are Kalpavriksh that has been publishing the newsletter since 1994, the Foundation for Ecological Security and the Duleep Mathai Nature Conservation Trust, whose support has been crucial in ensuring its uninterrupted publication all these years.

**Pankaj Sekhsaria**

Editor, *Protected Area Update*

August 31, 2019

## PROTECTED AREAS IN MAHARASHTRA: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The main protected area categories in the Indian context are the national park (NP) and the wildlife sanctuary (WLS), which have been notified under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (WLPA) (WLPA, 1972). Categories of the conservation reserve and the community reserve were added to the list of PAs in 2002, while the tiger reserve (TR) which has existed as an administrative unit since 1973 (MoA, 1973), became a legally constituted category via amendments made to the WLPA in 2006. A statutory body called the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was also created via the same set of amendments in 2006 (NTCA, 2010; WLPA, 1972 (2006)).

A little less than 5% of the landmass of the country is included in the protected area network today with the specific numbers being the following—national parks: 103, wildlife sanctuaries: 537, conservation reserves: 67, and community reserves: 26 (Kutty & Kothari, 2001; WII, 2017). The number of tiger reserves, each one of which is constituted by multiple units that include NPs, WLSs, revenue and private lands, currently stands at 50 (Kutty & Kothari, 2001; WII, 2016a, 2016b). The other category that is relevant here is the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) or the eco-sensitive area (ESA) that is constituted under the provisions of the Environment Protection Act (EPA) 1986; the state of Maharashtra currently has four such ESZs (GoI, 1986; Kapoor, Kohli, & Menon, 2009).

Also important here, particularly in the context of more recent developments, is the Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act (FRA), 2006

(FRA, 2006), which has a significant bearing on the discourse, contestations, ownership and management of PAs. There are other legal frameworks such as the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) under the EPA and the Biodiversity Heritage Sites under the provisions of the Biological Diversity Act (BDA) 2002 that are also relevant for a larger discussion on conservation and their particular regimes of regulation and management.

It is important to mention here that there exists a large body of research, analysis, discussion and debate on a range of issues related to the protection of forests and different ecosystems, the relevance and impact of conservation laws to the goal of conservation itself and the impact these legal frames and the protected area network have on local human communities (cf. Bijoy, 2011; Desor, 2015; Dowie, 2009; Lasgorceix & Kothari, 2009; Pande, Kothari, & Singh, 1991; Pathak Broome & Desor, n.d.; Sekhsaria, 2007). This larger legal and policy context, its implications and related debates form a crucial backdrop to the reporting in the media, to the news and information that is carried in the Protected Area Update and to the discussion and analysis of PA-related news from the state of Maharashtra that is the focus of this book.

### Maharashtra

Maharashtra, one of India's three largest states in terms of area and population (Pande & Pathak, 2005b), has a large number (n=42) protected areas, second only to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands where the number stands at 105 (MFD, 2017)<sup>1</sup> (WII, 2017). These protected areas cover an area

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1 Other sources like the website of the Maharashtra Biodiversity Board suggest there are 46 PAs in the state

## State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra

of about 10,000 square kilometres, which is about 3.26% of the total area of the state. The largest of these is the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve at 1727 sq km (WII, 2016b) followed by the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary at 1222 sq km (Pinjarkar, 2011). The state also has six tiger reserves:

Bor, Melghat<sup>2</sup>, Nawegaon-Nagzira<sup>3</sup>, Pench<sup>4</sup>, Sahyadri<sup>5</sup> and the Tadoba-Andhari<sup>6</sup> TR (WII,

2016b). There is also the Malvan Marine Sanctuary and the more recently created PAs like the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary and another one in Mahul-Sewri (WII, 2015; “Wildlife board approval for MTHL project,” 2015). For a comprehensive account of the history, ecology and management challenges related to the protected areas in Maharashtra see Pande and Pathak (2005a, 2005b).

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2 Melghat TR is one of the first tiger reserves in India and was constituted in 1974. It was enlarged in 2007 by combining the Gugamal NP, Narnala WLS, Ambabarwa WLS, Wan WLS and the Melghat WLS (WII, 2016a). (<http://melghattiger.gov.in/documents/MTR.pdf>)

3 The Nawegaon-Nagzira TR was created in 2013 and includes the Nawegaon WLS, Nawegaon NP, Nagzira WLS, New Nagzira WLS and the Koka WLS (WII, 2016a). Stories from all these protected areas have been clubbed together under the Nawegaon-Nagzira TR.

4 Pench TR was created in 2007 and includes the Indira Priyadarshini Pench NP and Pench Mowgli Sanctuary.

5 The Sahyadri TR was created in 2012 and spreads over an area of 1165 sq km. The Chandoli WLS, Chandoli NP and Koyana WLS are now included in the Sahyadri TR and all stories from these PAs are included in this section.

6 Tadoba Andhari TR was created in 1955 and is spread over an area of 1727 sq km. It was comprised of the Andhari WLS and Tadoba NP (WII, 2016a).

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

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*State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

**PAs in Maharashtra<sup>†</sup>**

No	Name of PA	Year of Formation		Total Area (sq km)
		Initial notification	Final notification	Total
A. National Parks				
1	Chandoli NP	-	-	317.67
2	Gugamal NP	1987	2000	361.28
3	Nawegaon NP	1975		133.88
4	Pench NP	1975	2000	255.12
5	Sanjay Gandhi NP	-	1996	86.96
6	Tadoba NP	-	-	116.55
B. Wildlife Sanctuaries				
1	Ambabarwa WLS	1987/97	1997	127.11
2	Andhari WLS	1986	2001	509.27
3	Aner Dam WLS	1986	-	82.94
4	Bhamragarh WLS	1997	1997	104.38
5	Bhimashankar WLS	1985	-	130.78
6	Bor WLS	1970	-	61.10
7	Chaprala WLS	1986	-	134.78
8	Dhyanganga WLS	1997	1997	205.23
9	Gautala Autramghat WLS	1986	-	260.61
10	GIB Sanctuary	1985	-	1222.00
11	Jaikwadi WLS	1986	-	341.05
12	Kalsubai Harishchandragad WLS	1986	-	361.71
13	Karnala WLS	1968	2003	12.15
14	Karanja Sohal WLS	2000	2000	18.32
15	Katepurna WLS	1988	2002	73.69
16	Koyna WLS	1985		423.55
17	Lonar WLS	2000	2000	3.83
18	Malvan Marine WLS	1987		29.12
19	Mayureshwar Supe WLS	1997	1999	5.15
20	Melghat WLS	1985	2000	788.75
21	Nagzira WLS	1970	2001	152.81
22	Naigaon Peacock WLS	1994	1994	29.89
23	Nandur Madhameshwar WLS	1986	-	100.12

*State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

24	Narnala WLS	1997	1997	12.35
25	Painganga WLS	1971/86/ 2000		424.89
26	Phansad WLS	1986	-	69.79
27	Radhanagari WLS	1958/85	-	351.16
28	Rehekuri WLS	1980	-	2.17
29	Sagareshwar WLS	1985	-	10.87
30	Tansa WLS	1970/85	-	304.81
31	Tipeshwar WLS	1997	1997	148.63
32	Tungareshwar WLS	2003	-	85.70
33	Yawal WLS	1969	-	177.52
34	Yedsi Ramlinghat WLS	1997	-	22.38
35	Wan WLS	1997	1997	211.00
	Umred-Karhandla WLS	2012	-	
	Thane Creek	2015	-	
	Sewri Wetlands	2015	-	
<b>C. Conservation Reserves</b>				
	Bhorkhada CR	2008	-	3.49
	Kolamarka CR	2012	-	180.72

<sup>†</sup> **Sources:** <http://envfor.nic.in/public-information/protected-area-network>; [http://wiienviis.nic.in/Database/cr\\_8229.aspx](http://wiienviis.nic.in/Database/cr_8229.aspx) (accessed on 13 April 2018); Kutty and Kothari (2001); and Pande and Pathak (2005)

**Tiger Reserves (as on 3 Sept. 2014)\***

No	Name	Year of creation	Area (sq km)		
			Core Area/ CTH	Buffer	Total
1	Melghat	1973-74	1500.49	1268.03	2768.52
2	Tadoba-Andhari	1993-94	625.82	1101.77	1727.59
3	Pench	1998-99	257.26	483.96	741.22
4	Sahyadri	2009-10	600.12	565.45	1165.57
5	Nawegaon-Nagzira	2013	653.67	-	653.67
6	Bor	2014	138.12	-	138.12

\* Source: [http://projecttiger.nic.in/content/109\\_1\\_ListofTigerReservesCoreBufferAreas.aspx](http://projecttiger.nic.in/content/109_1_ListofTigerReservesCoreBufferAreas.aspx) (accessed on 13 April 2018)



# **SECTION 1**

## **News and Information from PAs**



## **BHIMASHANKAR WLS**

**1995**

### **Dialogue at Bhimashankar WLS**

Kusum Karnik of Ekjoot Sanghatan recently reported that there was a consultation between forest officials, local tribals, and NGOs on the various issues faced by the Bhimashankar WLS. She also says that they are continuing to push for a joint management system with the FD, local tribals, NGOs, and independent conservationists/activists being involved. She has promised to send a write-up on the latest situation; we will report it in the next issue.

Date: September 1995

**1998**

### **Drive to rid Bhimashankar of plastic refuse**

Nisargavedh, a Pune-based NGO, has launched a drive to rid the Bhimashankar WLS of its problem of plastic waste. The problem has reached serious proportions with many animals (both domestic and wild) reported to have died as result of consumption of plastic. The plastic comes largely from the pilgrim and tourist traffic to the temple complex in the sanctuary at the sacred spot of Gupt Bhima, believed to be the origin of the River Bhima. The source of the river is itself reported to be clogged with plastic.

In the first part of the campaign, volunteers of Nisargavedh spent three days in the forest collecting 25 sacks of plastic garbage, weighing nearly 100 kg. Following an awareness drive, shopkeepers in Bhimashankar have agreed to place rubbish bins in front of their shops and to request customers to discard plastic and other waste

only in the bins provided. A Pune-based industrialist has also supported the campaign and is producing publicity material to help Nisargavedh in sustaining its efforts.

Source: 'Nisargavedh Launches Drive to Rid Bhimashankar of Plastic Refuse', *The Times of India*, 30/06/1998.

**1999**

### **Plastic clean up drive in Bhimashankar**



Nisargavedh, a Pune based NGO, has launched a plastic clean up and awareness drive in the Bhimashankar WLS. The campaign which

was started in June 1998 has also been regularly followed up by the group. Recently, a 17 member team of the organization collected more than 15 gunny bags containing a total of 150 kgs of plastic and other non-biodegradables from the area of the stream near the main temple in the sanctuary.

Nisargavedh has also prepared a plan for the promotion of jute bags and their volunteers have been trying to convince the local shopkeepers of the benefits of these bags over those of plastic. They have also distributed about two dozen of these bags among the locals. They are presently looking for funds to extend the project.

Source: Aishwarya Mavinkurve. 'Diary of an environmentalist', *Indian Express*, 11/11/1999.

Aishwarya Mavinkurve. 'Follow-up at Bhimashankar', *Indian Express*, 16/12/1999.

## **2003**

### **Bund construction near Bhimashankar WLS stopped**

The Pune Wildlife Division has issued an order to stop work on the construction of a water bund in Kondhwal village on the periphery of the Bhimashankar WLS. Construction work on the Rs 3 crore bund with a water storage capacity of 1,707 TMC (thousand cubic metres) was started in 2001. Rs 33 lakhs have already been spent towards mining, earthwork, masonry and primary construction of the bund.

The FD has said that the work was stopped because permission had not been taken under forest regulations. Further, it is reported that at least six hectares of prime forestland will be submerged once the bund is ready. 2,000 medium sized trees and some paddy land belonging to the villagers will also be submerged. According to the Irrigation Department, however, the construction work is outside the boundary of the sanctuary and that work was stopped because of a paucity of funds.

The Ekjoot Sanghatan, which has been working in this area for nearly two decades, has tried to bring up the matter with the FD. They have expressed concerns that the farmers who will be losing land will not be fairly compensated.

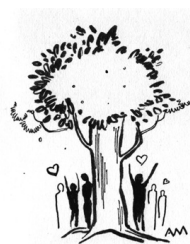
Source: Neil Pate. 'Construction work in Kondhwal bund halted', *The Times of India*, 22/01/2003.

## **2007**

### **Eco-festival in Bhimashankar WLS on occasion of Mahashivratri**

Keeping in view the serious pressures exerted on the forests of the Bhimashankar WLS on the occasion of Mahashivratri, the

Bhimashankar Eco-Festival was organized from February 15 to 17, 2007, by the FD in association with voluntary organizations like Kalpavriksh, the Tekdi Group, Ghodegaon Nisarg Group and the Khed Nisarg Seva Group.



The activities conducted as part of the initiative included cleaning up of the plastic garbage from around the Bhimashankar temple, the Bhimashankar sacred grove and the source of River Bhima that originates in these

forests; a wildlife photography exhibition by eminent photographers; film shows, street plays and puppet shows; patrolling of the sensitive pockets in the sanctuary; and an awareness drive about wildlife conservation and the hazards of plastic.

Source: Saili Palande, C/o Kalpavriksh

## **2009**

### **Rise in giant squirrel population in Bhimashankar WLS**

A census conducted by the FD in the Bhimashankar WLS in June has counted 1,297 giant squirrels (*Ratufa indica elphinstoni*), also known as Shekaroo. This is a significant increase from the 1,180 squirrels reported last year.

The FD employed indirect methods of calculating the number that primarily included the counting of nests built just before the setting in of the monsoon. The giant squirrel is known to build six to eight nests around the area it has marked.

The giant squirrel is also the state animal of Maharashtra.

Source: Umesh Isalkar. 'Giant squirrels at home in Bhimashankar, count up', Times News Network, 18/07/2009.



## **Opposition to religious gathering within Bhimashankar WLS**

Environmental activists have expressed concern and opposition over the permission granted to a religious function held in the Bhimashankar WLS towards the end of October. The PCCF (Wildlife) Maharashtra had permitted the Delhi-based Nandakishor Charitable Trust to organize a Ram Katha Pravachan by Baba Morari Bapu from 23rd Oct to 1st Nov inside the sanctuary. The permission for a gathering of not more than 400 people was given on the terms that there would be no violation of the provisions of the WLSA and that the pravachan would include information and awareness about the environment and forests. It was further stipulated that during the gathering, the work of controlling the crowd, cleaning and garbage disposal will be done by the organizer's volunteers under inspection of the FD.

The program was held at Bombay Point inside the sanctuary and tents for accommodation were put up close to Mhatarbachi Wadi. Initial estimates suggested that at least 2,500 people attended the program, which was much less than the expected figure of 10,000 but much higher than the officially permitted number. A large portion of the crowd was said to be visitors from places that included Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Mumbai and Delhi.

NGOs that voiced their concern included Ekjoot Sanghatan and Kalpavriksh. It was pointed out that the authorities have not been able to deal with the problems of sanitation, drinking water, firewood collection and disturbance to wildlife that is caused every year because of the religious pilgrimages and that permission for this pravachan should not have been given. It was also pointed out while the locals

have been denied permission for various developmental activities such as digging for electric poles and repairing village roads, the permission for the function gives the impression that any activity, as long as it is not for the local people, is fine within the protected area.

Source: Swati Shinde. 'Greens object to plans to hold religious function at Bhimashankar', *The Times of India*, 23/10/2009.

## **2010**

### **Proposal to remove temple area from Bhimashankar WLS rejected**

The Central Committee on Reconciliation of Boundaries of Protected Areas, headed by the Additional Director General (Forests), MB Lal, has rejected a proposal to remove the Jyotirlinga temple area from the Bhimashankar WLS. The argument for the proposal was based on the fact that the temple attracts thousands of devotees on Mahashivratri and Tripuri Pournima days and people were complaining of lack of facilities due to strict forest and wildlife laws.

The committee was of the opinion that development needs could be taken care of without making any changes to the boundary of the sanctuary.

Source: 'Panel nod for reducing area of bustard home, with rider', [www.expressindia.com](http://www.expressindia.com), 16/01/2010.

### **Students ask for plastic ban within Bhimashankar WLS**

Children of two ashramshalas (residential schools) from Terungun and Tokawade villages on the periphery of the Bhimashankar WLS appealed to authorities recently to strictly enforce the ban on use of plastic within the sanctuary.

A petition with their demands was also sent to the District Collector and other concerned authorities. The children pointed out that indiscriminate disposal of plastic was polluting 'their' forest and river and that the plastic was also a big threat to endangered wildlife like the giant squirrel and sambar. They demanded that shopkeepers and vendors at the temple not be allowed to give these carry bags to visitors and that there be a law banning entry of plastic carry bags into the sanctuary.

The appeal was made in the context of the festival of Mahashivratri in the month of February when thousands of pilgrims visit the temple inside the sanctuary and leave behind tons of plastic and other waste. A number of organizations have tried, albeit unsuccessfully, in the past to deal with the problem.

The students who made the appeal are part of an ongoing environment education program being conducted jointly by Kalpavriksh and the Maharashtra Arogya Mandal (MAM). A government representative is reported to have subsequently issued a statement saying that the ban would be strictly implemented but reports from the field indicated that there has been no control on the use of plastic bags.



Source: Chaitrali Chandorkar. 'Bhimashankar Abhayaranyala Vachva', *Sakal*, 9/02/2010.

Dipannita Das. 'Implement ban on plastic bags in Bhimashankar, say students', *The Times of India*, 09/02/2010.

'Mahashivratisathi Bhimashankarla prashasan saji', *Sakal*, 12/02/2010.

## **Students renew demand for plastic ban in Bhimashankar WLS**

Students from the residential school at Tokawade on the periphery of the Bhimashankar WLS have written a second letter to the authorities asking for a ban on plastic within the sanctuary. The letter was a follow up to a similar letter sent to the District Collector and other concerned authorities in early February on the occasion of Mahashivratri by students of the school in Tokawade and also Terungun. The students had suggested then that shopkeepers selling flowers and other items should not use plastic and neither should pilgrims visiting the temple in the sanctuary.

The students have written the letter because no action was taken in response to their first request. It also coincides with the 'Shravan' month, which sees a large influx of pilgrims to the forest and the temple. The students have threatened to carry out a protest march if their demands are not implemented.

The Conservator Forests (WL) has acknowledged receiving the letter and said that he was figuring out the provisions under which the ban could be implemented.

Source: Dipannita Das. 'Students from school near Bhimashankar seek ban on plastic bags; write to Collector', *The Times of India*, 18/09/2010.

## **Process for CWH declaration started in Bhimashankar WLS**

The process for the declaration of a critical wildlife habitat (CWH) was initiated recently in the Bhimashankar WLS. The ACF, RFO, and foresters spent a week in the month of December visiting all the nine villages in the sanctuary and reading out the CWH proposal to them. Seven of the nine villages are said to have rejected the CWH idea.

In the village of Yelavali, the community put forward a list of 11 demands to the forest officers. These included that the:

1. FD accept the idea/proposal for the joint management of their community forestry resource and promise to help in patrolling the forests and controlling illegal activities on a regular basis.
2. FD help with water source development and not creating objections to small acts such as bringing a tractor to the village for agriculture and construction of a school building.
3. FD come with them to neighbouring villages for a meeting and discussion that they are involved in forest protection and have support from the FD. (Villagers have claimed that there is a very high level of hunting and timber smuggling by some people from the surrounding villages which is impacting their own natural resource availability.)
4. FD should pay more attention to parts other than the sacred grove and erect check posts and signposts on all kaccha roads to the sanctuary.

Of the nine villages in the sanctuary, Yelavali was the only one which has agreed to give its consent for the CWH proposal provided their conditions are accepted.

The ACF promised the villagers that they would be given badges from the FD if they helped to protect the forests. It was also pointed out that the proposal would be sent to the higher authorities and there will be further discussions with the villagers. They also asked them to give the name of one villager who will go to all meetings related to the CWH, the district level committee meetings and represent the village.

The ACF also agreed to the formation of a forest protection committee in the village and to the demand of the villagers that he

will send a forest official every 15 days to go on a patrol in the forest with them.

Source: Neema Pathak Broome and Pradeep Chavan, C/o Kalpavriksh

## **2013**

### **Bhimashankar WLS and the FRA – An update**

**2009:** Kalpavriksh initiates a program related to the FRA in and with the village of Yelavali located along the southern boundary of the sanctuary. The area was experiencing a number of unregulated resource harvesting activities, including hunting. As a part of the initiative Yelavali villagers have taken up several activities which include restricting hunters, cultivation of medicinal plants, controlling goat numbers in the village and taking steps towards achieving long term management and sustainable use of resources. In turn, a more aware and confident community was able to resist continuous harassment from the field based forest staff.

**February 2011:** Yelavali becomes the first village in Khed taluka of Pune district to file for community forest rights (CFRs) in the sanctuary under the FRA. Apart from Kalpavriksh, Shashwat and Maharashtra Arogya Mandal are the organizations that have been facilitating the process of filing CFR claims in and around the sanctuary. Claims for CFRs have now been filed by Yelavali, Ahupe, Pimpri, Patan, Pimplegane and Sakhari villages. No responses regarding these claims have been received from the concerned government departments till date.

**January 2012:** Maharashtra government brought out a revised GR on joint forest management (JFM) and eco-development. Yelavali villagers decided, after discussions, that they would implement the scheme in their village for generating livelihoods through ecologically sensitive activities even

as they wait for their community rights claims to be granted. The village gram sabha prepared a detailed plan of action for utilizing Rs 10,00,000 that they would receive under the scheme.

Apart from providing each household with an energy saving chullah, a low bio-mass water boiler and solar street lamps, the village also decided to utilize the funds for construction of an eco-lodge and camping site within their village to support their income through low impact eco-tourism. The village is now running the initiative through a locally devised system.

**February 2013:** Civil society groups and village level activists organized a meeting to push for implementation of CFRs. They demanded taluka level meetings for filing CFRs in a campaign mode, adding that this should be organized by the tribal welfare department. They also demanded that the CFR claims already filed by the villagers in and around the sanctuary area be urgently cleared.

A proposal was also mooted in February by the state government for the declaration of an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) comprising an area within a 2 km radius around the sanctuary. A few gram sabhas recently submitted resolutions to the forest department rejecting the ESA, citing lack of information and their participation as reasons for the same.

Contact: Neema Pathak Broome and Pradeep Chavan, C/o Kalpavriksh.

### **Leopard presence detected at Bhimashankar WLS; increase in giant squirrel population**



The leopard has made a comeback in Bhimashankar WLS after three years. Although the FD is yet to sight the animal, officials have collected evidence that includes pugmarks and scat. The finds were made during the annual animal census held from May 14 to June 6. 18 units, each consisting of one forest official, two assistants and three volunteers, equipped with a GPS-enabled unit conducted the count.

The ACF (Wildlife) also said that the FD had been collecting such evidence for three months as part of the animal census preparation. Pugmarks had been found in various parts of the sanctuary while droppings were also found and tested. Two goats were recently killed in a nearby village and the killing pattern appears to be like that of a leopard. Four camera traps have been installed strategically inside the sanctuary and the FD is hoping to get a glimpse of the leopard.

Last year officials had counted at least 900 giant squirrel nests. This year, preliminary results suggest that the number may have doubled.

Source: Swati Shinde Gole. 'Pugmarks, scat indicate leopard presence in Bhimashankar', *The Times of India*, 11/06/2013.

## **BHORGAD CR**

### **2008**

### **Bhorkada (Bhorgad) CR in Nashik District**

The Maharashtra government recently announced the creation of the Bhorkada (Bhorgad) Conservation Reserve in the RF Compartment 622 of the Dindori Forest Range of the East Nashik Forest Division. The reserve that was created via notification No WLP 10-07/CR 255/F-1, dated 5th March 2008, covers an area of 3.49 sq km

and will be under the territorial wing of the Nashik Forest Division.

Mr. B. Raha, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Nashik District, and Mr. VK Mohan, Conservator Forests, played a key role in the process of the creation of the reserve.

Contact: B Raha - Nashik Nature Conservation, Society.

## **GAUTALA AUTRAMGHAT WLS**

**2014**

### **Camera traps for wildlife in Gautala Autramghat WLS; sanctuary also gearing up to receive tourists**

A proposal seeking 12 camera traps for the Gautala Autramghat WLS has been sent to the forest division in Nashik. Officials said they were expecting to receive the equipment during the wildlife census scheduled for May.

The FD has also initiated a number of activities to boost tourism in the sanctuary while at the same time studying the impact of human presence on wildlife. A four-member team of experts from the Cohort for Bio-Research, Jalgaon, recently started a study of the impact of traffic and noise disturbances that have been created by NH-211 here. The team also plans to gauge the impact on wildlife, possible movement of animals and connection between major water and food resources. The team would submit its report in the next couple of months.

An information centre for the sanctuary and the species found here has been established at Hivarkheda. Signboards have been erected in different places indicating directions to tourist spots and 12 pagoda like structures have been constructed for resting and sight-seeing purposes. Adequate arrangements have also been made in the

form of nakas and watchtowers, with one guard and two forest workers being stationed there, especially during the night. The historical sites of Gautam Rishi temple and Sita Nani are being developed to attract visitors and affordable residential arrangements have been made. The rooms can be booked through the wildlife office located in Aurangabad. 10 locals have also been trained as guides under the eco-development scheme of the joint forest management committee.

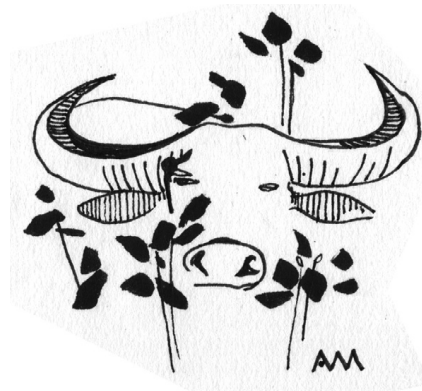
A number of activities directed towards better management, protection and conservation of wildlife have also been initiated. Smokeless stoves and solar cookers have been provided to four villages—Hivarkheda, Bildari, Haraswadi and Junona—in the vicinity of the sanctuary and street lights operating on solar energy have been installed. Fire-fighting equipment has also been procured to tackle wild fires though no fires have been reported in the last two years.

Source: Himanshu Nitnaware. 'Gautala sanctuary to get cameras for tracking animals', *The Times of India*, 10/04/2014.

## **KOLAMARKA CR**

**2015**

### **Wild water buffalo photographed in the Kolamarka CR**



## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

The Maharashtra FD has managed to spot and photograph a herd of wild water buffaloes in the Kolamarka Conservation Reserve, laying to rest the speculation that only one female was left in the entire central Indian landscape. At least four females were spotted in the herd.

The monitoring team has confirmed the existence of at least two herds of nine and six members each and an individual bull living separately. The finding is an outcome of a project to document the diversity of the area that was declared a conservation reserve in 2013. The team was led by Range Forest Officer (RFO) Atul Deokar and included FD ground staff and a small group of local villagers. Nine volunteers were selected to form a monitoring team and they were given geo-tagged cameras to get the exact GPS locations. The villagers also earned up to Rs 7,500 per month in wages in the exercise.

Over 65 species of butterflies, 114 species of birds, 1,200 nests of the giant squirrel, 33 types of grasses, over 180 individual white-backed and long-billed vultures and 19 different reptiles were also documented. Additionally, the survey recorded the presence of leopards, pangolins, crocodiles, wild boars, spotted deer, sloth bear, mouse deer, langurs and red-faced macaques. At least four butterflies—common banded peacock, common palm fly, monkey puzzle and common evening brown—were recorded for the first time in Vidarbha. No tiger, however, was cited despite the proximity of the Indravati Tiger Reserve in neighbouring Chhattisgarh. The findings have been compiled in a book named ‘Treasure of Kolamarka’. A separate study is now being undertaken to register plant biodiversity.

There are four villages—Chintarev, Chitveli, Tonder and Bangaram Petha—that are located inside the reserve; and four—Nayangodam, Asha, Damrancha and Mudumudgu—that are situated on the fringes. The FD has formed eco-development committees in the villages and

carried out some developmental activities. The villages here have domesticated buffaloes but chances of these breeding with the wild variety are believed to be negligible since the wild buffaloes never come close to these villages. However, the FD has chalked out a cattle replacement plan where the buffaloes would be taken off and villagers would be provided with cows and bullocks. The FD has also formed chain-link fenced “vulture restaurants” away from villages where villagers would be paid Rs 250 for each dead animal they would provide for the vultures to feed upon.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. ‘Young forest officer leads first wildlife survey in ‘liberated’ Naxal heartland’, *The Indian Express*, 03/08/2015.

## **GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD (GIB) SANCTUARY**

**2000**

### **Expansion of GIB Sanctuary opposed**

The move of the FD to increase the area of the GIB Sanctuary has been strongly opposed by local farmers in the region. The FD had issued a notification that only non-cultivable land linking up various areas that support the Great Indian bustard (GIB) were to be acquired and that too with the consent of the respective owners.

There have been reports that some land identification proceedings were initiated by the Revenue Department and the FD for the purpose of inclusion in the sanctuary. Villagers were not informed about this and a group of farmers met the District Collector of Solapur seeking a clarification. He professed ignorance of the developments but agreed to stay the land acquisition proceedings if there were any.

Recent reports suggest that the numbers of the GIB found in Nannaj have fallen further. According to the latest count it now stands at 39.

Source: Rajneesh Joshi. 'Farmers cry foul over bid to expand Nannaj bird Sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 14/12/2000.

Rajneesh Joshi. 'Great Indian Bustard numbers shrink further', *The Times of India*, 03/01/2001.

## 2005

### GIB census held



A census of the Great Indian bustard was undertaken by the FD on July 17 across all potential habitats of the bird in the state. A pre-census preparation workshop was conducted for volunteers and FD staff to equip them with information necessary for the census. They were provided information about the bird, its habits and were also instructed on mapping techniques and filling up the proforma. Nearly 70 people attended this workshop that was held at Nanaj in the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary in Solapur district.

The result of the census is not yet available.

Source: 'Stage set for headcount of Great Indian Bustard', *Indian Express*, 14/07/2005.

## 2007

### Lesser florican spotted in GIB Sanctuary after 1879

A lesser florican was seen in the grasslands of the GIB Sanctuary in Solapur district for

the first time since 1879. The sub-adult bird was rescued by a young shepherd, Bandu Bhise, as it was being chased by dogs. He took the bird to his school teacher who informed local foresters. The shepherd boy was honoured by the FD with a citation.

The incident is being considered an important positive outcome of the recent initiative of the FD here to educate people in the region of grassland birds like the GIB.

Source: 'Endangered bird spotted', *Maharashtra Herald*, 2007.

## 2008

### Proposal to reduce GIB Sanctuary to 350 sq km

The GIB Sanctuary that is presently spread over 8,500 sq km across the districts of Solapur and Ahmednagar is likely to be drastically reduced to an area of about 350 sq km. The Maharashtra FD has recently submitted a proposal to this effect to the SC.

The demand for the reduction in the size of the sanctuary has been around for a long time and there has been a broad agreement on this as well. The present sanctuary includes large inhabited areas and many big towns. Local people have been insisting on the size reduction, and recently the state forest minister too added his voice to the demand.

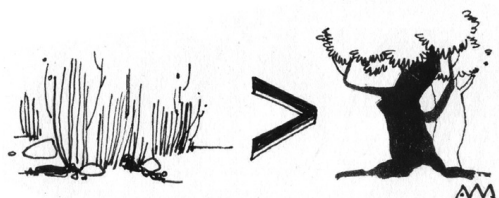
An expert panel headed by Mr. VB Savarkar, former Director of the WII, has however insisted that the state should retain at least 1,222 sq km area of the sanctuary to protect the rare bird.

Source: 'Maha govt. to approach SC for reducing bird sanctuary area', *Economic Times*, 06/07/2008.



## **2009**

### **Trees over 50 hectares to be cut in the GIB Sanctuary**



Trees over an area of 50 hectares are to be cut down in the GIB Sanctuary keeping in mind the needs of the endangered bird. The FD, which has actively supported afforestation since 1975, has decided to clear the area and allow for the development of grasslands, the natural habitat of the GIB.

Special permission for the same was taken from the SC in January 2008. Conservation organizations like the BNHS have welcomed this step by the FD.

Source: Chandran Iyer, 'Trees will be cut to save bustards', *Mid Day*, 02/10/2009.

## **2010**

### **GIB Sanctuary area down by 7,000 sq km**

The Central Committee on Reconciliation of Boundaries of Protected Areas has accepted the demand for reduction of the nearly 8,500-sq km GIB Sanctuary spread over the Solapur and Ahmednagar districts to 1,223 sq km, provided the Maharashtra government compensates for it by increasing the area of PAs elsewhere. The state had earlier proposed the reduction of the sanctuary to 347 sq km, but the committee had rejected it. The committee is headed by the Additional Director General (Forests), MB Lal.

According to the Maharashtra PCCF-Wildlife, the condition was put because the

removal of nearly 7,000 sq km would result in halving the protected area coverage in the state. The committee also insisted that forest areas presently controlled by the revenue department be handed over to the FD.

People in Nannaj and other areas in the two districts as also the adjoining Nashik have been demanding for a long time that the GIB Sanctuary be reduced as it had put considerable restrictions on their activities. Developmental work could not be taken up and agriculture was also not being allowed.

Source: 'Panel nod for reducing area of bustard home, with rider, [www.expressindia.com](http://www.expressindia.com), 16/01/2010.

### **Proposal for six new PAs in state**

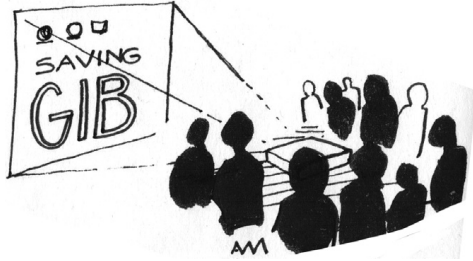
Six new PAs have been proposed in Maharashtra in lieu of the reduction of the area of the GIB Sanctuary from about 8,500 sq km to 1,223 sq km. The decision to reduce the area was taken recently by the standing committee of the NBWL.

The Central Committee on Reconciliation of Boundaries of Protected Areas had recommended that the area of the GIB Sanctuary could be reduced subject on the condition that other suitable areas in the state would be considered for inclusion in the protected area network. These include Mansingdeo (182.29 sq km), Nagpur district; Rajmachi (122.96 sq km), Thane, Pune and Alibag districts; Sudhagarh Tamhini (220.18 sq km) in the Western Ghats; Tipagarh (52.4 sq km), Gadchiroli district; Kopela (90.93 sq km), Gadchiroli district and Isapur (121.55 sq km), Yawatmal district.

Source: 'Maharashtra to loose PA cover by half in Golden Jubilee year', Press Release by the Satpuda Foundation, 30/04/2010.

**2011**

### **Joint meeting to discuss conservation of GIB Sanctuary**



The **Grasslands Indian Bustards (GIB)** Foundation conducted a two-day meeting in March involving villagers, the FD staff and NGO representatives to discuss conservation of the GIB Sanctuary in Solapur district.

The first day event was a community level meeting involving villagers from Nannaj, Mardi, Akolekati and Karamba, all of which are located around the areas of the sanctuary where bustards are still seen. Nearly 600 villagers attended and expressed their views related to the hardships they face and also on the involvement of the community in bustard conservation.

The second day event was a workshop on ecology and conservation of the bustard that was aimed at updating the knowledge of FD staff and to involve people related to acquisition of 434 ha of land and those living around areas where the birds are found.

The topics discussed during the workshop included prevention of grassland fires, impact of grazing and prevention of overgrazing, organic farming, community benefits, traditional farming, permission for the construction of the Shirapur Canal, crop damage by blackbucks, cattle attacks by wolves and related compensation; and rationalization of the sanctuary boundary.

Source: "Community Involvement in Bustard Conservation" - A Report

on Community Meeting and Workshop held at Bustard Sanctuary, Maharashtra (IBA). GIB Foundation.

### **SC clears denotification of GIB Sanctuary**

The SC recently cleared the long pending denotification of the GIB Sanctuary at Nannaj in Solapur district. From 8,496 sq km earlier, the sanctuary will now be restricted to 1,222 sq km. The reduction in the area of the sanctuary is based on the recommendations of the Committee on Rationalization of Boundaries of National Parks and Sanctuaries that had been set up by the MoEF.

The matter had been pending in the court since 2006. On October 20, 2008, the SC had directed the committee to recommend the area of the GIB sanctuary. Accordingly, a committee headed by VB Sawarkar, former Director, WII, recommended denotification of two sanctuaries in Maharashtra on the precondition of declaring some new sanctuaries.

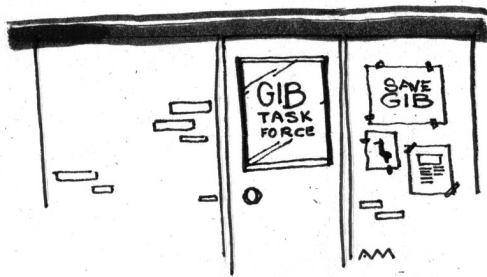
The new sanctuaries that were to be declared included Mansingdeo (Nagpur) 183 sq km, Rajmachi (Thane, Pune, Alibaug) 122.96 sq km, Sudhagarh-Tamhini 220.18 sq km, Tipagarh (Gadchiroli) 52.4 sq km, Kopela-Koramarka (Gadchiroli) 90.93 sq km, and Isapur Bird Sanctuary (Yavatmal) 121.55 sq km. Of these, only Mansingdeo has been declared as a sanctuary thus far.

The decrease in the area of the GIB Sanctuary will bring the protected area network in the state from 4.97% to 2.6% of the total area of the state i.e. from 15,332 sq km to 8,059 sq km—a sharp drop of 60.55%. Conservationists working in the region have welcomed the decision. They have pointed out that such a large sanctuary was a mistake and the strict enforcement

of wildlife laws had turned public opinion against the birds and had harmed the cause of conservation in the process.

Source: 'SC clears denotification of GIB sanctuary', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 24/07/2011.

### **Maharashtra to set up task force for bustard conservation**



The Maharashtra government has decided to set up a task force under the chairmanship of State Forest Minister, Patangrao Kadam, for the conservation of the GIB. The task force will be a multidisciplinary team that will include NGOs and experts from Vidarbha, Pune and Nashik, academicians and officers from the FD.

There are believed to be 30-35 GIBs in the state and can be found in Warora (Chandrapur district) and in the Solapur, Ahmednagar and Nashik districts.

Source: 'Maharashtra to set up taskforce for Indian Bustard', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 18/08/2011.

### **2013**

#### **Shirapur Lift Irrigation Scheme to affect 92 hectares of the GIB Sanctuary**

The proposed Shirapur Lift Irrigation Scheme, if implemented, is likely to affect nearly 92 hectares of land in the GIB Sanctuary. The proposal had been listed for discussion in the Expert Appraisal

Committee (EAC) meeting of the MoEF in the 1st week of February.

In a letter to the EAC written in the month of January, River Basin Friends, Mumbai, the Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, the South Asia Network for Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP) and the National Alliance for People's Movements pointed out that the said scheme was unworthy of being considered by the EAC as it was hydrologically, economically and ecologically unviable.

The reasons highlighted include the general shortage of water in the region which would not allow for the scheme to become operational; the fact that the scheme will directly impact the bustard sanctuary and also that the reservoir of the Ujani dam from where water would be lifted for the scheme was itself to be proposed by the state government as a Ramsar site. The latest in the matter is not known.

Source: Parineeta Dandekar, SANDRP. Web: [www.sandrp.in](http://www.sandrp.in)

## **DNYANGANGA WLS**

### **1999**

#### **Towards JPAM in Dnyanganga WLS?**

Botha is a small village in the Buldhana District of Maharashtra, which has done exemplary work in Joint Forest Management. In May 1997, out of the 1486 ha land given to the Van Sanrakshan Samiti, Botha, 1471 ha area came to be included in the newly declared Dnyanganga WLS (total area 32,282.38 ha). Thus the control of the area shifted from the territorial to the wildlife wing of the FD. But in accordance with their MOU with the Govt. of Maharashtra, the villagers continue their forest protection work. The Chief Wildlife Warden too has

indicated that there should be harmony between joint forest management (JFM) and the sanctuary's objectives.

On August 10, 1998, when the villagers of Botha had accompanied the wildlife division staff for patrolling and confiscation of cattle, they were beaten up by the illegal graziers while the wildlife staff stood as mute witnesses to incident. Several villagers were severely injured and their faith in the JFM process was shaken. A team consisting of members of NGOs from Vidarbha and Pune visited the area to investigate the incident. The team has filed a report and has asked the Chief Wildlife Warden to look into this matter urgently. They also interacted with various officials, NGOs, and villagers to explore possibilities of Joint Protected Area Management (JPAM) being initiated in the sanctuary since it is surrounded by 28 villages, a large number of which are already under JFM. The JFM work done here in the past 2-1/2 years has already resulted in the improvement of habitat as the area was considerably degraded earlier.

Source: JFM Network, Maharashtra, c/o  
Mohan Hirabai Hiralal, Vrikshamitra.  
Neeraj Vaghlikar, Kalpavriksh

## JAIKWADI WLS

**2007**

### State for denotification of Jaikwadi WLS

The Maharashtra government has decided to approach the SC for the denotification of the Jaikwadi Sanctuary to facilitate galpera (draw-down) agriculture by project affected families. The issue had come up for discussion in the state assembly in July following which the CM called a separate

meeting of political leaders of the region and forest officials.

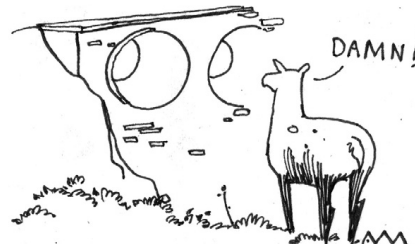
The proposal will have to be first approved by the NBWL following which it will have to be cleared by the state assembly.

Source: Vivek Deshpande, 'State to have Jaikwadi denotified to facilitate agriculture', *Indian Express*, 26/07/2007.

## KALSUBAI-HARISH CHANDRAGAD WLS

**2003**

### Ghatghar hydro power project impacting Kalsubai-Harishchandragad WLS



There have been reports that the construction of the ongoing Ghatghar Hydro (Pumped Storage Scheme) Power Project works, which envisages an output potential of 2 x125 MW of hydel electricity to be produced by further damming river Parvara, is causing substantial destruction of forest areas lying within the Kalsubai-Harishchandragad WLS.

The Rs 1,200 crore project is being promoted as the first of its kind. It includes an 84 m high dam, which includes the use of 80,000 tons of fly ash. The project is to be completed in 2005.

Concerns have also been raised whether the upper reservoir that will get created will further submerge forest lands within the sanctuary and whether appropriate steps are

being taken to store the large quantities of fly ash that are to be used for the construction.

Source: John Manjali. Email dated 19/08/2003.

## **KARNALA BIRD SANCTUARY**

**1999**

### **Noise pollution affecting birds in Karnala**



According to the CF incharge of the Karnala Bird Sanctuary, the bird population in the sanctuary has been affected by noise pollution and habitat destruction, including by traffic on the highway nearby that has trebled in the last ten years. Recent studies in Europe have shown that the noise of highway traffic drowns the mating calls of birds, resulting in less mating success.

Additionally, the habitat is being degraded by local headloaders who cut down branches to supply fuelwood to the farmhouses and dhabas that have mushroomed in the vicinity. Tourists are also extremely noisy and litter the place. Many areas in the sanctuary are covered with plastic litter and shards of broken beer bottles.

Source: Gunvanthi Balaram. 'Noise pollution drives away birds from Karnala sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 18/01/1999.

**2009**

### **Widening of NH-17 threatens Karnala Bird Sanctuary**

The Maharashtra State Wildlife Board has in a meeting held recently, approved the widening of NH-17 inspite of the threat posed to the Karnala Bird Sanctuary. A number of members of the board were opposed to the widening as they felt that a re-alignment was possible. The State FD too has registered its strong opposition but senior government officials said the widening was necessary and no options were available.

It is feared that the road widening will seriously impact the small sanctuary which is already facing serious pressure from encroachments, grazing and tree-felling.

Source: 'Karnala is on the verge of getting destroyed', <http://wildliferashwin.blogspot.com/2009/03/karnala-ison-verge-of-getting.html>.

**2010**

### **NBWL rejects widening of NH-17 because of impact on Karnala Bird Sanctuary**

The Standing Committee of the NBWL recently rejected the state government's proposal for the widening of the Mumbai-Goa NH-17 as it would have needed a large chunk of land from the Karnala Bird Sanctuary.

The widening had been approved by the Maharashtra State Wildlife Advisory Board a year ago though the FD and the Chief Wildlife Warden had expressed their opposition to it.

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'Proposal to widen NH- 17 rejected', *DNA*, 06/01/2010.

'Fresh lease of life for Karnala Bird sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 04/01/2010.

**2013**

**Navi Mumbai airport, located within 10 km of Karnala Bird Sanctuary, gets wildlife clearance**

The NBWL has granted approval to the Navi Mumbai International Airport. CIDCO, the development authority, had sought the approval after objections were raised by environmentalists, saying that the airport near Panvel was less than 10 km from the Karnala Bird Sanctuary.

The NBWL was asked to inspect the site and submit a report to a review committee. The inspection was conducted last month. The review committee concluded that the project is crucial to Mumbai even though it is within 10 km of the sanctuary. The clearance was given on June 6.

Source: 'Navi Mumbai airport gets wildlife board nod', *The Indian Express*, 08/06/2013.

**2015**

**NBWL approves widening of NH-17 through Karnala Bird Sanctuary**

The NBWL has approved widening of the section of Mumbai-Goa-Kochi National Highway, NH-17, passing through Karnala Bird Sanctuary near Panvel. Currently, the NH-17 has only two lanes passing through the sanctuary. Now, the NBWL has allowed for increasing the road width to four lanes. While approving the project it has asked the state government to add part of the adjacent forestland to the sanctuary and also carry out compensatory afforestation. The widening of the highway will happen on a two-km stretch and involves diversion of close to two hectares of the sanctuary land.

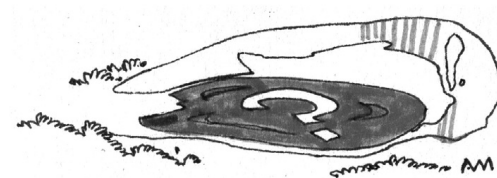
The proposal to widen the highway has been pending approval since the past five years. The NBWL rejected it for the first time in 2009 and later again in 2013. In 2009, the NBWL rejected it on the grounds that the sanctuary area, 12.11 sq km, was not too big but was home to rich biodiversity. In 2013, the NBWL had stated that since alternate routes were available, the proposal to widen the highway inside the sanctuary was rejected. When the project was, however, taken up for appraisal last August, the NBWL said alternate routes were not feasible.

Source: Nikhil M Ghanekar. 'Green nod to NH widening cutting through Karnala bird haven', *DNA*, 04/06/2015.

**LONAR CRATER WLS**

**2008**

**Lonar Lake to tell the story of climate change**



A group of scientists from India and Germany are studying the meteor-lake Lonar, seeking clues to shifts in the patterns of environmental and climatic changes that have occurred over 1000s of years. The aim of the study is to evolve a model that would predict future climatic changes and thereby address the increasing intensity of drought and flood cycles.

A team led by scientist Sushma Prasad from Germany's Geoscience Research Institute, Geo Forschungs Zentrum, and Professor N. Basavaiah from the Indian Institute of

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

Geomagnetism, recently visited Lonar as part of their project entitled, 'Himalayas: Modern and Past Climates.'

Six other German institutions are also part of the research project. Participating Indian organizations include the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, the Birbal Sahani Institute, Lucknow, Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehra Dun, Agarkar Research Institute, Pune, IIT Roorkie and the Pune and Punjab Universities.

Over 50,000 years old, Lonar is the world's only salt-water basaltic lake formed by meteor impact. Its sediments are believed to hold clues to the various climatic changes that have occurred during this period, since sediment formation is a function of the environment.

The lake is a part of the Lonar WLS, and the team had to seek the permission of the FD to undertake the project. The PCCF-Wildlife, B. Majumdar, has said that the project would strengthen the FD's case of maintaining the sanctuary here, particularly in face of the argument by some that the place does not have any wildlife.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'The lake that holds the clue to climate change, *The Indian Express*, 03/06/2008.

## **MAHABALESHWAR ESZ**

### **2001**

#### **Mahabaleshwar area declared as eco-sensitive**

The MoEF has recently declared the entire Mahabaleshwar plateau as an ESZ. The MoEF notification dated January 17, 2001, has been issued under the EPA, 1986. A master plan is to be drawn up for the zone, which will clearly demarcate all existing forests, green areas, horticultural areas like strawberry farms, raspberry farms, orchards, tribal areas and other environmentally sensitive areas.

Change of land use from green areas will not be permitted under the master plan. Pending the approval of the master plan by the MoEF, local authorities will not be allowed to make any reduction in the forest/green/agricultural zone or to increase the existing permissible floor area ratio, the number of storeys and ground coverage. The notification also makes clear that mining and quarrying will henceforth be banned and that only those industries can come up in the ESZ which are non-polluting, non-hazardous service industries and floriculture, horticulture or agro-based industries.

Source: Gunvanthi Balaram. 'Maha sensitive: New high for hill stations', *The Times of India*, 26/01/2001.

#### **Monitoring Committee for Mahabaleshwar ESZ**

The MoEF has set up a nine member monitoring committee for the newly declared Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani ESZ.

The committee will be chaired by Mr. Jamsheed Kanga, former Mumbai Municipal Commissioner. The other members include environmentalist, Mr. Shyam Chainani, MoEF Director, Mr. R Anantkumar, CF, Mahabaleshwar, District Collector, Satara, Deputy Director, Town Planning Dept., Pune Division, and a representative each of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) and the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB).

The tenure of the committee will be two years and its terms of reference include regulation and control of noise pollution, growth in traffic and keeping a check on the use of plastic. The committee will also consider proposals and take decisions for providing relaxations with regard to raising of larger dairies, poultry, mushroom rearing and other units in the nature of allied agricultural activities and structures



connected therewith in the non-municipal areas in excess to one-eighth built up area.

The committee has also been authorized to file complaints under Section 19 of the EPA, 1986.

Source: Gunvanthi Balaram. 'Monitoring committee set up for Mahabaleshwar – Panchgani zone', *The Times of India*, 05/11/2001.

## 2002

### Study committees set up for Mahabaleshwar ESZ

Three study committees and a technical panel were constituted recently to prepare reports regarding the Mahabaleshwar–Panchgani ESZ. They were constituted at a joint meeting of the regional planning board and the Central Government's High Powered Committee.

The committees will be submitting reports on the implementation of the revised regional plan while taking into account the limitations and constraints in the development of the two hill stations after these were declared as eco-sensitive in January 2001.

Source: Nandkumar Dhavalikar. 'Fresh move to preserve Mahabaleshwar's ecology', *The Times of India*, 04/02/2002.

## 2004

### HC bans tree felling in Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani



The Mumbai High Court has recently banned the cutting of trees in the Mahabaleshwar

and Panchgani region that was recently declared an ESZ. The order was passed in response to a petition filed by the Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG), which pointed out that forests were being systematically decimated in these hill resorts inspite of its ESA status.

Source: 'Ban on felling trees in Maharashtra hill stations', Email to defendingwildindia@yahooogroups.com dated 13/08/2004.

## 2015

### Ban on plastic bags, wrappers, bottles in Mahabaleshwar

The FD and the Mahabaleshwar Hill Station Municipal Council (MHSMC) have planned to introduce strict restrictions on plastic from November 1 in the hill station, which is also an ESZ. Stalls at tourist spots maintained by the joint forest management committee will not be permitted to sell polythene bags, food packaged in plastic and plastic water bottles. The civic body will also introduce a similar ban on all polythene bags that are less than 50 microns in the first stage to make the hill station a plastic-free zone.

The stalls will be allowed to keep large 20-litre cans of mineral water. They can refill the bottles carried by tourists for a fee, but they will not be allowed to dispense smaller bottles that are often dumped after the water is consumed. In a bid to encourage tourists not to litter, they will be handed out bags at the points of entry. They will be expected to dispose the garbage in the bags which will be collected from them when they are leaving.

To make the ban effective, the MHSMC has planned a series of meetings with shopkeepers within the hill station's limits to discuss the restrictions and inform them about the penalties for any violation.

Source: Ananya Dutta. 'Restriction On Sale of Bags, Food, Bottles From November 1', *The Times of India*, 07/10/2015.

## **MAHENDRI RESERVE FOREST**

**2009**

### **Conservation Reserve status proposed for Mahendri Reserve Forest**

The FD is considering a 'conservation reserve' status for the Mahendri RF in the Warud tehsil of Amravati district. The forest links the Melghat and Pench TRs and is particularly known for the large number and species of spiders found here.

The matter gained importance recently when around 40 researchers from across the country gathered at the Mahatma Phule Arts, Commerce & Sitaramaji Choudhari Science Mahavidyalaya, Warud, to discuss the spider richness of the area. It was an initiative of the Amravati territorial circle of the FD and the Nature Conservation Society (NCS), Amravati.

An existing proposal for declaring the forest a wildlife sanctuary has been reportedly opposed by locals and this is the reason why the conservation reserve idea has been mooted now. The DCF has been asked to submit a report that will include information about Mahendri's role as a corridor connecting Pench and Melghat and the density of the forests here.

The Mahendri RF is spread over an area of about 70 sq km and is rich in flora and fauna. Wildlife reported from the forests includes the tiger, leopard, cheetal, sambar, bluebull, barking deer and many bird species. It was a shooting block in the past and is mainly made up of 'A' class forests. The forest beats here include Shekdari, Wai, Linga, Pimpalgarh and Mahendri.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Mahendri spiders may help tigers, humans', *The Times of India*, 12/10/2009.

## **MANSINGDEO WLS**

**2004**

### **FDMC blocking declaration of Mansingdeo WLS**

The three year old proposal of the FD for the creation of the 115.37 sq km Mansingdeo WLS adjoining the Pench TR has still not been cleared. The proposal had been submitted in June 2001 and even though the FD is said to have satisfactorily replied to all queries regarding the proposal, it is alleged that the process is being held up by regular generation of fresh queries.

The main opposition is said to be coming from the FDCM which holds nearly half (54.97 sq km) of the area of the proposed sanctuary. The FDCM has demanded book adjustments against the expenditure it has made in the plantations in this area. It has been pointed out that due to this delay in declaring the sanctuary the corporation is continuing clear felling activities here for the creation of their plantations.

Source: 'Mansingh Deo Sanctuary Yet to Get Green Signal', *The Hitavada*, 03/07/2004.

**2010**

### **State cautioned against curtailing area of proposed Mansingdeo WLS**

The MoEF has written to the Maharashtra Chief Minister cautioning against any move to curtail the area of the proposed Mansingdeo WLS adjoining Pench TR. It has pointed out that this could lead to holding back of the denotification of the GIB Sanctuary in Solapur district.

The NBWL had asked the Maharashtra government to notify six sanctuaries including the Mansingdeo WLS in lieu of reducing the area of the 8,500 sq km bustard sanctuary in Nannaj to about 1,200 sq km. However, the state government has decided to reduce the proposed Mansingdeo sanctuary area from 182 sq km to around 143 sq km, keeping out 39 sq km area of FDCM forests and a portion of the Nagpur forest division. Of the proposed three blocks, the state has planned to exclude entire Block I consisting of 4,256 hectares (ha) (14 compartments) of the FDCM and 727 ha (three compartments) area of Nagpur division totalling 4,985 ha. As the Mansingdeo area will be left out, the government has planned to rename the proposed sanctuary as the Pench WLS.

It has been pointed out that the FDCM area is prime tiger habitat and without it the sanctuary will have no meaning. The Block I area that may not be included has rich forest and it connects to Nagzira, Pench, Tadoba and Melghat.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. MoEF warns state govt on Mansingdeo pruning, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com,> 13/08/2010.

## **2011**

### **Mansingdeo declared wildlife sanctuary**

The Maharashtra government is reported to have finally notified the Mansingdeo WLS over the entire proposed area of 183 sq km. This is now the 42nd PA in Maharashtra and provides an important buffer to the Pench NP.

The notification had been pending for a while for various reasons including, importantly, the fact that the FDCM was not willing to hand over forest land that belonged to it.

Source: 'Two decades of advocating bears result: Mansingh-Deo declared Wildlife Sanctuary', [www.wti.org.in](http://www.wti.org.in)

### **RFOs finally appointed in Mansingdeo WLS**

More than a year after the Mansingdeo WLS was notified, the state government has finally posted three RFOs here. It has been noted that though the FDCM was carrying out some protection work, the forests and the wildlife were suffering from continued neglect.

The appointments were made in November 2011 as part of a number of other steps taken by the state. The government has promoted 127 foresters as RFOs and has claimed to have filled almost all the vacancies of RFOs in wildlife and territorial ranges.

The Pench TR adjoining the Mansingdeo WLS has earmarked a fund of Rs 50 lakh for various wildlife management works in Mansingdeo. The state government has also directed the officials concerned to ensure immediate relieving of promoted foresters and their joining in the newly assigned duty stations. Promoted officials not joining in 15 days would be denied promotion and also face disciplinary action.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Mansingdeo wildlife sanctuary gets three range forest officers', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com,](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com,) 17/11/2011.

## **2013**

### **Villages oppose notification of the Mansingdeo WLS**

Villagers living in the vicinity of the recently notified Mansingdeo WLS have expressed opposition to the sanctuary. The 21 villages in the area say they were not taken into confidence before notifying the 183 sq km sanctuary, which was created in lieu of

de-notification of a large part of the GIB Sanctuary in Solapur district.

The gram sabhas of these villages have already passed a resolution against the creation of the sanctuary. They are also demanding that they be allowed to fish in Totladoh in Pench TR and be granted grazing and NTFP collection rights in Mansingdeo. They also want NH-7 to be widened from Mansar to Deolapar and for roads within the sanctuary—Ambazari-Saleghat (5 km) and Dhawlapur-Ghatkukda (14 km)—to be tarred. They have noted that declaration of the sanctuary has led to serious restrictions on grazing cattle and collecting tendu, mahua and gum. There are also no jobs and irrigation facilities in the region and all of this has adversely affected local livelihoods.

The Gondwana Ganatantra Party (GGP), which is spearheading the stir here, has suggested that giving community rights under the FRA, 2006 can be a solution to the present situation.

Forest officials have meanwhile clarified that grazing and collection of NTFP cannot be permitted within the sanctuary as per SC orders of February 14, 2000, which states that removal of dead, diseased trees, grazing, NTFP collection, construction activity, widening of roads, removal of bamboo, biomass, and even cutting of grass cannot be undertaken in national parks and sanctuaries without its permission.



It has also been argued that the sanctuary area is a RF where no rights can be granted.

There are no villages within it either. Fishing has already been banned in the Totladoh reservoir and the tarring of roads too needs the approval of the State Board for Wildlife and the NBWL.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Forest minister's visit no balm for angry Mansinghdeo villagers', *The Times of India*, 11/07/2013.

## MATHERAN ESZ

### 2001

#### SC asks for ESZ for Matheran

The SC has directed that the Matheran plateau be declared an ESZ. In an order dated July 12, 2001, the court has stated that, '...no vehicle, like tractor, tempo, car, truck or other mechanised vehicle, excepting an ambulance and a fire-engine will be permitted to ply in Matheran... Pending further orders, there shall be no movement of felled timber by natural causes or otherwise from Matheran ...'. The order came in a petition that was filed in 1995 by the Matheran Bachao Samiti (MBS).

The immediate provocation for the order was the May 2, 2001 decision of the state government to permit tractors and other vehicles to ply inside the hill station and to change the surface of the road from the present earthen road. The MBS had challenged this decision in court on May 10.

The MoEF will now have to publish a notification declaring Matheran as eco-sensitive under the EPA, 1986. The region will require a new master plan as also a tourism master plan. Pending approval of this new master plan, the court has ordered that development parameters will remain at current levels and that there will be no reduction in the forest and agricultural zones.

Earlier, in January this year, the MoEF has issued a notification declaring Mahabaleshwar as an ESZ.

Source: 'Matheran eco-sensitive: SC', *Indian Express*, 19/7/2001.

## 2002

### Matheran declared as an ESZ

The MoEF has declared the hill station of Matheran and its surroundings as an ESZ. The notification was issued on February 6, 2002, and it upholds an earlier SC ban on all vehicles inside Matheran except for an ambulance and a fire engine, and on new hotels in the hill station.

The SC had earlier, in its order dated July 11, 2001 directed that the Matheran plateau be declared eco-sensitive under the EPA, 1986. The order had come in a petition that had been filed in 1995 by the Matheran Bachao Samiti.

It was also announced that a new master plan for the Matheran ESZ will be drawn up within two years and that there will be no change in the meantime in the existing land use pattern and building bye-laws in the hill station.

Matheran is the second hill tract in the state to get protection after the Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani plateau which was notified as an ESZ on January 17, 2001. In a further development, the MoEF has appointed an expert committee to frame guidelines to determine what makes a hill station environmentally sensitive and important enough to merit preservation. This, it is hoped, will help in the process of other areas being identified and notified as ecologically sensitive.

Source: Gunvanthi Balaram. 'Matheran declared ecosensitive zone', *The Times of India*, 22/02/2002.

Vaishnavi C Shekhar. 'Hill stations may find it easier to get protection', *The Times of India*, 30/03/2002.

### State opposes SC ruling for ESZ in Matheran

The Maharashtra State Government has opposed the recent SC directive for declaring 498 sq km of Matheran as an ESZ under the EPA, 1986. It has instead recommended that the area be reduced to 117 sq km and a report detailing this has been prepared by the MMRDA.

The local Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLA, Suresh Lad, and Matheran Municipal Council chief have approached NCP Chief, Sharad Pawar, who has reportedly assured them that he would take up the matter with Union Minister for Environment and Forests, TR Baalu. Their main contention is that the declaration of the ESZ over such a large expanse will deprive Matheran's local residents of basic facilities.

Organizations like the Matheran Bachao Samiti (MBS) and the Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG) who have been instrumental in getting this protection for Matheran, have said that the ESZ is basically meant for the benefit of the local people. It checks uncontrolled development, curbs pollution, bans quarrying and mining and restricts multi-storeyed constructions.

Samir Mehta of the MBS has clarified that there is widespread misunderstanding that the notification will ban normal activities and that this had fuelled the opposition. The biggest losers are likely to be the real estate developers whose expansion and development plans will be severely curtailed because of the notification.

Source: Satish Nandgaonkar. 'State opposes SC's Matheran eco-zone ruling', *Indian Express*, 15/10/2002.

## **Plastic, garbage clearance drive in Matheran**



The Municipal Corporation of Matheran has, at the behest of the Matheran Bachao Samiti (MBS), launched a garbage clearance drive here.

Starting in September 2002, all forest trails and points were cleared of all plastic and other solid waste. The garbage was then packed and stored, to be carted away to the plains by a private company that has been contracted for the purpose. The plastic bottles were compressed with the help of a machine, waste paper was being separated and so was wet garbage that is to be turned into compost.

It has been decided to now clear the garbage on a daily basis from the forests and also from the local hotels and lodges, who have agreed to pay Rs 30 per room per month for the service. The Corporation has also added 60 contract workers to its permanent staff of 25 workers for the purpose.

The staff has been taught how to crush bottles by experts from the Indian Council of Plastics in the Environment (ICPE), an organization floated by the plastics industry to deal with the problem of plastics in the environment.

Source: Gunvanthi Balam. 'Plastic clearance drive in Matheran', *The Times of India*, 19/10/2002.

## **2003**

### **Notification issued declaring Matheran as ecosensitive**

The MoEF recently issued the final notification declaring the hill station of

Matheran and its surrounds as an ESZ. The notification came just two days before the end of the stipulation period of one year from the draft notification that was issued in February 2002.

The ESZ will be spread over 215 sq km and will cover areas in the jurisdiction of the Matheran Municipal Council as well as the surrounding areas in Raigad district and 19 villages in Ulhasnagar in Thane district. The notification has been promulgated under the EPA, 1986. The initial proposal was for the ESZ to cover an area of 498 sq km, but there had been opposition to that. The Maharashtra State Government itself had recommended that the ESA be limited to only 117 sq km.

The implementation of the notification is to be now supervised by a 10-member committee headed by an environmental expert and convened by the District Collector, Raigad.

Source: Prafulla Marpakwar. 'Matheran declared ecosensitive region', *Indian Express*, 20/02/2003.

'Matheran also gets eco-sensitive tag', *The Times of India*, 20/02/2003.

## **2012**

### **Zero-garbage plan for Matheran Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani ESZs in state**



The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) has sought funds from the Union Government to make the hill stations and ESZs of Matheran and Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani zero-garbage destinations within a year.

The project is inspired by the Katraj zero garbage ward project in Pune, which was implemented in 2011 and is based on using garbage to generate electricity. The estimated cost of the project in Matheran and Mahabaleshwar is approximately Rs two crore each.

MTDC has roped in Pune-based NGO, Janwani, which implemented the zero-garbage concept in Katraj with help from the Pune Municipal Corporation. The NGO will undertake a study of the spots and come up with a feasible proposal. The pilot project would be taken to other destinations in the state depending on the results here.

The idea is to segregate garbage at source with active participation from those who create garbage, like residents and hotels. Wet garbage can then be converted into compost, biogas or pellets for fuel, while plastic can be converted into plastic granules and boards (used as low-quality ply) while the remaining plastic waste can be converted into paving blocks. A customized system of garbage collection will be employed to minimize mixing of garbage and making its disposal easy.

Source: 'Plan to make hill-stations garbage free', <http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 18/03/2012>.

## **2013**

### **Casinos, discotheques planned in Matheran**

The Maharashtra government is making grand plans to re-position Matheran as an entertainment-cum-leisure hub. This includes proposals for creating casinos, discotheques, music halls and swanky parking arenas. The decision to repackage the hill station was taken in November 2012 during a meeting with the State Chief Secretary, JK Banthia.

The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) was asked to prepare a detailed project plan on the lines discussed. This would include the creation of adequate infrastructure to ensure year-long access as also ensuring 24x7 water supply by tapping alternative means.

A decision has also been taken to get an NOC from the MOEF as Matheran is an ESZ, restricting development and the movement of vehicles within the region.



Source: Sharad Vyas. 'Maharashtra tourism plans casinos, discotheques in Matheran', *The Times of India*, 29/11/2012.

## **MUNIYA CR**

### **2008**

### **Proposal for Muniya Conservation Reserve 15 kms from Nagpur**

Nagpur-based NGO, Nisarga Vigyan Mandal (NVM) has proposed the creation of the Muniya Conservation Reserve about 15 kms from the city of Nagpur for the protection of the area's wildlife and biodiversity. A proposal for the same has been submitted to the FD by NVM in September 2007.

The proposed reserve will comprise 10 compartments and is to be spread over 1,700 hectares of PF and about 710 hectares

of RF in the North Umrer Range in the Nagpur Forest Division. A site-specific study conducted by NVM over the past four years has recorded a large diversity of wildlife there, including threatened species like the leopard, blackbuck, and the GIB.

The CWLW of the state is reported to have written to the CCF—Territorial, Nagpur circle, requesting him to examine the proposal. If found fit, a self-contained draft notification with a description of the boundaries along with a map and a resolution of gram panchayat is to be sent to the CWLW for further action.

There are 18 villages on the fringes of Muniya, and NVM has been working to convince the villagers, mostly tribals, about the benefits of setting up the conservation reserve. The NGO also proposes to look after their livelihood needs and to support them financially by setting up agro-based units and self-help groups through their newly set up Nature Education Training Research Academy.

Source: Vinay Pinjarkar. 'Muniya backed as conservation reserve', *The Times of India*, 22/04/2008.

## **NANDUR MADHMESHWAR BIRD SANCTUARY**

**1999**

### **Protest against proposed Nandur Madhmeshwar Sanctuary**

Jaywant Bhimrao Bhosale, Vice President, Swatantraya Bharat Party, has threatened to undertake an indefinite fast to demand cancellation of the proposed 100.13 sq km Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary to be set up at in Niphad taluka of Nashik district. According to Bhosale, the sanctuary would render 50,000 farmers landless. This includes

adivasis and harijans who solely depend on agriculture for sustenance. Farmers from 10 villages who were practising cooperative farming would not be allowed to draw water from the Nandurmadmeshwar canal. Use of diesel pump sets, tractors etc. would also be prohibited as it might affect the birds once the sanctuary is set up.

However, a recently concluded study on the protected areas of Maharashtra has indicated that the area is already a sanctuary with the settlement of rights and leases procedure is in progress. A substantial portion of the sanctuary, besides the reservoir in the middle, is in fact agricultural and common land of 11 villages with a population of 19,000. The reservoir forms a primary source of water for irrigation with several farmers also cultivating the draw down area as well. It is possible that the unrest among farmers may be linked to the implementation of the SC order asking for completion of settlement procedures in protected areas where they are still pending.



Sources: 'Stir Against Bird Sanctuary', *The Indian Express*, 20/04/1998.

**2009**

### **CEE to develop nature interpretation centre at Nandur Madhmeshwar**

The Centre for Environment Education, Ahmedabad, will be developing a Nature



Interpretation Centre at the Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary in Nashik District of Maharashtra.

The main aim of the centre would be to disseminate information and create awareness about the importance of the wetland, including a glimpse of its cultural and biological diversity.

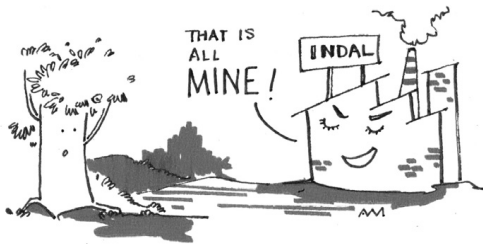
More details of the proposal are not presently available.

Source: 'Interpretation Centre at Wandoor, Andaman & Nicobar', *Ceenario*, May 1-15, 2009.

## **RADHANAGARI WLS**

**1998**

### **Radhanagari WLS: BEAG vs INDAL**



The Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG) had filed a writ petition (No. 959 dated 13.2.98) in the Bombay HC against the Indian Aluminium Co. Ltd. (INDAL), challenging the mining activities sought to be undertaken by them in the Radhanagari WLS.

When the matter came up for hearing in April 1998, INDAL produced a letter enclosing a copy of the order signed by the Section Officer, Trade & Commerce Department, purporting to renew their lease for a period of 20 years, i.e. upto March 2018. However, the court in its judgement asked INDAL to restrain its proposed activities in the area. Subsequently BEAG filed two more writ petitions in the HC on the grounds:

1. that the entire area falls within the notified forest area and therefore no non-forest activity can be allowed without Central Government permission. (In this case, not even the state FD had been consulted)

2. that the Section Officer has no powers under law to pass an order to grant / renew the mining lease, hence the order is bad in law and liable to be set aside

3. that despite the authorities being fully aware that a petition concerning mining activities was pending in court, an order for renewal of lease was granted, which therefore is illegal

4. that under the provisions of the Mines & Minerals Act of 1957, unless the area has been prospected earlier and the existence of mineral deposits been established, and until a mining plan duly approved by the Central Government is submitted, no mining lease can be granted (the petitioners found there was no such mining plan for the area). These two petitions will come up for final hearing on June 19 1998.

Source: Press release by Debi Goenka, Bombay Environmental Action Group.

**1999**

### **Mining at Radhanagari WLS**

A Division Bench of the Bombay HC has restrained the Indian Aluminium Co. Ltd (INDAL) from carrying out any mining activity within the Radhanagari WLS. The order came in response to a writ petition filed by the BEAG.

Armed with a lower court order, INDAL has earlier stripped the protective cover from a key plateau in the sanctuary, using bulldozers. It is reported that, thus far, not one truck of bauxite has actually been smelted by the company.

Radhanagari WLS contains many endemic and rare plants, insects, birds, and mega-

fauna including leopard, gaur and tiger. A proposal is also being readied to declare the forests here as a TR.

Meanwhile, INDAL has stated that the mined area is outside the current sanctuary limits, and even if the sanctuary is extended as proposed to include this area, the mine will be 8 km. from the core area. They also state that the mining technology used will cause minimal disturbance to the area. Activists maintain, however, that the mining poses a serious hazard, not just because of the actual mining activity but also because of the access roads and other associated activities. The HC will hear the matter further before final judgement is passed.

Source: Debi Goenka,  
Bombay Environmental Action  
Group.

## 2002

### Zoo to release monkeys into Radhanagari WLS

The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has asked the Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad Municipal Corporation's Pratapsinh Park to release most of the wild animals and birds into wildlife sanctuaries. The Pratapsinh Park is one of the 17 zoos in the country that has been asked to release the animals held.

Accordingly the park has decided to release the monkeys held into the Radhanagari WLS.

Source: Ravindra Daftardar. 'Zoos directed to release animals into sanctuaries', *The Times of India*, 10/01/2002.

## 2004

### Gaur from Radhanagari WLS to be shifted to Thane and Raigad districts

A recent census carried out in the Kolhapur Wildlife Division has estimated more than

1000 gaur in the division. The estimates for the three wildlife sanctuaries here are as follows—Radhanagari WLS: 395-610; Koyna WLS: 435-493 and Chandoli WLS: 88-243.

It is feared that the declining forest cover due to activities like mining and the increased number of gaur, particularly in Radhanagari, could result in conflict with farmers in the area. A proposal has therefore been made to shift some of the animals from the Radhanagari WLS to Thane and Raigad districts. Details of the number of gaur to be shifted or the exact new locations are not known.



Source: Radheshyam Jadhav. 'Radhanagari sanctuary bisons to get new home in Thane, Raigad', *The Indian Express*, 25/05/2004.

## REHEKURI BLACKBUCK SANCTUARY

### 2000

#### Rehekuri area to be extended



The Rehekuri Blackbuck Sanctuary in the Ahmednagar district is to be extended from its present area of 217 hectares to

600 hectares. The Revenue Department has agreed to hand over land to the FD for the purpose.

Source: 'Sanctuary to be extended', *The Indian Express*, 18/04/2000.

## **SAGARESHWAR WLS**

**2001**

### **Lion Safari in Sagareshwar WLS**

Union Minister, Maneka Gandhi has reportedly sanctioned Rs 3 crore for establishing a lion safari in the Sagareshwar WLS.

The decision is related to the recent deaths of 10 lions in Pratapsinh Park, the zoo in the city of Sangli, and the fact that environment ministry officials are convinced that the 27 lions still present in the zoo need to be released into more natural surroundings.

Source: 'Rs 3 crore for lion safari', *The Times of India*, 13/02/2001.

### **Stray dog threat to deer in Sagareshwar**

Stray dogs from surrounding villages are posing a big threat to the deer population in the Sagareshwar WLS. There are a number of reports of weak animals and fawns being killed by these dogs.

The villagers however have no complaints and point out that the increasing number of deer has resulted in huge losses to their crops.

Various solutions including killing of the intruding dogs and the fencing of the sanctuary have been suggested, but a workable solution is still to be found.

Source: Madhav Gokhale. 'Marauding dogs threaten Sagareshwar deers', *The Indian Express*, 09/11/2001.

## **SANJAY GANDHI NP**

**1997**

### **Borivili: Mumbai residents campaign to 'Save the Lakes'**



A meeting was held at the BNHS of about a 100 people representing NGOs, citizens' groups, the FD, and others on 22 April 1997, to discuss the problems of the Sanjay Gandhi NP. A position paper is currently being prepared on the various threats to the protected area that include among others encroachment, forest fires, bootlegging, expansion of temple complexes, quarries, builders, and the thousands of picnickers who visit the park every week.

In addition, a coalition of NGOs, activists, journalists and wildlifers has been formed for a 'Save the Lakes' campaign to highlight the threats to the six reservoirs inside the park supplying 50% of Mumbai's drinking water.

Source: Email from Bittu Sahgal, *Sanctuary Magazine*, dated 22/5/1997.

**1998**

### **Tiger safari set up in the Sanjay Gandhi NP**

A tiger safari was inaugurated in the Sanjay Gandhi NP on the 20th of November by the Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray. The safari is spread over an area of 50 acres in Krishnagiri, the tourist zone of the park and is surrounded by a ten feet high wire fence. The safari has six tigers, including two white tigers. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra announced that the state would donate Rs

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

1 crore through the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) to the safari that would cost about Rs 80 lakhs a year for maintenance.

Earlier, in the month of October, a petition was filed in the Mumbai HC by the animal welfare organization, Ahimsa, seeking to restrain the Sanjay Gandhi NP from using its land for conducting any non-forest or commercial activity such as setting up of an open air theatre, tiger safari, tourism zones, guest houses, botanical gardens and construction of roads. Following the petition the national park authorities had put off the inauguration of the tiger safari for about a month. The final outcome of the case is not known.

Source: 'Tiger Safari at national park challenged', *The Indian Express*, 7/10/1998.

'A new Tiger Reserve to come up near Nagpur', *The Indian Express*, 21/11/1998.

### **1999**

#### **Poaching, tree cutting inside Sanjay Gandhi NP**

Forest officials in Mumbai recently arrested a swami from his hideout inside the Sanjay Gandhi NP. He was found to be in possession of one tiger and two cheetal skins. The ashram of the swami was located in the forest area near the Kanheri caves, and officials suspect that it was being used as a shelter by criminals operating in the area.

There are already three ashrams in the park, which house more than 20 swamis. The ashrams flourish despite a Mumbai HC order of 1997 banning all constructions within the park.

In another development a conflict has arisen between the FD and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), over the

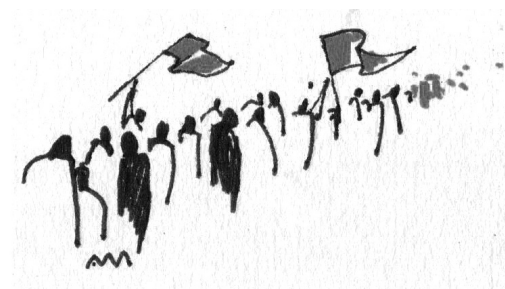
cutting of over 100 trees by the FD inside the park. The FD recently cleared a large patch of land near the entrance of the park to make way for a park-cum-botanical garden.

The BMC maintains that any tree in the urban area comes within the jurisdiction of the Maharashtra (Urban Areas) Preservation of Trees Act 1975 and the BMC Tree Authority has the sole power to sanction the cutting of trees in the urban area. Since the park is within the city limits, the FD should have taken the permission of the BMC. The FD says that the forest office itself is a tree authority and therefore does not need any permission from the BMC. It pointed out that the plot of cleared land was falling prey to encroachers and was being used as a public toilet.

Source: 'Forest Officials nab swami for poaching', *The Indian Express*, 18/02/1999.

Swati Deshpande-Aguiar. 'BMC, forest department at loggerheads over tree felling'. *The Indian Express*, 26/01/1999.

#### **Pilgrimage in PAs to be controlled**



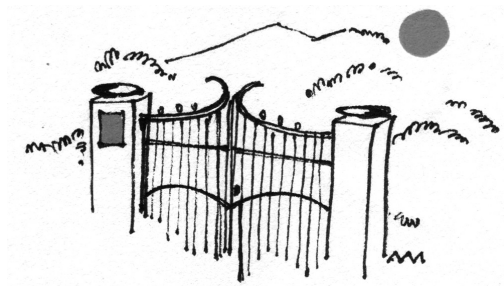
On the occasion of Mahashivratri, 14th February 1999, lakhs of pilgrims will visit sites within Maharashtra's PAs such as the Sanjay Gandhi NP and the Bhimashankar WLS. In the past, this has caused considerable damage, through littering, noise and fuelwood use. This year, the FD, the Anthropological Survey of India, and

district authorities have decided to restrict entry points, and prohibit pilgrims from carrying such items as plastic bags, radios and cigarettes/bidis. Certain areas, such as the Kanheri caves in SGNP, will have special restrictions. These steps were initiated at the suggestion of some Mumbai and Pune based NGOs.

Source: 'Restrictions for visitors to Kanheri Caves on Shivratri', *The Times of India*, 13/2/1999.

V. Deshmukh. 'Bhimashankar dumps plastic', *The Indian Express*, 12/2/1999.

### **New entry to Sanjay Gandhi NP**



Faced with the problem of handling 25 lakh visitors a year, the Sanjay Gandhi NP has decided to open a new entry point at Mulund. Local MLA, Kirit Somayya, will provide Rs three lakh from the MLA's fund for the project. The blueprint for the 50 acre project which would cover the north-west range of the hills has been prepared by the CCF, MG Gogate and ACF, Satish Phale.

However, various environmentalists and organizations including the WWF have raised objections to this project, saying that it is not in the interest of national park and the wildlife here.

Source: 'National park will open entry point in Mulund', *The Times of India*, 11/02/1999.

Vaishnavi C. Sekhar. 'Greens voice concern over Nisarga Vihar project', *The Times of India*, 15/03/1999.

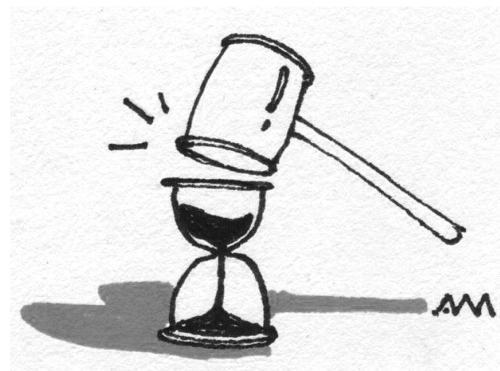
### **Nisarg Vihar in Sanjay Gandhi NP opposed**

WWF – India has filed a petition in the Mumbai HC against the construction of 'Nisarg Vihar', a nature centre proposed on a 50 acre area within the Mulund side buffer zone of the Sanjay Gandhi NP. Earlier a new entry to the park had been opened at Mulund to reduce the pressure of visitors at the main entry in Borivili.

According to the petition, the creation of such an area was violative of the WLPA and the FCA – 1980. The petition also noted that the project was more like an amusement park, not for the purpose of forest conservation, and that the project is aimed more at securing political mileage in the forthcoming elections.

Source: 'Plea filed against building nature centre in national park', *The Times of India*, 22/06/1999.

### **High Court orders related to 'encroachments' in Sanjay Gandhi NP**



The Mumbai HC has ordered the setting up of three committees to monitor the rehabilitation of those who have encroached into the Sanjay Gandhi NP. The first committee will monitor and ensure the relocation of the slum dwellers who are eligible for relocation, the second committee will function as a grievance redressal

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

committee, and the third would monitor and submit a report every two months about the progress of the implementation of its order.

The order was passed following a public interest litigation filed by the Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG) in 1995 challenging the large scale encroachments in the park. In addition, the state government has finally identified the land for rehabilitation and started infrastructure development.

In another case related to the park, the court asked the state government for details of the proposed Nisarg Vihar Kendra within the park at Mulund. The court said that though the project was laudable, no construction activity can take place till the plans are detailed and approved. The order was in response to a petition filed in the Mumbai HC by WWF-India against the project, which is proposed to be built over 50 acres on the Mulund side of the park.

Source: 'Court prods govt. on Borivli park settlers', *The Times of India*, 10/07/1999.

'HC orders panels to monitor resettlement of park encroachers', *The Times of India*, 17/07/1999.

'HC asks state for exact plans of nature centre in National Park', *The Times of India*, 23/08/1999.

### **SC stay on demolitions in the Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The FD had to stall the demolition of the 500 odd encroachments at the Thane end of the Sanjay Gandhi NP following an order of the SC in a petition which claimed that the land under survey No. 520 on which they were located is classified as the collector's land and does not fall under the FD. The encroachers occupy five acres on a plot at the foot of the Yeoor hills. Apart from 100 odd commercial establishments, there are

three illegal four-storey buildings and 340 pucca hutments.

The HC order allowing the FD to demolish the encroachments had been passed on July 11, 1999 following a petition filed in 1995 by the BEAG.

Source: Kishore Rathod. 'SC stays demolition of Thane encroachments', *The Indian Express*, 22/11/1999.

## **2000**

### **HC: clear Sanjay Gandhi NP of encroachers**

The Mumbai HC has ordered the state government to persuade those encroachers who are eligible under its rehabilitation plan to join the scheme or face eviction on March 21, 2000. The eviction was to be carried out with the help of two companies of the State Reserve Police (SRP). The ultimatum was issued in a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by the Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG), which alleged that there were as many as 33,000 illegal hutments inside the national park.

According to reports received at the time of going to press, the demolition of the encroachments was going on. However, DFO AR Bharati, the person responsible for the demolitions was reportedly threatened by a group of people including some of the encroachers and the MLA of the area.

Source: 'Govt. told to clear Sanjay Gandhi Park of encroachers by March 21', *The Times of India*, 06/03/2000.

'Sloganeering slumdweller bundled out of court', *The Times of India*, 14/03/2000.

### **HC stay on nature park in Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The Mumbai HC has refused to lift its interim order staying the multi-crore nature

park project near the Mulund side of the Sanjay Gandhi NP. The state government with the support of the MLA of the area had proposed to create a 50 acre 'Nisarg Vihar Kendra' in 1999. WWF - India had filed a petition in the HC opposing the project saying that it was like an amusement park and violative of the WLP and the FCA. The HC had issued an interim order staying the project in December 1999.

When the case came up for hearing in early April 2000, the state government pressed for final hearing and reiterated its stand that there was no need to obtain any permission from the centre or conduct any scientific study. The judges took strong objection to the state's alleged apathy and refused to give an early date for the final hearing, saying that the matter would come up in regular course.

Source: 'HC refuses to lift stay on nature park', *The Indian Express*, 16/04/2000.

## **Demolitions in Sanjay Gandhi NP**

Demolitions of the slums and encroachments in the Sanjay Gandhi NP have been going on. The demolitions were started in the 2nd fortnight of March 2000 following an order of the Mumbai HC to persuade those encroachers who were eligible to avail of the rehabilitation plan that was offered. Only 7000 of the 33,000 of the encroacher families had reportedly applied for the rehabilitation package of Rs 7000 each.

There continues to be large-scale protest and opposition to the demolition drive, which is being led by the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti (NHSS). Former Prime Minister, Mr VP Singh, too joined the protests. He visited the area in the last week of May and appealed to the Maharashtra government to allow more time for the rehabilitation process. The Committee for Protection of Democratic Rights (CPDR) too has condemned the demolition drive.

Environmentalists and the FD have however pointed out that the forests of the national park are vital for water security of the city of Mumbai. It has also been alleged that most of the encroachments in the park were there at the behest of slumlords who had become very powerful in the last few years and had, in fact, misled and prevented a lot of the families from accepting the rehabilitation package.

Source: 'VP asks for more time to rehabilitate Borivli National Park slum-dwellers', *The Times of India*, 26/04/2000.

'The battlelines are drawn in Borivli', *The Times of India*, 30/04/2000.

'National Park demolition to continue: high court', *The Times of India*, 01/05/2000.

'Slum demolitions at Sanjay Gandhi park inhuman: report', *The Times of India*, 01/05/2000.

Michael Rodriguez. 'Demolitions go on amid tight security', *The Times of India*, 04/05/2000.

'Inhuman displacement of people condemned', *The Times of India*, 05/05/2000.

'Slum-dwellers move SC; appeal will be heard today', *The Times of India*, 08/05/2000.

## **Demolitions in Sanjay Gandhi NP put off**

The Mumbai HC has put off the demolitions of encroachments in the Sanjay Gandhi NP for the period June 15 to September 31, the monsoon season. The court also extended by two weeks the time to the encroachers to avail of the relocation scheme that has been offered by the government.

Source: 'State govt. calls off slum demolitions in National Park', *The Times of India*, 15/06/2000.

'Borivli demolitions to be put off', *The Indian Express*, 15/06/2000.

## Human Rights tribunal, Justice Krishna Iyer flay HC stand on encroachments in Sanjay Gandhi NP



A three member tribunal of the Indian People's Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) has stated that the Mumbai HC orders directing the eviction of 75,000 dwellings in the vicinity of the Sanjay Gandhi NP was nothing short of a 'fraud on the court'. This was because none of the orders considered the rights of the parties most affected - in this case, the slum dwellers.

The tribunal of the IPHRC was headed by the former Chief Justice of the Delhi HC, Justice Rajinder Sachar and had as its members, Justice (Retd.) SM Daud and Justice (Retd.) H Suresh.

Earlier in August, the state government had instituted an inquiry against the alleged excesses committed by the forest officials in the demolitions of slums here. This decision was taken following a complaint made by the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti (NHSS) to the Chief Minister of the state.

There have also been reports that the plans of the government to shift people from the national park to Kalyan-Ambarnath may run into trouble with locals at the rehabilitation site opposing the plan. The residents of the villages of Khoni, Shirdone, Ghesar and Antarli, where the national park oustees are to be resettled, have formed the Gairon Bachao Samiti (GBS) under the leadership of DB Patil, a Shiv Sena leader here.

Source: 'Encroachers' rights were crushed', *The Indian Express*, 01/11/2000.

Anil Singh. 'Villagers resent rehab of slum-dwellers on their turf', *The Times of India*, 04/09/2000.

'Inquiry ordered into excesses by officials in national park', *The Indian Express*, 24/08/2000.

## 2001

### Stay on demolition work in Sanjay Gandhi NP

Demolition work of encroachments in the Sanjay Gandhi NP has been stayed and the people whose houses were slated for demolition have been given till April 30, 2001 to apply for alternative accommodation. The demolitions had been resumed in November 2000 following the order of the division bench of the Mumbai HC headed by Chief Justice B.P. Singh that was passed just three days after the Maharashtra government withdrew security cover for demolition crews working in the park. The crews had then refused to work any further.

Demolition work in a hamlet called Ketkipada was disrupted following fears of a severe law and order problem and attempts by the encroachers to set themselves on fire to prevent the demolitions. According to state government officials, more than 46,000 of the 75,000 shanties earmarked for demolition have been already demolished.

The court's ruling follows a public interest suit filed by the Bombay Environment Action Group and has been severely criticized by many human rights groups and retired judges of different high courts in the country.

Meanwhile, a delegation that included Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Mr. Ram Naik, and BJP MLA, Hemendra Mehta, met the Maharashtra Chief Minister to discuss the rehabilitation of the families displaced from the park. They requested the state government not to rehabilitate



the oustees to distant Kalyan-Dombivali in Thane district, but to a find area within a 10 km radius of the national park.

Source: Shiv Kumar. 'Demolition of shanties at Mumbai national park to resume', *India Abroad News Service*, 18/11/2000.

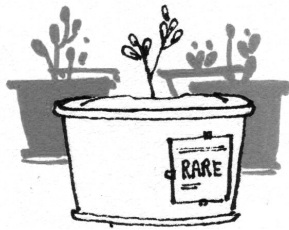
'Naik, CM discuss rehabilitation of slum-dwellers', *The Times of India*, 05/01/2001.

### **Indian People's Tribunal Hearings in Sanjay Gandhi NP**

Justices R Sachar, H Suresh, and SM Daud, recently heard the dispositions related to the ongoing slum demolition in the Sanjay Gandhi NP that have been carried out here following an order of the Mumbai HC. They have severely criticized the demolition operations, saying that the entire process has seriously violated the human rights of the residents here.

Source: Jyoti Punwani. '60,000 homeless', *Mid Day*, 29/04/2001.

### **Nursery for endangered, wild herbs in Sanjay Gandhi NP**



The Maharashtra State Government has decided to set up a nursery for endangered species of wild herbs in the Sanjay Gandhi NP. More than 200 hectares of 'dense' forest at Nagla, inside the park, have been earmarked for this nursery.

The move came shortly after the MoEF issued an order freeing 233 species of medicinal herbs for exports. Traders can now freely ship rare plants without the legal procurement certificate (LPC). It is

feared that this new development is going to severely affect many rare and valuable species of medicinal plants in the wild.

Source: 'Sanjay Gandhi National Park to have nursery for endangered, wild herbs', *The Indian Express*, 02/05/2001.

### **Tunnel through Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The MoEF has, reportedly, cleared the laying of an underground pipeline through the Sanjay Gandhi NP, overriding objections of the FD and local NGOs.

The pipeline is to pass through the core area of the park and it is not exactly clear what the construction and the maintenance of the pipeline will entail.

Source: Sunjoy Monga. Email dated 06/08/2001.

'SGNP tunnel cleared', *Sanctuary*, October 2001.

## **2002**

### **Leopard attacks on the rise around Sanjay Gandhi NP**

Leopard attacks on children in and around the Sanjay Gandhi NP have been on the increase in the recent past. At least 11 such attacks were reported in the first three months of 2002. A combination of a depleting prey base inside the park and the increased human settlements and encroachment around the park are said to be the main reasons for this. Wildlife experts point out that none of the 11 reported attacks have been on adults and that this is proof that all the attacks have been accidental.

However, they have also expressed apprehension that the leopards that had been captured for human attacks are now being released back into the forests.

Source: 'Encroachments, depleting prey behind panther attacks', *The Times of India*, 30/03/2002.

### **Plan for the rehabilitation of encroachers in Sanjay Gandhi NP**

A joint proposal for the rehabilitation of the encroachers evicted from the Sanjay Gandhi NP has been mooted by the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti (NHSS) and Sumer Corporation, a developer.

The proposal is for the rehabilitation of 20,000 families from the park at an alternate plot in Chandivli near Powai. It will make use of the opportunity created by the government's declaration of these families as 'project affected'. A builder undertaking a rehabilitation project to re-house project-affected slum dwellers is entitled to additional benefits, particularly, a huge Floor Space Index (FSI) of 4.5 as transfer of development rights (TDR) for every 2.5 FSI consumed on site for rehabilitation. This facility is unavailable under normal slum rehabilitation projects.

In the proposed Chandivli Scheme, Sumer Corporation will re-house the national park slum dwellers free of cost on the 3.60 lakh sq m of land. In return the developer will get a crore square feet of TDR, worth several hundred crore rupees. This TDR can either be sold in the market or used by the builder to develop real estate anywhere north of Chandivli.

Senior officials have questioned the decision of the government to treat these slum dwellers as project affected and also said that the government has no power to unilaterally sanction the proposal. The NHSS will have to first present the proposal to the slum redevelopment authority (SRA). If the SRA approves the scheme it will be then placed before the HC for clearance.

Former Prime Minister, Mr. VP Singh, who has supported the fight against these evictions, has reportedly said that he had nothing to do with this proposal that involves the Sumer Corporation.

Source: Nauzer Bharucha. 'VP Singh distances himself from slum rehab project', *The Times of India*, 11/05/2002.

Nauzer Bharucha. 'HC will decide on rehab plan for park encroachers', *The Times of India*, 26/08/2002.

### **Leopard-human conflict around Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The conflict between leopards from the Sanjay Gandhi NP and human settlements around the park is intensifying. There have been reports of at least 12 attacks on humans since July this year. Seven leopards were also captured in the same time period. The park authorities too are not very sure of how to handle the situation. A combination of a depleting prey base and increasing human intervention along the forests is said to be the main reason behind the escalation of this problem.

As a solution to the problem, the park authorities have proposed a captive breeding programme for wild boar and hare inside the forest in an attempt to augment the food supply for the leopards. They are reported to be scouting around for sponsors to fund this project, which is expected to cost Rs five lakhs.

FD staff helped along by the SGNP veterinarian will rear the animals, who will then be released into the wild at an appropriate time. The proposal, perhaps the first for a national park, is awaiting state clearance.

Source: Reshma Patil. 'Captive leopard starves to death', *The Indian Express*, 03/09/2002.

**2003**

### **NHSS takes up rehabilitation of those displaced by Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti (NHSS) has decided to take on the responsibility for the housing construction project for the rehabilitation of those recently evicted from the Sanjay Gandhi NP. The project will come up at Chandivli on land that belongs to Sumer Corporation. Earlier reports had suggested that the NHSS and Sumer Corporation were to jointly undertake this project.

As per the latest details, as many as 16,500 families will be accommodated in a township to be developed on 1.89 lakh sq metres of land. The Sumer Corporation had reportedly approached the NHSS with this offer from a total land of about 3.6 lakh sq metres that is in their possession. The balance cannot be used as it is in the no-development zone. Sumer Corporation, will in return, get transfer of development rights (TDR), which it could sell in the open market. There were some questions about the legality of the TDR, but the NHSS has also said that the TDR was being given as per government policy and there is no illegality involved.

Source: 'Shabana's NGO takes up resettlement plan', *The Times of India*, 07/02/2003.

### **TDR transferred for project for rehabilitation of those displaced by Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) recently released 11,690 sq mtrs of transfer of development rights (TDR) worth about Rs 10 crore to Sumer Developers (SD) for the project to rehabilitate those displaced from the Sanjay Gandhi NP. The rehabilitation project is coming up on land

belonging to SD and will be taken up by the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti (NHSS).

The 11,690 sq meters TDR was given to the developer as the first installment after the developer conveyed the title of 60,000 sq meters of the land to the slum rehabilitation authority (SRA) for the project.

The developer is expected to earn at least Rs 600 crore in the form of TDR for the project that will rehabilitate 16,000 families from the park on an 85-acre quarry in Chandivli.

The TDR certificate was issued by the SRA which is headed by the Chief Minister of the state. There has however been further controversy. It was reported that the TDR was issued just two days after the CM, Mr. Sushil Kumar Shinde, had himself ordered against its release. He said he wanted to study the matter before making a final decision.

Source: 'TDR given to builder after CM's stay order', *Times News Network*, 24/03/2003.

### **HC orders removal of encroachments from Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The Mumbai High Court recently directed the removal of all existing encroachments in the Sanjay Gandhi NP within six months. It has also directed the state to relocate the 33,000-odd slum dwellers who have been living on park land prior to 1995 in accordance with an earlier HC directive and the state slum rehabilitation policy. Eligible slumdwellers have to pay Rs 7,000 for the relocation. The court then stayed the implementation of the orders for eight weeks to enable the affected party to appeal to the SC.

The order was passed in a public interest litigation been filed by the BEAG. The state government has already demolished about 49,000 illegal hutments in the park between

1997 and 2000 but 12,000-odd illegal structures are still remaining.

Disposing off the 37-odd petitions on the issue, the judges said that as per the WLP and other forest laws, the encroachers have no right to continue residence inside the park. They observed that the occupants had been unable to establish, even prima facie, legal occupation of the land. The slumdweller's lawyers had questioned the validity of the park boundary, arguing that the slums actually fall outside the park boundary. It was also argued that parts of Yeoor hills, which houses many posh bungalows owned by politicians, were deliberately excluded from the national park boundary.

The court also dismissed a petition by the Shramik Mukti Andolan seeking permanent injunction against eviction of the park's original 2,500 adivasis. In this matter the court relied on DCF AR Bharati's report that the entire park's original tribals had been shifted to Palghar in the 80s. The court was of the opinion that the adivasis had not been able to prove that they are the original inhabitants.

Source: Swati Deshpande. 'HC orders to remove encroachments National Park', *Times News Network*, 15/09/03.

## **2004**

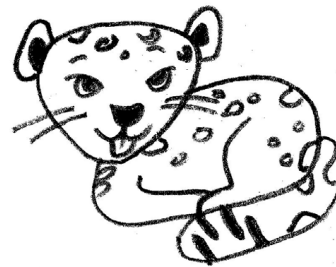
### **CM clears Chandivli resettlement plan for evacuees from Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr Sushil Kumar Shinde, has recently put his stamp of approval on the controversial Chandivli rehabilitation project for the 20,000 odd families that have been evicted from the Sanjay Gandhi NP. He had earlier refused to approve the project. The CM has now said that the earlier rehabilitation site at Shiridon village in Kalyan taluka had been cancelled and this has paved the way for the Chandivli project.

According to the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti, which is implementing the project, the work had started in November 2003. Currently, 48 buildings in five clusters are coming up and the first batch of 3,000 homes is expected to be ready by June 2004.

Source: 'CM clears Chandivli resettlement plan', *The Times of India*, 29/01/2004.

### **'Leopard Rescue Centre' for leopards of Sanjay Gandhi NP**



The FD has decided that leopards trapped in the vicinity of the Sanjay Gandhi NP will not be translocated. Instead they will be released in a 'Leopard Rescue Centre' that will be set up on 50 acres of land in Aarey Colony in Goregaon.

This decision was taken after a day long meeting that was held recently in Mumbai and attended by senior wildlife officers like the CWLW of Maharashtra, Mr K Subramaniam, Director Project Tiger, Dr. Rajesh Gopal, former Director, WII, Mr VB Sawarkar and NGOs like the BNHS and BEAG.

Source: 'Captive cats will get new home, to be left alone', *The Times of India*, 06/07/2004.

### **New residential zone proposed adjoining Sanjay Gandhi NP in Mumbai**

The Maharashtra government has proposed the conversion of a large tract of no-development zone (NDZ) land adjoining the Sanjay Gandhi NP into a residential

area. The land in question measures 1.2 lakh square metres and is located in the P-North Ward, Malad village. It comprises two plots of land that are sandwiched between the national park and the Dadasaheb Phalke Chitranagari (Film City).

The State Urban Development Department has directed the civic administration to modify the status of the land in view of the increasing population here. The proposal is presently before the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) Improvements Committee.

The larger plot of land (10 hectares) is not accessible by any municipal or private road, actual or proposed. The other plot (1.8 hectares) adjoins two proposed roads. The government has sought the change in reservation as the population growth in the area has outstripped the projected population in the revised development plan. The current population in the area is around five lakh.

It has been alleged that a well-known builder is keen on undertaking a housing project on the land, and the dereservation was being planned to facilitate the same. It is feared that this development will increase pressure on the forest ecosystem of the national park and would also lead to a situation of increased conflict between humans and wildlife.

Source: Clara Lewis. 'New homes may squeeze national park', *Times News Network*, 08/11/2004.

## **2005**

### **Ganesh immersions allowed in Sanjay Gandhi NP**

Public pressure forced officials of the Sanjay Gandhi NP to overturn their decision prohibiting immersion of Ganesh idols in a water body in the national park. Nearly 3,500 idols are immersed in a small pond

near the Borivili entrance of the park and this had to be allowed this year as well following requests from the police and the municipal authorities that a law and order problem could be created otherwise.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has assured the FD that they would make arrangements for a new artificial water body for the immersions next year.



Source: 'Immersion back at Natl Park', *The Times of India*, 09/09/2005.

## **2007**

### **Captured leopards to be released into the wild**

The Maharashtra FD will be shortly releasing 47 captured leopards back into the wild. The leopards were caught in 2004 and 2005 after straying from the Sanjay Gandhi NP. Electromagnetic chips will be planted in their tails to help in their capture in case they were to start attacking humans again.

The move of the FD comes as a result of an order of the MOEF for their release. The order is reported to have said that a year or more in captivity was too long for the animal and that they should now be freed.

It's not clear whether all the leopards to be released had been captured in Mumbai and which forests will they be set free in.

## State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra

Source: 'Indian leopards on parole, with tag and warning', <http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/39441/story.htm>.

### Vigil in Sanjay Gandhi NP and Tungareshwar WLS for Mahashivratri

A number of NGOs including the BNHS, Here On Project Environment, WWF – India, BEAG, Conservation Action Trust and concerned individuals kept a vigil in collaboration with the FD at the Sanjay Gandhi NP and the Tungareshwar WLS during Mahashivratri.

A vigil was kept at different entry points in and around the two PAs. People were allowed to follow predefined routes to reach the temple and were prevented from venturing into other areas of the forest.

Hawkers were allowed only at main entry points and this reduced garbage inside the forest. A number of prohibited items like plastic bags, matchboxes, cigarette packs, chillums and alcohol were confiscated from a number of visitors. A few forest fire incidents were observed that were immediately put off by the volunteers and forest guards.

Source: Email from Tejal Dhulla Vishweshvar

**2008**

### GIS-based surveillance for Sanjay Gandhi NP

A Geographical Information System (GIS) based surveillance network is to be installed for better patrolling and management of the forests of the Sanjay Gandhi NP. Called GeoVun, the network will be installed by the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) within the next six months. GeoVun allows the users a number of facilities like identifying the best routes for patrolling and for performing

spatial analysis. It integrates all maps and tables, and is a one-point warehouse of all the park data.

TCS, along with Conservation Action Trust and WTI Advanced Technology Limited are reported to have recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Maharashtra for the project. The total cost of Rs 30 lakhs will be borne by TCS as part of its corporate social responsibility program. The project has not, however, been formally announced yet.

Source: 'Eye in the sky for Mumbai's jungles', *The Hindustan Times*. 20/03/2018.

### Illicit liquor dens in Sanjay Gandhi NP may be responsible for leopard deaths



It has been suggested that the mysterious deaths of leopards in Sanjay Gandhi NP may have been caused by illicit liquor dens that operate in the forests here. The 25 illicit liquor dens that continue to operate here are set near waterholes and cause serious disturbance to the wildlife. Four of these are located near Goregaon and the other 20 are in Yeoor and Nagla.

It is believed that the liquor den operators are responsible for killing the leopards by either poisoning the waterholes that the animals visit or by poisoning the black jaggery (navsagar) that is used in the brewing of liquor.

Forest officials have so far maintained that the five recent leopard deaths the Yeoor range were due to natural causes. It has been pointed out, however, that none of the animals was estimated to be older than five years. Further, not a single forensic report has identified the exact cause of death.

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'Blame leopard deaths on liquor mafia', *DNA*, 10/04/2008.

### **SC allows eviction from Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The SC has recently permitted the Maharashtra government to remove the encroachments from the Sanjay Gandhi NP.

After the Mumbai HC gave a final order on the 1995 petition of the BEAG, eight special leave petitions (SLPs) were filed in the apex court challenging the eviction order. The SLPs came up for hearing in 2005 and the apex court ordered status quo on the SLP filed by Shabbir Siddiq Malik, who owns a house constructed on a plot of land bearing survey number 2391. The FD interpreted the status quo order as applicable to all the petitions.

The apex court has now made it clear that the status quo order should remain in force only in relation to one petition filed by Malik and that all other encroachments should be demolished.

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'Evict squatters from national park, says SC', *DNA*, 03/05/2008.

### **Sanjay Gandhi NP seeks more lions for safari**

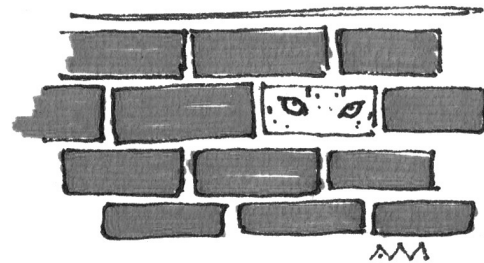
In a bid to boost its flailing lion safari, the Sanjay Gandhi NP is on the look out for more animals to add to its current population of two lions and one lioness. The park has initiated correspondence with the Central Zoo Authority, expressing

the wish to introduce two pairs of lions in its existing animal facility. The park has offered a couple of its six white tigers in exchange. At present, the park has two options to choose from, the Mysore Zoo and Bangalore's Bannerghatta Zoo.

SGNP officials are eager to get ahead since the park's lions are inadequate for safari purposes and are also too aged to reproduce. The lioness is barred from entering the safari zone since she cannot walk and the males have to be kept sheltered when ill or injured. Tourists have, consequently, often gone home disappointed after seeing the ailing lions, and sometimes, without seeing them at all.

Source: 'National park officials seek more Asiatic lions,' *The Times of India*, 25/11/2008.

### **Construction of wall around Sanjay Gandhi NP to be speeded up**



Following a series of four incidents of leopards straying out of the Sanjay Gandhi NP in one month, forest officials have decided to speed up construction of a 21-km 'leopard proof' wall around the park. The FD says that the wall will be ready in about a year's time and will prevent wildlife from straying into human settlements. 13 km of the wall has already been constructed and the state government has sanctioned Rs five crore for the work. The money has already been allotted to the Public Works Department.

NGOs like the Conservation Action Trust have however pointed out that the wall will not help keep leopards inside as they are expert climbers and can make use of the trees along the wall to jump across. It has also been pointed out that the existing wall is broken at many places in Malad, Dahisar and along the Western Express Highway and people who intend to encroach into national park land won't be deterred by it.

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'The great wall of Borivli', *DNA*, 23/12/2008.

## 2009

### Three leopard safaris for state

The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has approved a proposal of the Maharashtra State Government for setting up leopard safaris in three different parts of the state. These are to come up near Belwandi in Ahmednagar district, at Manikdoh in Pune district and at the Sanjay Gandhi NP in Mumbai.

60 leopards captured from various parts of the state will be rehabilitated in the safaris, the first of which will come up in the Ahmednagar district. The state government expects to spend Rs 10 crores for the establishment of these safaris.

Source: 'Forest dept. to set up three leopard safaris in state', <http://www.dnaindia.com/report.asp?newsid=1222153>.

### SC will not interfere in encroachment removal from Sanjay Gandhi NP

In a significant development, the SC recently said that it will not interfere with the judgments passed by the Mumbai HC on the removal of encroachments in the Sanjay Gandhi NP.

The apex court did not grant any stay on the demolitions but allowed the slumdweller

to approach the statutory authority with their grievances. A bunch of special leave petitions had been filed by groups of slumdweller before the SC in the matter. They had objected to the classification of all occupants as being illegal and called for a re-survey of the forest boundary.

Source: 'Mumbai HC free to decide on national park encroachment: SC', *The Times of India*, 06/03/2009.

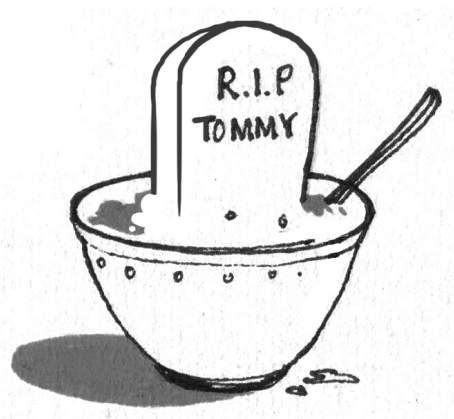
### Taxidermy centre in Sanjay Gandhi NP

Mumbai's Sanjay Gandhi NP will have the country's first taxidermy centre. The PCCF, Maharashtra, recently approved the proposal that had been received from the park authorities a few months ago. Grants are now awaited from the Central Government and it is estimated that Rs 10-15 lakhs will be needed for the same.

The centre will have provisions for skinning, tanning, moulding and casting of carcasses. It is hoped that the centre will play a useful role in education and creating awareness about wildlife and its conservation.

Source: 'Coming soon, country's first taxidermy centre at SGNP', *The Indian Express*, 14/04/2009.

### Dogs form 50% of leopard diet in Sanjay Gandhi NP





An analysis of 117 scats, collected between May 2008 and March 2009 by the BNHS has indicated that almost half of the prey of the leopards of the Sanjay Gandhi NP was constituted by the domestic dog.

Rodents and wild boar constitute the majority of the rest. The findings correlated with the results of the human-leopard interaction survey, which indicated that dog/livestock lifting is common in areas surrounding the park.

Source: 'Leopards prefer domestic dogs as prey', <http://www.midday.com/news/2009/may/270509-leopard-dogs.htm>.

### **11.44 acres reclaimed by Sanjay Gandhi NP**

11.44 acres of land of the Sanjay Gandhi NP that was in the possession of a private individual due to a clerical mistake was recently restored to the park. The issue is linked to land acquisition notices issued under the IFA on August 27, 1975, to owners of 987.2 acres of land bearing survey number 291 in Owala, Thane. 49.20 acres of this had already been sold by the original owners then, and the FD, which should have got possession of the remaining 937.22 acres, actually got only 926.12 acres.

After realising the mistake, the FD approached the court of the Sub Divisional Officer, Thane, for correction of the land records, which has now been made. Senior forest officials have pointed out that the land was situated at a prime location along Ghodbunder Road and was being eyed by many influential persons, including a few politicians. The FD is said to have been under tremendous pressure throughout these legal proceedings but managed to successfully regain the land.

Source: 'Borivili national park gets back land', *DNA*, 18/06/2009.

### **Soil testing in Tulsi Lake area in Sanjay Gandhi NP without FD permission**

Workers employed by the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) were found doing soil testing work in the Tulsi Lake area within the Sanjay Gandhi NP without the needed permissions. Park officials and those in the civic body initially claimed ignorance about the work. Neither had a clue about who gave permission for the work, or if any such permission was granted at all.

Forest officials subsequently visited the site, stopped the work and seized all the equipment. The lake is under the BMC but permission for surveys, repair works and new projects has to be taken because it falls within the national park.

About a year ago, the BMC had sought permission to lay pipes through the SGNP to connect the Bhandup water purification complex with the Malad reservoir. The MOEF had denied permission to dig up the park's core zone but it has been alleged that the staff at SGNP had unofficially allowed them to do so.

Source: Yogesh Naik. 'BMC's soil work puts wildlife to the test', *The Times of India*, 29/06/2009.

### **NGO alleges that Sanjay Gandhi NP authorities claiming land illegally in Malad area**

The Ghar Hakka Jagruti Parishad (GHJP), an organization representing the slum-dwellers of Malad has claimed that the Sanjay Gandhi NP management was illegally claiming land that never belonged to it. The land covers an area of 200 acres and is part of survey number 239(1) in Malad.

The NGO has argued that the SC has rejected the plea of the BEAG that the park area is occupied by unauthorized

occupants and held that the Mumbai HC has no jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution to decide the factual adjudication of encroachment, and that this can only be done by a competent statutory authority. The NGO also claimed that the SC had given the appellants the opportunity to move the appropriate authority to decide the issue.

FD officials have, however, said that re-measuring the boundaries cannot be done since Section [35(5)] of the WLPA does not allow alteration of boundaries unless a resolution is passed by the state legislative assembly.

Source: 'Forest dept laying claim to our land', *DNA*, <http://www.dnaindia.com/report.asp?newsid=1261022>.

### **Dismantled film sets degrading forests adjoining the Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The reckless dumping of waste from dismantled film and television sets has been degrading the forest area inside Film City that borders the Sanjay Gandhi NP. Most of the sets used in the entertainment industry are made using non-biodegradable items such as plaster of paris, plastic and thermocol and this aggravates the problem. The reckless dumping is not only degrading the forests but also polluting the water bodies in the area.

The BNHS which has its education centre adjoining the Film City has raised concerns about this. Volunteers from the BNHS recently collected 12 bagfulls of waste during a cleanup drive that was conducted within a one-kilometre radius of Film City.

The chief administrative official of Film City is reported to have said that the television and film units are responsible for the disposal of the sets and to keep the area clean. He also said that if environmental groups had complaints, those would be looked into.

Source: Simit Bhagat. 'Film sets killing Film City', *Times News Network*, 05/12/2009.

## **2010**

### **CCTV cameras at Sanjay Gandhi NP gates to track visitor movements**

In a move to keep track of visitors, the Sanjay Gandhi NP authorities have installed closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras at its two gates in Borivili and Yeoor. The idea is to ensure that all vehicle entries into the national park are recorded.

Others in the FD have however said that the cameras were necessary to keep a check on a number of 'heavyweights' who entered the park beyond the allowed timings. The Mumbai HC too has asked the FD not to allow anyone to enter the forest, especially from the Yeoor gate, after 6 pm.

Source: 'Cameras at SGNP gates for tracking visitor movements', *www.indianexpress.com* 17/01/2010.

### **Frequent forest fires in Sanjay Gandhi NP**



More than 25 instances of forest fire have been reported from various areas of the Sanjay Gandhi NP since January 2010. Areas where fires have been reported include Chena Village, Yeoor, Manpada, Warlipada,

Kajupada, Kavesar, Ghodbunder, Nagla Block, Tata Power in Borivili (East) and Malad (East).

The FD has deployed a team of 122 guards along with 200 labourers to control the fires. Citizens were also asked to report fires in the park to the forest control room at the number 28866449.

It has been pointed out that the main cause of the fires could be encroachers, slumdwellers, those living on the periphery of the park or tourists who are not careful when they throw cigarette butts or match-sticks

Source: Simit Bhagat. 'Frequent forest fires scorch national park', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, 28/03/2010.

### **Lioness in SGNP safari kills guard; report suggests better security measures**

A lioness in the lion safari at the Sanjay Gandhi NP killed a guard in an incident in the middle of April 2010, following which a male lion in the safari managed to escape. There was no clarity if the animal that had escaped was captured and if so when.

The lion safari spans 21 acres and has two safety gates at the entry. Only two guards are posted there, one at the ticketing office and one for the twin gates. An employee at the park is reported to have said that ideally the safety gates at the lion and tiger safari should have at least two guards, one manning the inside gate and the other the outside gate.

A report prepared subsequently by the ACF has highlighted the need for strengthening and upgrading the security mechanism. The report is yet to be finalized, following which corrective action may be taken.

Source: Nitya Kaushik. 'Lioness killing guard: SGNP report stresses gate switch', [www.expressindia.com](http://www.expressindia.com), 29/04/2010.

### **Satellite-collared leopard walks 120 km to Sanjay Gandhi NP**

A project involving satellite tracking of a collared leopard has documented a case of an animal that walked 120 kms to the forests of the Sanjay Gandhi NP. The leopard was released at Malshej Ghat in Pune district as part of joint effort between Project Waghoba and the Maharashtra Forest Department.

The animal had been rescued from a well in Alephata near the Pune-Nashik highway in July 2009. It was fitted with a collar and released near Malshej Ghat. The collar had a global positioning system (GPS) and global system for mobile communication (GSM). The readings of the leopard's position were stored in the collar and transmitted via SMS to the server whenever the animal reached an area that had mobile connectivity.

The animal took four months to complete its journey. In the process it crossed the railway line close to the station at Kasara and headed towards the Tansa and Tungreshwar WLSs before finally reaching the Nagla block in the northern part of the Sanjay Gandhi NP. It then swam across the Vasai creek, and crossed the busy Ghodbunder Road to enter the main area of the national park.

The tracking device reportedly malfunctioned when the animal crossed the creek and as a result the researchers lost track of it.

Source: Simit Bhagat. 'Spotted: Ajoba's trek from Malshej Ghat to national park' *The Times of India*, 30/06/2010.

## **2011**

### **Dedicated freight corridor to impact Sanjay Gandhi NP, Tungreshwar WLS**

The high profile dedicated freight corridor (DFC) will negatively impact the Sanjay

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

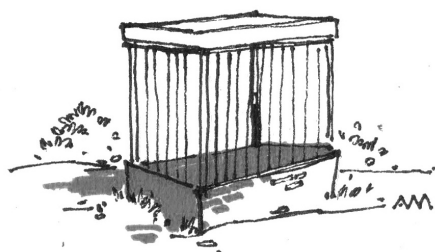
Gandhi NP and the Tungareshwar WLS. Parts of the Tungareshwar WLS are to be acquired for the corridor, which will also impact the movement of animals between these forest areas.

It has been noted that it is not just the 30-mt-wide stretch on which the rail tracks will come up that will be affected as land use will also change and impact other forest areas as well.

Railway officials have said that there was no possibility of an alternate line and the proposed route would cause the minimum damage to forest areas. Double the number of trees would be planted in compensation for those that will be cut for the project.

Source: Simit Bhagat. 'Project on track to wreck wildlife habitat: activists', [articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 21/02/2011), 21/02/2011.

### **200 acres from Sanjay Gandhi NP for zoo**



200 acres from the Sanjay Gandhi NP are to be used for a new zoo being proposed in Mumbai. The remaining 200 acres of land needed for the zoo will be acquired from Aarey Dairy in Goregaon. An announcement to this effect was made recently in the state assembly by the state Forest Minister, Mr Patangrao Kadam.

It was also pointed out that since the National Zoo Authority does not allow commercial activities on forestland, commercial exploitation would be on the land acquired from Aarey dairy. The project

is to be implemented by the FDCM on a build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis.

Source: Surendra Gangan. '200 acre Aarey land for international zoo in Mumbai', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 06/08/2011.

### **Leopard movement to be studied at SGNP to help deal with human-animal conflict**

Officials at the Sanjay Gandhi NP will use modern technology to track the movement of leopards within the park to handle the rising incidence of the wild cats moving into human habitats. The year-long project, named 'Mumbaikars for Sanjay Gandhi National Park and Leopards' will start on September 1. The FD has allocated Rs four lakh for the project that will be conducted by a 25-member team of wildlife scientists, experts and forest staff. It is hoped that this study will help in mitigating man-animal conflict around the national park.

In 2011 alone there have been seven cases of leopards being sighted in colonies on the periphery of the park in Malad, Goregaon, Mulund and Bhandup. Six camera traps, connected to a global positioning system, are being installed at various locations of the 103 sq km park and near Aarey colony, Goregaon, as part of the project.

Source: SGNP to study leopards to handle man animal conflict, [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 16/08/2011.

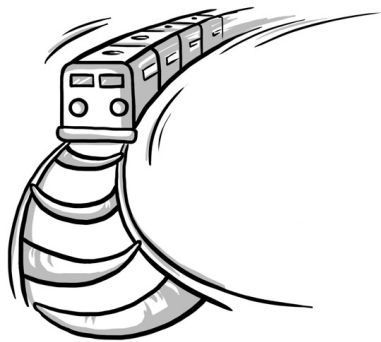
## **2012**

### **State clears the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor through Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The Maharashtra State Government's wildlife advisory board has cleared a part of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor that is to pass through the Tungareshwar area. The Chief Minister, Mr. Prithviraj Chavan,

has reportedly asked for that part of the rail corridor that passes through Tungareshwar area to be elevated so as not to disturb wildlife movement. He has also asked for installation of chain-link fences along the existing railway track that runs through the sanctuary to ensure safety of the animals and for underpasses for use by the animals.

The 1483 km Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor is a USD 90 billion project to be executed with financial and technical aid from Japan.



Source: Yogesh Naik. 'State clears freight corridor via SGNP', [www.mumbaimirror.com](http://www.mumbaimirror.com), 08/06/2012.

### **Hi-tech digital cameras to be installed in Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The Sanjay Gandhi NP authorities are all set to install five hi-tech cameras that will enable monitoring of animals on a real-time basis. The cameras are also capable of instantly emailing pictures to the authorities.

10 camera traps are already operational in the park and these new cameras will be in addition to the existing 10. It is hoped that these hi-tech cameras will also help in tackling illegal activities in the forests here. The cameras were procured and custom-fitted by the Navi Mumbai based Solar Spectrum Energy Systems.

Source: Virat Singh. 'SGNP to get hi-tech cameras that can mail animals' photos', *Mumbai Mirror*, 25/06/2012.

## **2013**

### **FD opposes buffer zone around the Sanjay Gandhi NP**

Strongly opposing views have emerged between the SC appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) and the Maharashtra FD in the matter of a buffer zone for the Sanjay Gandhi NP. While the CEC has recommended the creation of a 500 meter buffer zone around the park, the FD has argued that none be created. In reports sent to senior authorities in August 2012, the RFO-Mumbai and ACF-Thane had stated that the ESZ should be "0.00 km".

Justifying their stand against a buffer zone, the FD explained that the area bordering the national park had been developed and that the residents along the hilly tract around Mumbai and Thane are opposed to any move that prevents future development. While one section of the FD is reportedly of the opinion that they have been "practical" in recommending a zero-width buffer zone in the Mumbai-Thane belt around SGNP, another group is opposed to such a blanket clearance for development outside the sanctuary.

Source: Nitin Yeshwantrao. 'Forest department, panel lock horns over eco-zone', *The Times of India*, 21/11/2012.

### **High-voltage line through Sanjay Gandhi NP, Tungareshwar WLS approved**



The MoEF and State forest and wildlife authorities have approved a proposal for a high-voltage wire network through certain portions of the Sanjay Gandhi NP and the Tungareshwar WLS. The network is expected to add 1,200 MW power for Mumbai from within and outside the state by 2016-17.

Source: Chittaranjan Tembhekar. 'Power network through Sanjay Gandhi National Park gets sanction', *The Times of India*, 05/02/2013.

### **New rescue centre for leopards at the Sanjay Gandhi NP**

A new rescue centre for leopards at the Sanjay Gandhi NP is expected to be ready by the end of December 2013. The centre will be spread over one acre of land and is located in the Mafco factory area of the national park. The work has been carried out by the Public Works Department. It will comprise 22 cages in a single building and the leopards will have access to a larger 'exercise area' when they are let out of the cages.

At present, 18 cages are housed in two buildings, with an area of 100 sq ft per animal. As per norms, at least 125 sq ft area should be available for each animal. At the new centre, each animal will get around 175 sq ft area.

Source: 'New home for rescued leopards to be ready soon', *The Indian Express*, 03/11/2013.

## **2014**

### **Three-month bird survey in Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The authorities of the Sanjay Gandhi NP have initiated a three-month bird survey in the park. A 10-km stretch from Hathi Gate at Film City to Kanheri caves has

been chosen for the survey, which will be conducted every weekend with the help of teams that will be made up of an expert birder, a forest guard and two volunteers. Each team will be allotted a two-km stretch for the purpose of the survey.

It is hoped that the survey will generate interesting and useful data on the birdlife in the park and will help eventually in protection and conservation activities.

Source: Virat Singh. 'Expert birders to conduct 3-month survey at SGNP', *Mumbai Mirror*, 11/01/2014

### **Sanjay Gandhi NP gets Rs 15 crore compensation for proposed freight corridor**

The Sanjay Gandhi NP has been given Rs 15 crore as compensation for the proposed Delhi-Mumbai Freight Corridor (DMFC) that will pass through the park. The kilometre-long section of the Diva-Vasai railway line that passes through the SGNP will be upgraded and expanded as part of the DMFC project. At present, there is only one line. The goods trains that will use the corridor will be run at greater frequency and hence, an additional line is to be added.

Praveen Pardeshi, Principal Secretary, Revenue and Forests, Maharashtra, has said that no additional forestland is being made available for the freight corridor, work for which will start in a year.

Source: Clara Lewis. 'Sanjay Gandhi National Park gets Rs 15 crore for freight belt', *The Times of India*, 25/06/2014.

### **NBWL clearance a must for constructions near Sanjay Gandhi NP**

The FD has informed the Mumbai and Thane Municipal Corporations that a clearance is needed from the NBWL for

construction projects over 20,000 sq m that are located within a 10 km radius of the Sanjay Gandhi NP. A circular to this effect was issued in the first week of December by the CCF and Director, SGNP.

The FD had, in 2014, submitted a proposal demarcating an area within 0.1 km to 2 km from the periphery of the national park as the ESZ. The MoEF, however, is yet to notify the proposal and until then, any non-forestry activity, especially construction over 20,000 sq m, requires a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the NBWL.

The National Real Estate Development Council said that a majority of the buffer zone area falls in the residential zone, and the move is likely to add to the procedural delays in several ongoing and proposed projects between Borivili and Bandra and from Sion to Thane, in addition to a few areas in Thane district. The CCF has, however, pointed out that most projects were bypassing the NOC requirement as the planning agencies had not cared to implement the MOEF orders in the first place.

Source: Shalini Nair. 'Out of blue, new blues for real estate projects in Mumbai suburbs, Thane', *Indian Express*, 17/12/2014.

'Construction near SGNP to need wildlife board nod', *The Times of India*, 18/12/2014.

## **2015**

### **Illegal research carried out on animals at VJBU and Sanjay Gandhi NP in 2001**

While the Prevention of Cruelty against Animals Act states that experimentation on animals in zoos or protected areas is illegal, details procured from the Bombay Veterinary College (BVC) via an RTI application have revealed that chemical experiments were carried out on tigers and

deer at the Veermata Jijabai Bhosle Udyan (VJBU) and the Sanjay Gandhi NP. The research, conducted for a dissertation by two students from the BVC in 2001, sought to understand drug reactions on animals. While all tigers showed inverse effects to the drug administration, two deer died during the experiments in the zoo, the RTI response stated. The details were obtained by Sunish Subramanian Kunju, Secretary, Plant and Animal Welfare Society, Mumbai.

Both the VJBU and the SGNP had rejected Kunju's request three times saying no such experiments were carried out as per their records. The proof, however, came from the thesis written by students of the BVC. The submitted thesis says that the tests were conducted on six tigers, three male and three female, from the VJBU and SGNP. The tigers were anesthetized using a blowgun and were kept on fast for the same during the research without the presence of any anesthetic experts. Side effects of the anesthesia such as apnea, severe respiratory distress, vomiting and excessive salivation were noted during the experiment. These side effects were observed in 5 out of 11 trials conducted on the tigers. The animals also showed severe cardiac and respiratory repression after administration of xylazine and ketamine.

Burdizzo experiments for castration were also conducted on the deer in the zoo, and one of the animals died while anesthesia was being administered to it. The other deer showed severe respiratory distress after the onset of anesthesia. The paper states that the postmortem conducted on both deer showed severe congestion along with extensive escape of blood in the brain. The PCCF is reported now to have ordered an investigation into the matter.

Source: Swati Jha. 'Illegal research carried out at SGNP, zoo', *The Asian Age*, 09/03/2015.

## Expert panel ignores wildlife and biodiversity in Aarey Colony in Mumbai

After the authorities said there was “no wildlife” at the Metro III site in the Aarey Colony in Mumbai, the Chief Minister’s expert panel also failed to mention wildlife or biodiversity in its report. The Metro-III project continues, therefore, to threaten the 2,298 trees as well as the wildlife at the Aarey Colony, which is situated in the vicinity of the Sanjay Gandhi NP.

The expert panel has now submitted its final report suggesting that Kanjurmarg, not Aarey, is the best possible location for the Metro car depot. It has, at the same time, also hinted that if acquiring land at Kanjurmarg is not possible, a “double-decked” car shed can be built in Aarey Colony itself. The report says that this will increase the project cost by Rs 750 crore, but will only need the cutting of 446 trees and will also need less space – 20.82 hectares instead of the 30 hectares proposed initially. The committee has not mentioned existence of wildlife or biodiversity at the proposed Metro site in Aarey Colony; instead it has mentioned only the threat to native and exotic species of trees there. A source from the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority is reported to have said that if they had mentioned that wildlife is also found at the plot, then constructing a car depot in Aarey would have become next to impossible.

Environmental activists have expressed objections to this viewpoint, insisting that the Metro poses a threat not just to the trees but also to the rich biodiversity in Aarey, including species such as the leopard and the Indian rock python.

Source: Ranjeet Jadhav. ‘Mumbai Metro-III car shed: Expert panel’s report also ignores wildlife in Aarey’, *Mid Day*, 17/08/2015.

## Two new species of spider discovered in Mumbai

A team of young naturalists has discovered two spider species at Aarey Milk Colony, near the Sanjay Gandhi NP. The species, which belong to the families of spitting and lynx spiders, have been named *Dictis mumbaiensis* (after Mumbai city) and *Peucetia phantasma*, after the silvery ghost tree *Sterculia urens* on which it is found to nest and hunt.

The records were published recently by the Indian Society of Arachnology in its journal *The Indian Journal of Arachnology*.

Source: Vijay Singh. ‘Two new species of spiders found at Mumbai’s Aarey Milk Colony’, *The Times of India*, 29/07/2015.

## No permission for new projects around SGNP: NGT

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has restrained the government and other planning authorities from granting permissions to any new projects within 10 km of the boundary of the Sanjay Gandhi NP. The bar on such new sanctions would remain until the NBWL issues a notification for a change in the demarcation of the ESZ.

The order, according to those in the real estate field, will have a debilitating impact on an already weak real estate industry in Mumbai. It will impact construction in and around the park, especially in Goregaon (East), Malad (East) Borivili (East) and Mulund, where applications for projects, mainly slum redevelopment projects, abound.

The NGT, however, clarified that its order would not apply to ongoing projects. There is also a draft notification issued by the NBWL, which proposes to reduce the ESZ to 100 metres from the park boundary at certain places, keeping in mind construction.



Source: Swati Deshpande. 'NGT bars new projects within 10 km of SGNP', *The Times of India*, 09/12/2015.

## Maharashtra to set up leopard safaris near Sanjay Gandhi NP and Tadoba Andhari TR



The Maharashtra State Government has decided to set up two leopard safaris—one in Chandrapur and the other at the Sanjay Gandhi NP in Mumbai. A committee under the Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis, has cleared the proposal for both the safaris and work is expected to start soon. The information was provided by the state Forest Minister, Sudhir Mungantiwar, recently while he was replying to a query in the legislative assembly.

Only leopards which have attacked people after straying into human settlements will be relocated to these safaris. Five such leopards are currently caged in Tadoba-Andhari TR in Chandrapur. Of these, one had attacked eight people while another had attacked a small girl recently. The leopard safari in Chandrapur will be located around TATR.

The PCCF-Wildlife said that the FD will start working on the project after getting approval from the government. The work would involve identification of an appropriate area for the safaris, appointments of consultants and taking required permissions from concerned authorities.

Source: 'Leopard Safaris in Chanda and Mumbai', *The Times of India*, 15/12/2015.

## SEWRI WETLANDS

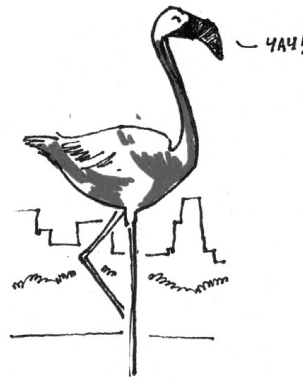
2008

### Protected area status proposed for Sewri Mahul Wetlands

The Mumbai based NGO, Srushti Dnyan, has proposed the creation of a three sq km wildlife sanctuary in the Sewri-Mahul coastal area for the protection of the coastal ecology and the large number of flamingoes that visit here regularly. The area will be seriously threatened if the proposed trans-harbour sea link project is approved.

The NGO has also proposed the creation of a permanent conservation and education centre, developing educational literature and teaching aids, mangrove trails, bird watching, and field study visits for conservation of avifauna here.

The CCF-Wildlife, Mumbai, has said that the suggestions by the NGO and the PA proposal will be forwarded to the MoEF.



Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'Declare Sewree-Mahul wetland as protected area' *DNA*, 15/04/2008.

2014

### Rs 800 cr plan to limit damage to Sewri Wetlands

The state government has said it will spend Rs 800 crore to limit damage caused to

the Sewri Wetlands by the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL). The project which involves the construction of a 22 km bridge from Sewri to Nhava in New Mumbai poses a significant threat to the wetlands that are used by many bird species including flamingoes.

The BNHS has been demanding shifting of the MTHL's starting point in Sewri to 500 meters south of the current proposed location to minimize the destruction of the mudflats. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), the agency implementing the project, has expressed its inability to do so and has decided, instead, to appoint an environmental consultant and allocate an estimated budget of Rs 800 crore to minimize ecological losses. This budget is around nine per cent of the total estimated project cost. ARUP, a global firm responsible for the environmental consultancy for the Hong Kong-Shenzhen corridor, will be given the responsibility for the MTHL. The Chief Engineer, MMRDA, said that the project was being modified by taking into account the environmental concerns.

The total project cost of around Rs 10,000 crore will be mainly met by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The agreements for the project are expected to be inked in the next six-eight months.

Source: Alok Deshpande. 'Rs 800-crore plan to save flamingo habitat', *The Hindu*, 26/11/2014.

## **2015**

### **Forest clearance withheld for MTHL through the Sewri mudflats**

The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) of the MoEF has withheld clearance for the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) as it will affect the existing mangroves as well

as the flamingo population here. The FAC has directed the Maharashtra government to submit a study report detailing the project's impact. It also advised the state to rope in the BNHS or the WII for the report. The cost of the report is to be borne by the project proponent, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA).

The MTHL's starting point poses a threat to around 20,000-30,000 flamingos and the critical mangrove habitat. Though the Sewri mudflats have been enlisted as an 'Important Bird Area', they are already heavily polluted because of the coal storage depots, shipyards and domestic sewage nearby.

For several years, the project's alignment has been opposed by environmental groups and the BNHS had even proposed an alternative alignment 500-700 metres southwards to mitigate MTHL's ecological threat. It was, however, shot down by MMRDA due to the cost implications.

The FAC, while considering the project earlier, had noted that neither the state's CWLW nor the MMRDA had made any mention of the alternative alignment. In fact, in lieu of the project's potential impact on flamingos, the state government had planned to notify the sea link's north end as a flamingo sanctuary. The FAC has now also asked the state government to apprise them on the declaration of the proposed 'flamingo sanctuary'.

Source: Nikhil M Ghanekar. 'Flamingos hit Rs 11,000-crore Trans Harbour Link; centre holds clearance', *DNA*, 12/04/2015.

### **MTHL gets wildlife board's approval**

The Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link project has got an approval from the state wildlife board. The development came after the Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis, approved the creation of a 1,600-hectare

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

flamingo sanctuary at Mahul-Sewri. This is in addition to the Thane creek sanctuary that was notified in August.

The Mahul-Sewri sanctuary will have three parts: the Mahul-Sewri Zone, the TSC-

NRI wetlands of Palm Beach Road in Navi Mumbai, and the Panje-Funde Zone, also in Navi Mumbai.

Source: 'Wildlife board approval for MTHL project', *The Times of India*, 04/12/2015.

## TANSA WLS

### 2011

#### A number of proposed dams in Thane district to impact Tansa WLS

Following are the details of dams proposed in the Thane and Raigad districts mainly to ensure continued and regular water supply to the city of Mumbai. A number of these dams are expected to have serious impacts on the local people, many of whom are tribal. They will also impact the forests here, including parts of the Tansa WLS.

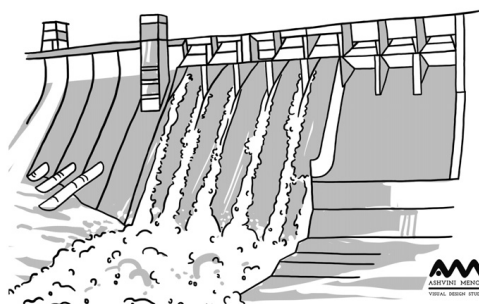
Dam	Dist.	Storage Capacity MCM	Submergence area (ha)	Forest area affected (ha)	Population affected	EC* required?
Kalu	Thane	407.99	2100	999	3196	No
Shai	Thane	348 (planned utilization PU)	Not available	43000 trees to be cut	5124	No
Middle Vaitarna	Thane	172 (PU)	3473	760; over 100000 trees cut	8villages (min. 1600 people)	Cleared. Submerging part of Tansa WLS.
Balganga	Raigad	127.76 (PU)	1240	265	8000	No
Gargai	Thane	180 (PU)	NA	NA	NA	Yes, affecting part of Tansa WLS
Pinjal	Thane	425 (PU)	NA	NA	NA	Yes, affecting part of Tansa WLS
Barvi	Thane	250 (PU)	NA	1214	3375	No

\*EC- Environmental Clearances

Source: Parineeta Dandekar. 'No EIA, no public hearings, no clearances, no monitoring: They are benign dams!', *Dams, Rivers and People*, Jun-Jul-Aug 2011.

**2012**

### **State wildlife board clears Gargai Dam; to submerge part of Tansa WLS**



The Maharashtra State Wildlife Board has cleared the Gargai Dam that will submerge a part of the Tansa WLS. The approval was granted on June 5, 2012 and the proposal will now be sent to the NBWL for final clearance.

The 440 million litres per day (MLD) dam is to come up on the Gargai river in the Wada Taluka of Thane district and is being constructed, mainly, to supply water to the city of Mumbai. An EIA report is being prepared by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI). It is expected that the EIA report will be cleared by the MoEF by December next year. The actual work on the dam will then begin in 2014 and is slated to be completed in four years.

Source: Eknath Makne. 'Gargai dam gets nod; now, over to Centre', *DNA*, 14/08/2012.

**2014**

### **Forest owllet spotted in Tansa WLS**

The critically endangered Forest owllet, believed to be endemic to the Satpuda Mountain Range in Central India, was recently spotted in the Tansa WLS in the

Western Ghats. The bird was first seen here in October 2014 by naturalists Sunil Laad and Rohidas Dagale, who are associated with the BNHS. The place where it was located is a dry deciduous forest with open patches very similar to the bird's typical habitat in the Satpuda ranges. However, this location in Tansa is partially degraded due to human disturbances.

The bird was considered to be extinct for 113 years, until researchers rediscovered it in 1997 in the Toranmal RF, Shahada in the Satpuda ranges in Nandurbar District, Maharashtra. Later studies established its presence across the Satpuda ranges—from Piplod in Gujarat and Toranmal to Yawal and Melghat in Maharashtra and Kalibhit in Madhya Pradesh.

Source: 'Critically endangered Forest Owllet spotted in Western Ghats', *The Hindu*, 29/11/2014.

## **THANE CREEK WLS**

**2014**

### **Protected area status proposed for part of the Thane Creek**

The Maharashtra FD is said to be working on a proposal for the notification of a seven-eight kilometres stretch of mangrove forests and adjoining mudflats along the western part of the Thane creek as a protected area. The stretch falls between Vashi and Airoli bridges and will exclude the main creek. The area is rich in mangroves and is also host to a number of bird species including the flamingo, Painted stork, osprey, tern, heron, ibis, white-bellied sea eagle and the plover.

Officials said that the declaration will not impact traditional fishing and related activities because the main creek area where the fishing takes place will not be included in the PA. It was also noted that notifying this stretch as a protected area was an

environmental impact mitigation condition for the Navi Mumbai International Airport and Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link projects.

The FD plans to start educational boat tours from the Gateway of India to this area once the notification has been made. The tour would include a stop at Elephanta Island, where the FD guesthouse will be converted into a nature interpretation centre that will have information regarding coastal biodiversity. The FD proposes to rope in local fishermen and boat operators for the tours and will also involve local fishermen in crab farming and creek cleaning activities within the protected area.

The area is already an Important Bird Area and the state wildlife board, which met recently, recommended that this stretch also be declared a Ramsar site.

Source: Anjali Lukose. 'Forest Dept proposes 'protected area' along Thane Creek', *The Indian Express*, 04/03/2014.

## 2015

### Thane Creek area to be declared as Flamingo Sanctuary



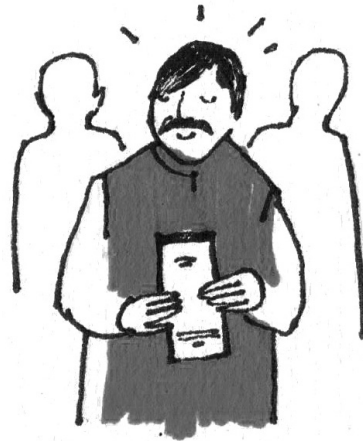
The Maharashtra State Government has decided to declare a 17 sq km area in the Thane Creek as a Flamingo Sanctuary and to also get the stretch declared as a Ramsar Site. The decision was taken at the recently held meeting of the state wildlife

board in the presence of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Forest Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar along with other forest officials.

The area is home to nearly 25,000 flamingoes and 205 different species of birds have been reported from here. The area is currently not under the control of the FD. An initial proposal to have the area protected was prepared and submitted by the NGO, Vanashakti in 2013-14.

Source: Sujit Mahamulkar. 'Maharashtra to declare Thane creek area as 'Flamingo Sanctuary'', *The Times of India*, 23/06/2015.

### A booklet on 'Birds of Thane Creek' released



Maharashtra Forest Minister, Mr Sudhir Mungantiwar, recently released a booklet on the 'Birds of Thane Creek'. Published by the Mangrove Cell under the Central government's Indo-German GIZ Project on Coastal and Marine Protected Areas, it has been authored by noted birder, Sunjoy Monga.

The Maharashtra government recently declared a part of the Thane Creek spread over 1,690 acres as a 'Flamingo sanctuary'.

Source: 'First ever documentation of bird species in Thane Creek released', Press Trust of India, 16/08/15.

## **TIPESHWAR WLS**

**2001**

### **Irrigation project threatens Tipeswar WLS**

The Tipeswar WLS in Yawatmal district is threatened by the Lower Painganga Irrigation Project, which is expected to submerge 4.82 hectares of land inside the sanctuary and another 1,105 hectares of forest land around it.

The project on the River Painganga which was estimated to cost Rs 1,400 crores in 1995 is an interstate venture between the governments of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. It was sanctioned in 1998 and is expected to irrigate a total of 1,60,050 hectares of land in the districts of Yawatmal and Chandrapur in Maharashtra and Adilabad in Andhra Pradesh.

The Government of India is yet to give clearance to the project under the FCA, 1980 and reportedly no public hearing has been held as mandated under the EPA, 1986 either.

The proposal had been sent to CF, Nagpur, who then made a site inspection visit on July 7, 2001. He is supposed to have suggested that the construction of the canal be restricted to a minimum area, that a wire fencing be erected along the canal for the safety of wild animals and for the construction of a bridge for wildlife to cross the canal. The Irrigation Department has agreed to this, and the CCF (WL) is also reported to have given permission to the project on the terms mentioned by the CF (WL), Nagpur.

Source: Kishore Rithe. Email dated 30/08/2001.

## **TUNGARESHWAR WLS**

**2003**

### **New sanctuary at Tungareshwar**

The 85 sq km Tungareshwar forests, north of the Sanjay Gandhi NP have been declared a wildlife sanctuary. It is hoped that this large chunk of contiguous forest would help in improving animal habitats and ensuring the protection of their migratory corridors.

This is the 35th sanctuary in the state now in addition to the five national parks. The announcement declaring the sanctuary was made by the Chief Minister of the state recently during the Seminar of the Centenary Journal of the BNHS held in Mumbai.

The gazette notification for the same has also been issued.

Source: 'Tungareshwar made wildlife sanctuary', *The Hindu Business Line*, 14/11/2003.

**2008**

### **Spotted deer from Powai park to be moved to Tungareshwar WLS**



75 spotted deer, presently at the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) Powai park, are to be soon freed in the forests of the Tungareshwar WLS. The decision to release these animals was taken

about a year ago but the final approvals came only recently. The animals will be moved in batches of 10-15 depending on how the first batch of introduced animals adapt to their new habitat.

About two years ago, the BMC's Hydraulic Department, which manages the Powai park, had admitted in a letter to the CF that it did not have proper infrastructure, skilled staff and a veterinary doctor to maintain the animals, and therefore, requested permission to release the deer in the wild. Keeping the deer in the park was costing the authorities over Rs 15 lakh annually. The facilities too were not very good and the low lying enclosure would get regularly flooded during the monsoons.

An RTI application made by the NGO PAWS, last year had revealed that the deer had been kept in Powai park for 40 years without permissions from the Central Zoo Authority's (CZA) or wildlife authorities.

Source: 'Shifting of deer from Powai park to begin by March end', [www.expressindia.com](http://www.expressindia.com).

### **Illegal temple construction in Tungareshwar WLS**



Trouble has been brewing in the Tungareshwar WLS on account of the illegal construction of a temple within the boundaries of the sanctuary.

The ashram trustees have been denied permission by the Central Government to construct the temple and their bid to get the

temple regularized was also turned down. They were asked to vacate the premises in the sanctuary by April 30, 2008. Work on the construction, however, has gone on, allegedly with high-level political patronage. Apart from the illegal construction inside the sanctuary, the trustees of the ashram also violated the WLPA by keeping four peacocks at the ashram premises.

Things took a nasty turn on April 30, when a team of forest officers attempted to raid the ashram in order to confiscate the peacocks. In retaliation, the discontented devotees at the ashram locked up the forest officers and thrashed them with sticks, stones and iron rods. The officers were released only after a team from the Virar Police Station reached the site some three hours after the incident. The police is reported to have criticized the forest officials for initiating such a raid without police permission. The policemen initially made no attempt to arrest the culprits, but subsequently registered an offence under sections 143, 353, 332 and 345 of the IPC. Seven people were arrested for the assault but were later released on bail. The assaulted officials have still not been provided the police protection that they have been demanding.

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'Illegal temple coming up in wildlife sanctuary', *DNA*, 21/04/2008.

Ashwin Aghor. 'Forest officials beaten up, cops let culprits go', *DNA*, 02/05/2008.

Ashwin Aghor. 'Mob armed with sticks, rods thrashed us for 3 hours', *DNA*, 03/05/2008

Ashwin Aghor. 'Apathy upsets forest officials', *DNA*, 08/05/2008.

### **No support from police to demolish illegal ashram in Tungareshwar WLS: FD**

Forest officials have alleged that the Thane (Rural) Police has refused to give the FD any

assistance in demolishing an 'illegal' ashram inside the Tungareshwar WLS. The FD had planned the demolition in the last week of May but could not go ahead because of lack of police support. Trouble has been brewing in the sanctuary for a while now, and forest officials had been allegedly assaulted by the ashram office bearers when they had gone there in early May to carry out the demolition.

The police, on the other hand, have said that help to the forest officials had never been denied. They have pointed out that since this was a religious issue, it could become a law and order problem, and would therefore have to be dealt with in a careful manner.

Source: 'Police refusing support to raze 'illegal' ashram: Forest department', [www.expressindia.com](http://www.expressindia.com), 30/05/2008

## 2009

### Deer from Powai Park released in Tungareshwar WLS

About 85 deer from Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's (BMC) Powai park were recently released in the Tungareshwar WLS. The plan for their release had been finalized more than two years ago. The animals were transported to Tungareshwar in batches in special trucks as per the guidelines of the IUCN.

They were all medically tested and declared fit before their relocation. The animals were kept and fed in an enclosure at Tungareshwar for a few days before being finally released.

In February 2006, the BMC had requested the forest officials to release the deer into Sanjay Gandhi NP following which the FD seized the animals stating that the BMC had no permission to keep the deer in their custody and display them. Subsequent to the seizure, the animals were handed back to the BMC to be kept in the same conditions 'till further instructions'.

Source: 'Finally, Powai deer breathe free', *The Indian Express*, 30/01/2009.

## 2015

### Seven poachers nabbed in Tungareshwar WLS



Seven poachers were recently nabbed by the FD inside the Tungareshwar WLS. The accused have been booked under several sections, including setting fire, hunting and trespassing of the IFA, 1927, sections under the WLPAs as well as the Arms Act.

The FD, which had already intensified patrolling in the forest area after they found a carcass of a leopard at the Shilonda trail of the Sanjay Gandhi NP, managed to nab seven people with guns. 13 others, however, managed to escape. The accused, most of whom are residents of Rajavali village, claimed that they had planned to hunt a wild boar for a party planned by them. They denied any involvement in the leopard poaching case, however.

Source: Virat Singh. 'Forest department nabs seven poachers from Tungareshwar wildlife sanctuary', *DNA*, 30/12/2015.

## UMRED-KARHANDLA WLS

## 2012

### State notifies Umred-Karhandla WLS and Kolamarka Conservation Reserve

The Maharashtra government has notified two new protected areas in the Vidarbha



region of the state. One is the 189.29 sq km Umred-Karhandla WLS near Nagpur and the other is a 187 sq km conservation reserve in Kolamarka, Sironcha of Gadchiroli district specifically for the conservation of wild buffaloes. These along with the recent additions to the Bor and Nagzira WLSs and the Nawegaon NP have increased the PA coverage in the region by over 500 sq km.

The new sanctuary will include 22 RF compartments (61.57 sq km) of Kuhi, Bhiwapur and Paoni ranges, 53 PF compartments (116.42 sq km) including 11 compartments of the FDCM, 0.94 sq km of revenue forest land and 10.36 sq km of private land. There are four villages inside the sanctuary and these are slated for relocation. A provision of Rs 25 lakh has already been made for construction of water holes and protection measures in the new sanctuary.

These are also the forests where a tigress had fallen into a canal of the Gosikhurd dam project in October 2011. She was rescued and later released in the wild with a radio collar. Confirmation that the area acts as a corridor came when the tigress was observed moving towards Tadoba.

The total number of PAs in the state has now gone up to 40. The notification of new PAs was necessitated after the government last year de-notified over 7,000 sq km of the GIB Sanctuary, leading to a reduction in total PA area of the state.

Source: 'State's newest sanctuary is 50 kms from city', *The Times of India*, 09/06/2012.

'Maharashtra to get new Tiger Corridor in Umred', *The Times of India*, 08/06/2012.

## **2014**

### **Umred-Karhandla WLS officials catch nine poachers**

Officials of the Umred-Karhandla WLS caught nine alleged poachers inside the

sanctuary in early April. The poachers were identified as residents of Budhwaripeth, Umred and are known to be habitual offenders. It is believed that they had been frequenting the area for long but have been caught for the first time. Two of their accomplices did, however, manage to escape.

The group was caught in compartment number 1415 in Karhandla beat. They had sneaked into the park on seven bicycles and two motorcycles with an alleged intention to poach wild animals. A dozen weapons like spears, sickles, knives, and big, thick nets were also confiscated from them. Those apprehended were produced before the court and the Judicial Magistrate sent them to custody till April 14.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. '9 poachers nabbed in Umred-Karhandla', *The Times of India*, 12/04/2014.

## **YAWAL WLS**

### **2004**

#### **Forest owlet discovered in Yawal WLS**

A team from the BNHS and the Satpuda Foundation recently recorded the presence of the endangered forest owlet in the Yawal WLS in Jalgaon District. The two nearest known locations for the bird are at Shahada, 120 km west to Yawal and Melghat, 150 km to the east.

Source: Email from Kishor Rithe. 25/05/2004.

### **2013**

#### **No basis yet for declaration of Critical Wildlife Habitat: a report from Yawal WLS**

The FD organized a meeting in the month of April 2013 to discuss issues related to the

Yawal WLS. The meeting was organized in response to a request from the Lok Sangharsh Morcha in light of some developments related to the declaration of a critical wildlife habitat (CWH) here. Newspapers, for instance, had been reporting that there was a proposal, which listed about 16 villages to be relocated for creation of the CWH. There was, however, no explanation on how these villages had been identified and when the committee that identified these villages had been constituted.

The meeting was attended by officials from the revenue and forest departments and about 100 representatives from various villages around the sanctuary, mainly from the Bhil community. The FD informed during the meeting that a committee for the identification of the CWH had indeed been formed on the basis of a Maharashtra state G.R. (No. WLP-9007/279/F-1) dated 11th October 2011, which directs all PA managers in the state to constitute a committee under section 5.1 of the draft protocol for identification of CWH.

It was pointed out in the meeting, however, that action on the ground cannot be initiated on the basis of a draft protocol, which in any case is currently under revision. In response to a demand from the participants the FD agreed to stop any further process towards identification of the CWH till the protocol was finalized. It was also pointed out that no such process can begin until recognition of rights had been completed. Both, individual and community forest rights under the FRA have been filed in all the villages within the sanctuary about a year ago but no response has been received from the concerned agencies.

Prior to this meeting and following substantial pressure from local activists, the above-mentioned committee had, in fact, already been dissolved and was in the process of being reconstituted. This was in response to objections raised by the activists to the

inclusion of ‘ecologists’ and ‘tribal experts’ who they believed had little connection with the area. They have demanded that the committee should include people who are qualified and are actually working with the local people and have knowledge of the local ecosystems. It was also suggested that in Schedule V areas, any such committee when constituted, must be approved by the local gram sabhas.

Source: Trip report by Neema Pathak, C/o Kalpavriksh

### **Fresh encroachments reported in Yawal WLS after cut-off date for FRA**

About 177 sq km area of Yawal WLS is reported to have been encroached upon after the cut-off date of December 13, 2005, as prescribed under the FRA. Although the encroachments have been reported since 2006, their pace is alleged to have increased alarmingly in the last couple of years. It has also been alleged that there is large-scale tree felling in the sanctuary to grab land and get rights under the FRA.

The convener of Satpuda Bachav Kruti Samiti (SBKS) said things had worsened after Jalgaon District Collector (DC) directed the Yawal DCF, on January 15, 2013, not to take action against encroachments. Further, a revised order was issued by the Bhusawal SDO on April 1, stating the stay was for only those claimants who had submitted their claims to village level forest rights committee within the framework and enclosed a list covering 2,750 claims, most of them controversial.

The DC who is also chief of the district level committee on forest rights, denied that he had stayed action against encroachments. He informed that 1,773 claims have been approved while an equal number of them were rejected. These claims belonged to six villages—Gadrya, Jamnya, Usamani,

Garkheda, Nimdya and Garbardi—inside the sanctuary.

Members of the SBKS who visited the sanctuary on July 29, 2013 reported fresh encroachments and tree-felling in compartments 53, 54, 49, 40 & 41 near Nimdya and Pimparkhund villages. Five hutments were found in compartments 41 and 48 as well. The SBKS has pointed out that there has been no action by forest officials due to lack of support from the police, administration and leaders. It has also been alleged that activists of the Lok Sangharsh Morcha (LSM) have at times attacked forest officials who acted against encroachers. The matter has been reported to the Principal Secretary (Forests), Praveen Pardeshi, and he too is reported to have admitted that the situation in Yawal was serious.

According to the ACF here, offences were registered against 118 persons for fresh encroachments last year. Failing to produce papers about the encroached land, they took out a protest march under the LSM and the DC then ordered a stay on encroachment removals under pressure. Also, once claims are filed under FRA, encroachments cannot be removed unless a final decision is made.

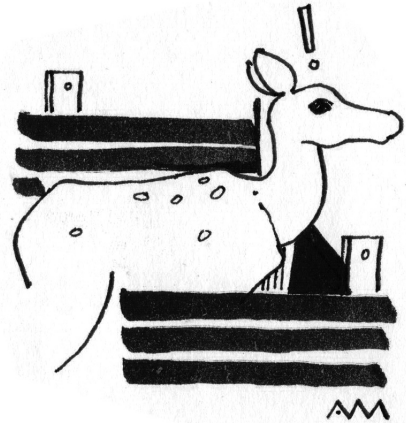
Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Encroachments overrunning Yawal sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 09/08/2013.

## **TIGER RESERVES AND TIGERS**

### **BOR TR**

**2009**

#### **Deer and neelgai translocated from Nagpur to Bor WLS**



115 deer and neelgai were translocated from the Seminary Hills in Nagpur to the Bor WLS situated some 60 kms from the city. The process was carried out by the Nagpur Forest Division and Nagpur Wildlife Circle. The re-location site was selected after considering forest density, distance from villages and water availability.

The relocation task was taken up in presence of senior forest officers and veterinary experts. It was carried out as the National Zoo Policy does not now allow small zoos or orphanages to keep more than 10 deer. The excess animals are required to be transferred to other zoos or released in the wild. Former PCCF (Wildlife) B Majumdar had in 2007 directed the Nagpur FD to shift these animals to the Melghat TR. However, considering the long distance between the two places, it was decided to relocate them to Bor.

While some of the animals had been born here, most of them had been rescued. The deer park will now house only animals which

are not fit for release. In a similar exercise six years ago, around 75 animals had been released from an orphanage at Ramtek.

Source: 'Deer, neelgai being relocated from Seminary Hills to Bor', *Times News Network*, 11/10/2009.

## **2012**

### **Kin of tiger kill victim in Bor WLS compensated by FD, NGO**

The kin of a tiger-kill victim in the Bor WLS were given compensation by both the FD and the WTI.

Sitaram Wadhve, a daily-wage forest labourer posted in Pendhri beat of the sanctuary, died in a tiger-attack on April 19 while he was collecting water at a water hole in Chichkhori area. His family was given Rs two lakh from the Forest Welfare Fund and Rs one lakh under WTI's insurance scheme for all field staff of PAs in the state.

Source: 'Wildlife Trust of India gives 1L to Bor tiger attack victim kin', *The Times of India*, 07/06/2012.

### **LPG for village near Bor WLS under village eco-development programme**

As a part of the village eco-development (VED) programme, the FD has introduced LPG in Salai Pevat village near Bor WLS. 75% of the total cost of the development project is being borne by the FD, while the villagers have to put in the rest of the amount. An amount of Rs 10 lakh has been given to a VED committee formed in the village.

In the case of Salai Pevat, cattle grazing and collection of firewood was putting pressure on the forest. A survey suggested that giving LPG sets to the villagers was the best way to wean them away from using firewood. They are also going to be provided free cylinders

for one year by which time, it is hoped, the villagers will get used to LPG and thus won't go back to the chulhas.

Apart from this, 840 acres of non-forest barren land will be developed into pastures for cattle grazing. Other initiatives like solar street lights, sewing machines and jhunka bhakar set ups for the women's self-help group are also being planned.

Source: Aparna Nair. 'Village Eco Development a boon to Bor wildlife sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 05/10/2012.

## **MELGHAT TR<sup>1</sup>**

### **1998**

### **Meeting on communities in Melghat TR**

The Melghat TR is once again at the centre of controversy following the state government's zealous drive to build tar roads throughout the reserve, ostensibly as a response to NGO demands for amenities to villages affected by malnutrition deaths in 1997. Conservationists have opposed this move, fearing that it will only open the area to further commercial exploitation and arguing that tribals outside the reserve are more affected by malnutrition than those within as they have adequate forest resources to survive on.

The NGO Co-ordination Committee (NGO-CC) of NGOs working with communities living in and around the reserve, held a meeting in the matter on 28th January, 1998, at Chikhaldara inside the reserve. While this was one of their regular meetings to assess the state of their work on issues such as malnutrition, they had

1 Melghat TR is one of the first tiger reserves in India and was constituted in 1974. It was enlarged in 2007 by combining the Gugamal NP, Narnala WLS, Ambabarwa WLS, Wan WLS and the Melghat WLS

also invited conservationists to discuss the above controversies. NGOs present at the meeting included YUVA Nagpur, Oxfam Nagpur, Koro Kora, ADIM, Utkarsh, Upekshit, Apeksha Home Society, Kal ke Liye, Prem, Sarita, Human Rights Law Network, Kalpavriksh, and Amravati Nature Conservation Society. The discussions brought out the following main points:

(i) The serious communication gap between wildlifers and human rights activists on the status of communities inside the reserve must be bridged with regular correspondence and meetings.

(ii) Community-based NGOs clarified that they did not want major tarred roads through the reserve, but rather 'traditional' approach paths, to ensure access for villagers especially in the difficult monsoon months.

(iii) Other developmental amenities being demanded included medical and educational facilities; however, NGOs agreed that they should try to build on local health and learning traditions and only supplement these with allopathic and formal educational systems where necessary.

(iv) On the hydro-electricity dam proposed on the edge of the reserve, the NGOs were eager to fight against it.

(v) There was general agreement that forced relocation was unacceptable, nor was a situation where villagers are so cut off from basic amenities that they are forced to ask for relocation.

(vi) Community-based NGOs agreed to work out, with the 22 villages inside the reserve, plans for joint management which would help to protect the forests and wildlife as also meet livelihood requirements.

(vii) To this end a joint statement between conservationists and human rights organizations would be worked on; the Melghat NGOs would discuss this in their next meeting.

(viii) The government would be jointly pressurised to release all information relevant to Melghat; urban NGOs would help local groups to obtain such information.

(ix) The Amravati Nature Conservation Society member requested NGO members to report poaching cases to him, especially where forest staff was involved. He also promised immediate payment of compensation for cattle kills, using his position as Honorary Wildlife Warden for Amravati district.

Source: Datta Patil, YUVA Nagpur

## **Fires in Melghat TR**

Melghat TR has suffered a series of disasters in the recent past including the ill-advised widening and tarring of roads that has caused major disturbance and siltation of water courses. Recent reports from Melghat also confirm a severe forest fire having affected a large part of the core area. It is possible some gaur deaths that have been reported may also be related to the fire.

Source: Email by Bittu Sahgal, Editor, *Sanctuary Asia*, on [nathistory-india@lists.princeton.edu](mailto:nathistory-india@lists.princeton.edu).

## **Melghat TR: destructive development**

Two projects are causing serious concern about the future of the Melghat TR: the first is a highway being built through the reserve; the second a pumped storage scheme in the adjacent area.

The road works undertaken in the Melghat TR, against which NGOs have been agitating for months, have been found to violate the FCA, 1980. The work has now been stopped and an FIR is being prepared against the contractor. Questions are also being asked of the Field Director of the reserve and the CWLW of Maharashtra. The situation now

is that the Executive Engineer of PWD and CF are liable for punishment.

Some years ago, when around 4,000 tribal children died in the Melghat area, allegedly because of 'malnutrition', almost no rise in the normal infant mortality was observed in the 57 forest villages inside the Melghat TR. This could be because quite apart from fresh and safe drinking water, the Korku communities had access to tubers, roots, creepers, wild fruit, fish, crabs and other such life supporting resources. These communities will probably have to face outside 'competition' as the roads that have been constructed now enable outsiders in vehicles to enter the very heart of the forest.

The Chikhaldara RF surrounds the proposed Chikhaldara Pumped Storage Project (CPSP) site on all four sides—a dense mixed 'A' class forest with old growth trees including teak and a reported presence of tigers. These forests are contiguous with the Melghat TR and serve as both corridor and buffer for the TR. Contrary to the information provided by the CWLW, the CPSP is a mere four km away from the sanctuary, and 6-7 km from the NP boundary. Any construction that involves non-forest purpose could contravene SC instructions, irrespective of its status as a PA or otherwise.

As per Indian Board for Wildlife/Project Tiger stipulations, no project is allowed within a 10 km radius of the boundary of a tiger reserve. As per the EIA report, the following endangered species have been recorded at this site: tiger, panther, bear, flying squirrel, giant squirrel, rattel, python, gaur, neelgai, sambar, and pangolin. It is highly undesirable that such prime habitat be destroyed for this project.

About 144 ha of forestland will be submerged by the project. Much of this forest is reportedly of a density higher than 0.4. According to the EIA report, the land falling under submergence is from four villages with a total area of 104.36 ha. (forest and revenue land). Though the

project report claims that no gaunthan (village common land, for grazing and other uses) will be affected, it is important to study any direct or indirect effect of the same (e.g. through agricultural changes).

The project being located in the RF, violates the provisions of the FCA, 1980. In addition, the Gawaligarh Fort, just one km away from the project site, is an important ASI/State archaeological monument, but is not mentioned in the EIA. The influx of more than 1,300 labourers could drive away all the wildlife in the area. The pipes and tunnels between the lower and upper reservoirs will become an artificial barrier for the wildlife. NGOs are demanding that this project should be rejected at the outset.

Source: E-mails from Bittu Sahgal, 04/18/1998 and 11/08/1998, on [nathistory-india@lists.princeton.edu](mailto:nathistory-india@lists.princeton.edu).

## **1999**

### **Developmental threats to Melghat**

The River Valley Expert Committee of the MoEF made a visit to the site of the Chikhaldhara Pumped Storage Project in March 1999. A meeting, which was held to discuss the impact of the proposed project was attended by forest officials, researchers and officials of the irrigation department.

Bittu Sahgal, a member of the committee has circulated a detailed note explaining the reasons why this particular project should not be granted permission.

In another development, various NGOs in the region have also voiced their opposition to the Upper Tapi Irrigation project, which is expected to impact Melghat adversely. Environmentalists have expressed the apprehension that the motive behind denotifying part of the sanctuary in the Project Tiger area may have been to make the necessary land available for the project.

The state FD has opened a new wildlife circle at Amravati. This will be under the administrative control of the Field Director of the Melghat TR. There will be two wildlife divisions for Melghat, with headquarters at Paratwada, while a separate wildlife division for the sanctuaries of Ambabarwa, Wan, and is being established at Akot in Akola district.

In another development the Tiger Conservation Action Force (TCAF) of the Amravati based Nature Conservation Society (NCS) arrested three wildlife traders in Akola on 20 May 1999. The operation was aided by the Delhi based Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI). Subsequently the FD too succeeded in arresting three more people and confiscating some wild animal skins from them.

Source: Bittu Sahgal on email dated 17/04/1999.

‘Greens object to big projects in Melghat’, *The Indian Express*, 10/05/1999.

Jawahar Dubey on email dated 11/05/1999.

‘Reserve status for tiger habitat’, *Business Standard*, 04/05/1999.

Sunil S Deshmukh on email dated 28/05/1999.

### **Chikhaldara project recommended for rejection**

The Chikhaldara Pumped Storage Project which envisaged the construction of two dams just outside the Melghat TR has been recommended for rejection. The decision was taken on August 27 by the River Valley Project Appraisal Committee of the MoEF. The project would have destroyed prime forest areas and vital habitats for many endangered species including the tiger.

Source: Email from Bittu Sahgal dated 28/08/1999.

### **Meet on tribal issues**



The Maharashtra Tribal Forum, a platform for voluntary groups working in adivasi areas of Maharashtra, organized a symposium on tribal issues in Maharashtra, at Chikhaldara, bordering Melghat TR, on August 29-30, 1999. Participants included representatives of various NGOs, social activists, researchers, journalists and government officials.

The issues discussed included malnutrition and related child mortality, tribal self rule with respect to the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996, issues related to PAs, nistar rights and joint forest management, the Land Acquisition Act and the rehabilitation policy.

The discussion on protected areas primarily focussed on the issues of people in Melghat TR, including those of the settlement of rights process and displacement. Besides the social and wildlife groups working in the region, also participating in this discussion were Mr. Patki, Field Director, and Mr. Wankhede, Deputy Field Director, of the TR. There was some disagreement on whether people in most of the 22 villages inside the sanctuary wish to move out or not. To better understand this situation, all participants have agreed to meet with the residents of one or more villages on October 30, 1999.

Source: Neeraj Vaghlikar, Kalpavriksh  
Maharashtra Tribal Forum, c/o  
KHOJ, Paratwada

## **Call to cancel denotification of Melghat TR**

Conservationists have urged the Maharashtra and the Union government to cancel the 1994 denotification of 500 sq km of the Melghat TR. In 1994, the government had denotified 500 sq km of the reserve, supposedly to allow the tribals continued access to their livelihood rights and to avoid displacement. A large amount of money has also been spent for the construction of roads in the area for the benefit of the tribals. These have however reportedly damaged the hydrology of the area and have instead provided easy access to the timber mafia and poachers.

Source: 'Call to cancel denotification order on Melghat tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 02/11/1999.

## **Meet on settlement of rights in Melghat TR**

A joint meeting of government officials, NGOs and villagers was organized at Bori village in the Chikaldhara block of the Melghat TR to discuss the issue of the settlement of rights of the 22 villages located inside this protected area. Some of the major points that were agreed upon were that none of the villages would be forcibly displaced and a resettlement and rehabilitation plan for the village of Bori would be given to the village in writing. It was also decided that the gram sabha of Bori would discuss the plan and only after they give their final assent to it will a time bound programme be agreed upon.

In the first phase only Bori would be considered for rehabilitation, while the villages of Koha and Kund would be considered only after the rehabilitation of Bori is successful and the other two villages are convinced about it. A joint committee comprising the government, NGOs and the villagers themselves will be set up to discuss and monitor this process in Bori.

In November, however, settlement notices were issued to three villages, Kund, Koha and Bori, admitting claims only over agricultural land, cattle sheds and houses. Kalpavriksh has sent a letter to the concerned authorities pointing to the decisions taken in the meeting in Bori and the fact that all other customary rights to the forests like those for grazing, fuelwood, medicinal plants, leaves, fruits, bamboo and other non-timber forest produce were being ignored.

In another meeting held at Chikaldhara in December, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Vilasrao Deshmukh discussed a number of developmental schemes for the Melghat region. These included the widening of roads, desilting of 150 ponds and lakes in Melghat, the establishment of a power generating station at Chikaldhara and, reportedly, the rehabilitation of six villages from the TR area.

Source: 'Resettlement of Melghat evacuees discussed', *The Indian Express*, 06/11/1999.

'Melghatatil rikamya hatana rojgar', *Lokmat*, 19/12/1999.

Letter from Kalpavriksh to the Chief Secretary, Maharashtra dated 11/12/1999.

## **Study on needs of tribals in Melghat TR**

An interesting assessment of Melghat TR's tribal residents has been made by P. Srivastava, DCF East Melghat Forest Division. In a paper titled 'Minimum Forest Produce needed by Tribals (Physical and Financial Limit Determination): A Study in East Melghat Forest Division, Amravati Dist., Maharashtra', Mr. Srivastava has shown that per capita requirements of forest produce amongst the tribals have not increased since the 1930s. He calculated that the overall annual contribution of such produce was worth about Rs 2.70 crores.



On the basis of this report, the *PA Update* had enquired from Mr. Srivastava, whether there was over exploitation of resources because of overall rise in population (even if per capita needs may not have increased), as conservationists and some forest officials were claiming. Following is his response dated 14 October, 1998:

“As regards the carrying capacity of Melghat forests. ...purely from the Working Plan document, if the issue is looked at, I am sure no one can dispute about the ongoing extraction by the tribals of forest produce being within the carrying capacity. Population decidedly has gone up, but in the absence of any data... I am not in a position to correlate their inter-relation cogently. The present status in no manner gives any indication to show adverse impact upon forest. Fear expressed by conservationists is more imaginary than real. Population since 1930 would definitely have gone up; however the existing carrying capacity would surely sustain their needs, as the productivity per hectare far exceeds their demand.

Yet, while doing so revenue returns by the government would surely recede. But as the National Forest Policy unambiguously recognises bona fide needs of the tribals to form first charge on forest produce, I do not foresee any meaningful opposition. Henceforth, harmonious relation between tribals and forest produce is more a matter of reality rather than a theoretical contention.

Impact on biodiversity is immensely difficult to assess, therefore I would not risk reacting to that. I am sure similar surveys in relation to many more relevant forest produce would be needed (for) any coherent inference to be reached.”

Other readers may wish to respond to Mr. Srivastava's claims. His views imply that the Forest Department's argument to relocate tribals from Melghat, stating that they are putting negative pressure on the area's wildlife, is questionable.

Source: Kalpavriksh.

## **2000**

### **Rehabilitation committee for Bori village in Melghat TR**

A rehabilitation committee was set up by the Collector, Amravati, in February 2000, to oversee the satisfactory resettlement and rehabilitation of the Bori village from the Melghat TR.

Earlier, in a meeting held in October 1999, the Bori villagers had expressed their willingness for voluntary relocation provided the rehabilitation plan was to their satisfaction. The committee is chaired by DCF (Wildlife), Amravati (as nominated by the Field Director, Melghat TR) and its members are: Sub-DFO, Dharni, Kishor Rithe, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Purnima Upadhyay, KHOJ (NGO representative), and the Sarpanch of the gram panchayat.

As per the terms of reference, the committee is supposed to communicate and discuss the rehabilitation proposal with the villagers and convey their expectations to the Collector. They will be involved in discussing the facilities to be provided at the rehabilitation site and the actual formulation of the plan in consultation with the villagers. They are expected, from time to time, to convey to the Collector, any shortcomings expressed by the people with respect to getting a satisfactory rehabilitation.

Source: Letter dated February 5, 2000, issued by Collector, Amravati.

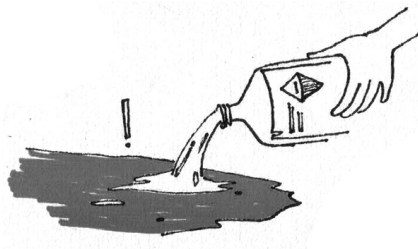
## **2001**

### **Water holes poisoned in Melghat**

There have been many reports of the poisoning of water holes in the Melghat TR and of related deaths of many wild animals like jungle fowl, peafowl, and civets. The latest incident was reported in February

2001, when Jamun Nallah in the Chaurakund Range in the park was poisoned. According to forest officials, incidents of locals poisoning water holes to kill peafowl and deer for their meat have become a serious problem in Melghat.

This latest incident has come after a brief lull. Earlier in December 2000, four local people had been caught red-handed by forest officials while poisoning a water hole on the Khapra River in the sanctuary. A bottle containing 500 ml of Endosulphan, a highly toxic pesticide had also been recovered from them.



Source: Prerna Bindra. 'Poisoned water hole kills peacocks, civet', *The Indian Express*, 24/02/2001.

### **Workshop on NGO Networking in Melghat**

The 2nd workshop on 'NGO Networking for Wildlife Conservation in Melghat' was held from June 7-9, 2001. Jointly organized by the BNHS and the Nature Conservation Society, Amravati (NCSA), it was a follow up to the meeting held in Pench in December 2000. 23 participants from nine organizations participated in the workshop.

The participants also visited Bori village, which has been recently relocated from inside the TR to Rajurgirwarpur in Akola district.

A list of recommendations was also prepared at the end of the workshop.

Source: 'Second workshop on NGO networking', *Tigerlink*, September 2001.

### **Meet on relocation of villages from Melghat held**

A multi-stake holder meeting on the relocation of villages from Melghat TR was held at Paratwada on November 11, 2001. Various decisions were taken regarding the relocation of village Bori. This included issues related to the Schedule V status of the land where the original village was located, the need for a public hearing for the relocation of the villages of Koha and Kund, the establishment of a rehabilitation committee and the need for a joint meeting of representatives of all the 22 villages in Melghat.

Source: Letter from Khoj dated 09/11/2001.

## **2002**

### **Leopards from Junnar being relocated to Melghat, Koyna**

There have been an increasing number of reports of leopards turning man-eater and/or attacking livestock in the Junnar area near Pune. This has resulted in a huge public outcry and many reports of retaliation killings of the animals by local people.

Some of the reasons for the problem include the large-scale destruction of forests and their conversion to agricultural land in the Junnar Forest Circle. The leopard population which is reported to be 90 here has been left with a decreasing natural habitat and prey base. The leopards have now taken to living in the sugarcane fields that have proliferated after the coming in of irrigation. They have also started to regularly prey on dogs and goats.

In the last year (2001) at least seven people were killed by the leopards here. The district authorities have reportedly allowed killing of the problem leopards, and have also made efforts to relocate the ones that have been captured to other forested areas like Rajepur, Ratnagiri, Koyana, Bhimasankar and Melghat.

Twelve of these leopards were recently relocated, four of which were released in the Melghat TR. The TR authorities are however not in favour of this move as it could cause similar problems here, endangering the lives of villagers and livestock of the 61 villages that are part of the reserve.

Source: Prerna Singh Bindra. 'Endangered leopards face crisis of numbers', *The Pioneer*, 04/08/2002.

### **BNHS calls for renotification of denotified parts of Melghat TR**

The BNHS has called for the renotification of the 500 odd sq km of the Melghat WLS that was denotified a few years ago. This demand was made at a one-day workshop that was held in Mumbai recently on the 'Implementation of the National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP) of western India'.

It was pointed out that the Chikhaldara Pumped Water Storage project on the boundary of the Melghat TR would submerge at least 100 hectares of prime tiger and leopard habitat. Though the River Valley Committee of the MoEF has rejected the project three times in the last six years, there is a strong political lobby that is pressing ahead with the demand for the implementation of the project.

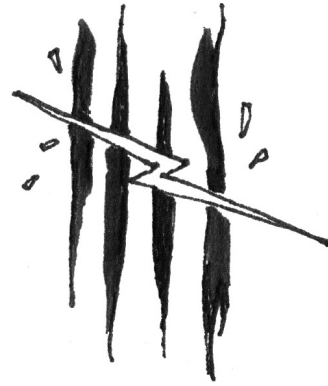
In addition to this, suggestions were also made for declaring the Mehndri RF a wildlife sanctuary and forests in the Gadchiroli district as the Kopela Kolamarka Wild Buffalo Sanctuary. It was also pointed out that the Taloda and Chaurakund forests were home to the endangered Forest spotted owl and therefore efforts had to be made to protect these forests too.

Source: 'BNHS want renotification of sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 18/09/2002.

'Renotify parts of Melghat: BNHS', *The Indian Express*, 18/09/2002.

## **2003**

### **A tigress and four cubs electrocuted in Melghat TR**



A tigress and four cubs have reportedly been electrocuted near Sipna River in the Harisal region of the Melghat TR. The bodies were discovered on February 3, 2003, four days after the incident. The cubs were reported to be only a few days old. A post mortem report confirming the electrocution was pending.

Following extensive investigation by the staff of Melghat TR led by the Field Director Mr. Ramanuj Chaudhari, four persons were arrested on February 6. They confessed to have laid the live wire on January 30 with the intention of electrocuting deer. They admitted that they had earlier killed many animals using the same technique. The Police Department and Nature Conservation Society, Amravati assisted the FD in the operations. The FD has also seized the wire, hooks, axe and other material, and is following leads gained from these poachers to get to the bottom of the entire network. Another gang of four had also been subsequently detained.

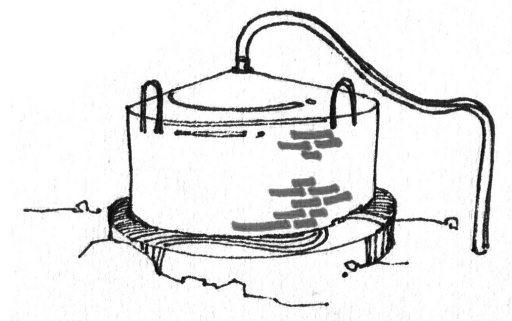
In the last two decades, Maharashtra has recorded the largest number of cases of poaching by electrocution using power lines running through forests (55 out of a national figure of 202). In the last six months alone, Maharashtra has lost at least six tigers, four

in and around the Tadoba TR and two in Pench, among the instances that have been recorded.

Source: 'A tigress and four cubs electrocuted in Melghat Tiger Reserve', [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 05/02/2003.

'Poachers nabbed in Melghat', [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 07/02/2003.

### **Gobar gas plants installed in village rehabilitated from Melghat TR**



Three gobar gas plants were recently installed in the Bori village that was moved from the Melghat TR a couple of years ago. Care for Wild India and the Satpuda Foundation financially assisted the gobar gas project. The installation was done with the help of the Srushti Tribal Welfare Society.

Source: Kishore Rithe, Satpuda Foundation.

### **Divisional meeting of Special Tiger Cell held in Amravati**

The Maharashtra State Government has established a Special Tiger Cell (STC) to deal with crimes related to wildlife and tigers. A divisional meeting of the cell was held in Amravati in the last week of July. It was attended by senior officials from the forest and police departments including Field Director of Melghat TR, Ramanuj Choudhary, and Inspector General of Police, Pankaj Gupta.

Some of the discussions and decisions taken during the meeting include the following: filing of chargesheet within eight days against the persons guilty of electrocuting a tigress and her four cubs in Melghat; judicial pursuasion of the tiger and leopard skin smuggling case in May 1999 at Akola; exchange of information regarding crime control and forest and wildlife crime between forest and police departments; establishing better coordination in wildlife crime control work; joint meetings of the police and forest department officials of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in view of Melghat's location on the border of the two states; awards for policemen doing good work in forest and wildlife crime control; and training in arms handling by police department to foresters.

Source: 'Special tiger cell to curb wildlife crimes', *The Hivwada*, 25/07/2003.

## **2004**

### **Symposium on three decades of Melghat TR**

The Melghat TR was one among the first nine tiger reserves declared in the country and the first in Maharashtra. To commemorate 30 years of its existence, the Melghat TR Directorate has planned a two-day symposium in October 2004 in Amravati titled 'Three decades of Project Tiger in Melghat'. It is being held in association with the P.G. Department of Zoology, Amravati University and Nature Conservation Society Amravati. The symposium proposes to cover a range of themes:

- a) biodiversity of Melghat and its conservation significance for the people.
- b) impact of managerial practices on habitats. Relevant changes in the status of habitats and regeneration, with special reference to conservation of rare, endangered and endemic species including medicinal plants in Melghat.

c) study of behavioral aspects of wild animals, prey-predator relationships in Melghat with special reference to rare and endangered species.

d) research work on biodiversity and gene pool conservation for protecting natural resources.

e) social aspects in wildlife management, ecodevelopment, rehabilitation of villages.

f) conservation education, interpretation and ecotourism.

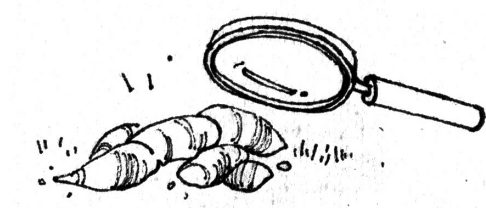
g) threats to tiger habitats and future strategies for tiger conservation.

h) status of tiger conservation in Tadoba Andhari TR.

Source: Kishor Rithe, Satpuda Foundation.

## **2005**

### **Scat and transect survey training in Melghat**



The Center for Wildlife Studies, Bangalore will conduct training camps in the application of sampling-based methods for monitoring tiger and large mammal populations in the Melghat TR in February. The training programme will focus on developing an index of relative abundance of the tiger using the scat encounter survey technique and density estimation for prey species using the line transect method.

Candidates who want to undergo the training must fit the following description: candidates in the 18-40 year group, who are physically very fit and have some experience in hiking through forests and rough country

and have a reasonably good ability to spot and identify large mammals.

Source: Dr. Prachi Mehta, Envirosearch, Pune.

### **Fire in Melghat TR; animals safe**

Fire broke out in parts of the Melghat TR in the first week of April 2005, but officials said it was brought under control and that there was no threat to wildlife in the reserve.

Fire was reported from Dolar, Somthana and Dhargarh areas in the park. Director, Mr. Nitin Kakodkar, said that this was a common thing in the dry season and there was nothing to worry about. It was suggested that the fires might have spread from the burning by tribals who set patches of forest afire for various reasons including for the collection of mahua flowers.

Source: 'Melghat fire: Officials say animals safe', *The Indian Express*, 05/04/2005.

### **Leopard gecko found in Melghat TR**

Members of the Nature Conservation Society, Amravati (NCSA) recently spotted a leopard gecko in the Melghat TR, making this the first record from the Satpuda Range.

The NCSA team spotted the gecko while at Tarubanda for de-siltation work of the village tank. The specimen was photographed in June 2005 and later confirmed as the Leopard gecko by the BNHS.

Source: 'Leopard gecko found in Melghat', *The Indian Express*, 21/12/2005.

## **2007**

### **New spider found in Melghat TR**

A new spider is reported to have been discovered from the Melghat TR. It was found in the Sipna Wildlife Division in

## State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra

October during an expedition to study spiders being conducted by 30 research students from Amravati University along with the Nature Conservation Society, Amravati.

The insect is about one centimeter long and has an arch-shaped thorax, which tapers down to two lobes at the posterior end. Reputed scientists including those from the Zoology Department of the university have confirmed that the spider is indeed a new species.

Source: Archana Sharma. 'New spider found in Melghat', *The Times of India*, 18/11/2007.

### 2011

#### Additional Rs 3,665.50 lakhs allocated for relocation of two villages from Melghat TR

The NTCA has approved the release of an additional Rs 3,655.50 lakhs for relocation of two villages from the core of the Melghat TR. The initial outlay of Rs 544.93 lakhs has therefore been increased to a total of Rs 4,210.43 lakhs. Of this money, an amount of Rs 739.19 lakhs was to be released during the year 2011-12. The money will be treated as 100% central assistance by the Government of India.

A total of 141 and 172 families from the villages of Dhargad and Pili respectively are to be relocated as part of this plan.

Source: Letter No. 4-1(10)/2011-PT by Dr. HS Negi, Deputy Inspector General (PT) dated 28/12/2011.

### 2013

#### 3 tonnes of plastic removed from relocated village in Melghat

Volunteers of Amravati-based Satpuda Foundation, Swawalambi Eco Club, Akola,

and forest staff of the Akot Wildlife Division of Melghat TR removed three tonnes of plastic from Gullarghat, a village relocated from Melghat TR.

The plastic had been used by villagers for waterproofing of their roofs, which were dismantled after relocation and had been left in the area. Most of the plastic was buried and a large quantity littered all over the place.

A similar campaign was conducted last year in Dhargad, another village relocated from the reserve.



Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Students remove 3 tonne plastic from relocated village in Melghat', *The Times of India*, 22/04/2013.

#### Community Forest Rights (CFRs) rejected in Melghat TR

The claim for community forest rights (CFRs) under the FRA in the Melghat TR has been rejected by the Sub-divisional level committee (SDLC). In a letter issued on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013, the SDLC Dharni said that the CFR claims were being rejected since the area had been declared a Critical Tiger Habitat. On seeking further clarifications regarding the provisions of the law under which the claim was rejected, the claimants and the NGO Khoj were sent a letter from the ACF dated 16/12/2011 which mentioned the following objections to the claim:

1. The claimants have not enclosed their caste certificate
2. The other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs) have not enclosed the evidence of

their stay in forest and their dependence on the forest for their genuine needs

3. They haven't enclosed two evidences in support of their CFR.

Following are the specific objections to the CFR claims in relation to the village Madizhap:

1. The statement of the old person does not have a date

2. The CFRs claims include nistar, MFP, water bodies, protection, conservation and regeneration and bio-diversity, intellectual rights and traditional knowledge. The compartments claimed under FRA are RFs and the rights in the said compartment(s) were extinguished. The compartment Nos. 276, 277, 282, 274, 284, 275, 285, 214, 211, 280 had been declared a sanctuary in 1994 and as a Critical Tiger Habitat in 2007.

The letter also says that the claimants did not have the said area under their use on 13/12/2005 and did not have it under their control on 21/12/2007; hence the said claim of CFR cannot be accepted.

Source: Purnima. Email dated 17/11/2013.

### **Project to study forest owlets in Melghat & Tadoba-Andhari TRs and in Toranmal, Nandurbar district**



The Pune-based Wildlife Research and Conservation Society (WRCS) will soon

embark on a project to study the critically endangered forest owl in the Melghat and Tadoba-Andhari TRs and in the forests of Toranmal in the Nandurbar district. As many as 25 pairs of the bird will be colour-banded to study their distribution, population, demography and ecology. In the first phase of the project that will begin in September 2013, a team will capture and mark the birds with differently-coloured bands.

The project is supported by the Government of India's Department of Science and Technology (DST) and MBZ Species Conservation Fund. Permissions from the MoEF and the state FD have also been obtained.

Source: Tarini Puri. 'Colour-banding may help save forest owlets', *The Times of India*, 16/04/2013.

### **Opposition to research project on forest owlets near Melghat TR; other researchers back the project**

The MoEF's decision to allow capture of 20 forest owlets in east and west Melghat divisions outside Melghat TR has been opposed by some former forest officials and conservationists.

The MoEF, in February 2012, had recommended the research project titled 'Study of ecology, distribution and population of critically endangered forest owl (*Heteroglaux blewitti*) in Melghat Tiger Reserve', proposed by Wildlife Research and Conservation Society (WRCS), Pune. The WRCS team which has studied the bird in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh, wanted to capture another 50 birds in collaboration with the BNHS for the purpose of the study. The Melghat TR field director did not support the project, but the CCF-Territorial, Amravati, granted permission for research in the buffer area of the reserve

The technical committee for wildlife research under the then PCCF-Wildlife had recommended capture of 20 birds. The MoEF permitted the capture of the owlets by using non-invasive methods and the NTCA also approved the project in the buffer area while seeking comments on exclusion of research in the core area of Melghat TR. The WRCS is reported to have said that it wants to conduct studies in the core area of the tiger reserve as well.

Kishore Rithe, a former member of the NBWL while opposing the research request has pointed out that a lot of research has already been done on owlets. He also noted that the bird has in fact gone extinct in places other than Melghat where research to study the bird was carried out. The retired PCCF of Madhya Pradesh, PM Lad, too pointed out that the research work in Toranmal was responsible for near disappearance of forest owl from there.

Prachi Mehta of WRCS said that the loss of habitat was one of the most important causes for the decline of the bird and that it was important to get scientific information including that related to the habitat needs, and breeding and nesting requirements for conservation efforts of the species. She also added that an unscientific approach to conservation and not research is responsible for extinction. Other researchers including Girish Jathar of the BNHS, Farah Ishtiaq who was among the first to research the birds after they were re-discovered in 1997 and Shomita Mukherjee of the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Nature (SACON), Coimbatore, have expressed their support for the research project. Evidence, according to Jathar, suggests that the bird has not disappeared from Toranmal as claimed.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Research project on forest owl in Melghat opposed', *The Times of India*, 02/12/2013.

Ananya Dutta. 'Experts studying forest owl back efficacy', *The Times of India*, 05/12/2013.

## 2014

### Special Tiger Protection Force proposal for Melghat TR



A proposal was sent to the NTCA in the month of February 2014 for the formation of a Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) for the Melghat TR. This is believed to be an immediate fall-out of the recent spate of incidents of tiger poaching here.

One STPF platoon consists of 112 men that comprises an ACF as the person in charge, three RFOs, 81 forest guards and 27 forest watchers. The STPF will exercise policing powers to use firearms to combat tiger poaching and related offences in the tiger habitat. The state will be required to confer these powers on personnel under subsection (3) of Section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974).

The STPF will be used only for tiger protection and under no circumstances would be requisitioned in aid of civil authority for any other work. The STPF will receive special training from state police and paramilitary forces. In 2012, STPF platoons were constituted in Pench and Tadoba-Andhari TRs as well. Owing to a funds crunch, however, staff salaries were paid only in 2013.

Source: 'Stung by tiger poaching, Special Tiger Protection Force proposed for Melghat', *The Times of India*, 26/02/2014.



### **At least four tigers were poached in Masondi, Melghat in 2013: CCMB**

A January 2, 2014 report from the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad has said that DNA samples of bloodstained soil, decomposed flesh pieces, intestinal parts collected from compartment No. 51, Masondi in Melghat, a metal trap with blood stains and hair samples, collected half a km away from the crime spot, have tested positive and belong to four different tigers. This is apart from one tiger poached in Dhakna - Melghat in March 2013.

The CCMB report has brought a sensational twist to the tiger poaching incidents in Melghat because till now poachers had revealed (and the officials had believed) that only one tiger had been killed here. The number could, in fact, be much higher. The arrested poachers are reported to have said that one individual known to them had alone trafficked 11 tiger skins between April and June 2013 but only five have been brought on record and offences have been registered in four cases. Offences have still not been registered in the Katol, Khumari and Sevagram poaching cases.

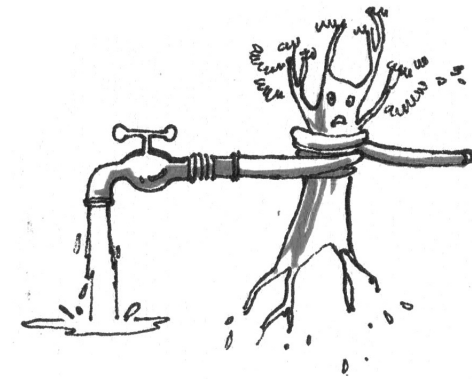
The official tally of tigers poached in 2013 stands at 12. It includes only one from Masondi. It also doesn't include poacher Ranjit Bawaria's confession that he trafficked two tiger skins from Katol and more from Sevagram. Apart from this, poachers also killed two leopards and two sloth bears at the same spot in Masondi. Yet, no one has been held accountable.

Melghat officials claimed they have nabbed over 20 poachers on the basis of call-details records (CDRs) of March 4, 2013, when the Dhakna tiger was killed. Wildlife experts have, however, pointed out that if officials had indeed been working on CDRs of March, they could have saved those four tigers that were killed later. Officials are, reportedly, continuing to resist putting

higher figures on record for poaching cases. Trafficking of six tiger skins from Bhandarbodi in Ramtek has also not been put on record, for instance, even though the accused have admitted to their crime.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Poachers killed four tigers together at Melghat', *The Times of India*, 08/02/2014.

### **Three irrigation projects, including two near Melghat TR, violate environmental laws: NGO**



The South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People (SANDRAP) has urged Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr Prithviraj Chavan, to withdraw the State Wildlife Board's (SWB) recent decision to clear three irrigation projects – Nardawe in Sindhudurg and Ar-Kacheri and Alewadi in Buldhana district near the Melghat TR. SANDRAP has alleged that these three projects are violating SC directives and crores of rupees have been spent on them without acquiring essential wildlife clearances.

The Nardawe project is alleged to have violated the FCA and also the EPA. An EIA of the project has still to be carried out fully and yet the Konkan Irrigation Development Corporation has already spent more than Rs 311 crore on this project.

The Ar-Kacheri project, which will irrigate 1,900 hectares of land needs 321.43 hectares

of private land located six km from the Melghat TR. In any case, SANDRAP points out, half the proposed land to be irrigated is already under irrigation. The Alewadi project, similarly, needs diversion of 273 hectares private land, and is situated about four km from the boundary of the tiger reserve. Farmers are reportedly not ready to part with their land for either of these projects.

SANDRAP has also pointed out that the 65th meeting of the expert appraisal committee had rejected the terms of reference for the Ar-Kacheri and Alewadi projects, but the SWB has still gone ahead and cleared them.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Prithviraj Chavan urged to withdraw Ar-Kacheri, Alewadi irrigation projects', *The Times of India*, 11/04/2014.

### **Three sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for tiger poaching in Melghat TR**

An Amravati court recently sentenced three people, Ranjit, Sarju and Dalbir, to seven years' rigorous imprisonment in the Dhakna tiger poaching case in Melghat TR. The interesting point in the case is that the tiger's body was not found and the conclusion that it was poached was based on DNA analysis. The electronically recorded statements of the accused and call detail records were produced in evidence as per relevant legal provisions.

Ranjit was arrested from Visakhapatnam. He had also been booked by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 2009 in a tiger smuggling case. However, he was released on bail, which he later jumped. Sarju was arrested when he was driving to Delhi, while Dalbir was arrested from Haryana. Sarju and Dalbir have been booked by the Maharashtra FD in other tiger poaching cases too. Their arrests were made in 2013.

The FD had arrested over 30 persons in the various cases that involved the killing of over 15 tigers. Many of the cases are still under trial.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Dhakna poaching case: 3 tiger traders sentenced to seven years' imprisonment', *The Indian Express*, 11/12/15.

## **NAWEGAON-NAGZIRA TR<sup>2</sup>**

### **1999**

#### **Ecological assessment of Nawegaon**

People's apathy, a failure of the administration, poaching and illegal tree felling have badly impacted the Nawegaon NP. This has been reported by the Nagpur-based Vidarbha Nature Conservation Society (VNCS), which has just completed an ecological assessment of the park.

The society has also launched an environmental education programme for the youth staying in and around three major protected areas of Vidarbha: the Nawegaon NP and the Pench and Tadoba-Andhari TRs.

Source: Letter from VNCS to *PA Update* dated 28/10/1999.

### **2000**

#### **Meeting in Nagzira WLS**

A one day meeting on 'Community participation in wildlife conservation' in Nagzira WLS was held on March 1, 2000.

- 2 The Nawegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve was created in 2013 and includes the Nawegaon WLS, Nawegaon NP, Nagzira WLS, New Nagzira WLS and the Koka WLS. Stories from all these respective protected areas have been clubbed together under this section on the Nawegaon-Nagzira TR

The meeting was called by the ACF in-charge of the sanctuary and was attended by the local villagers and conservationists.

Source: Circular of the Forest Department dated 25/02/2000.

Personal communication received from Adv. Sanjeev Gajbhiye.

## 2001

### **Inquiry demanded into illegal felling in Nagzira WLS**



The Nagpur based Maharashtra Vanrakshak Vanpal Sanghatana (Maharashtra Forest Guards Association (MFGA)), has demanded that a fair inquiry be conducted into the smuggling of teak valued at around Rs 10 lakhs in January and March 2001, from the Nagzira WLS. The timber was felled and smuggled from the Magezari beat of the sanctuary.

Following an inquiry conducted by the CF responsible for the area, Mr. Ashok Khune, Forest Guard PM Raghorte had been suspended. The MFGA has said in a letter dated 15/08/2001 to the Lokayukta, Maharashtra, that this is unfair and a clear case of the absolving the senior officials of their responsibility in the matter.

They have even alleged that senior officials like Mr. Khune, Mr. Bardekar, ACF, Wildlife, Gondia and Mr. YB Patle, CF Wildlife, Nagzira are directly involved in the smuggling and that they should be immediately suspended. The reactions of the forest officials to these allegations are not presently available.

Source: Vijay Mehar. Letter to the Lokayukta dated 15/08/2001.

## 2003

### **500 teak trees allegedly felled in Nagzira WLS**

National President of the Bharatiya Kisan Morcha and former Minister for Finance and Planning in the Government of Maharashtra, Mr. Mahadevrao Shivankar, has charged FD employees with illegally felling around 500 teak trees in the Nagzira WLS. He has also demanded the resignation of the State Forest Minister, Surupsingh Naik.

Shivankar has pegged the value of the felled trees at Rs 500 crore (some reports put the value of the timber at Rs 5 crore) and alleged that such felling could not have been possible without the involvement of senior forest officials. He has also demanded the investigation should be handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation and that POTA should be applied against the DFO, Ranger and Beat Guard reported to be responsible for the incident.

CCF-Wildlife Mr. Jwala Prasad, when contacted, accepted that trees had been cut, but that their number was 40-45, and not 500 as alleged. He said that one person had been suspended and also conceded that the felling could not have been possible without the involvement and assistance from forest personnel.

A RFO and a forest guard were also reported to have been suspended.

Source: '500 teak trees felled in Nagzira wildlife sanctuary', *Hindustan Times*, 25/06/2003.

'Nagzira forest officer, guard suspended', *The Times of India*, 07/07/2003.

## **2009**

### **Van majoor's protest non-payment of wages; stop tourists from entering Nagzira WLS**

Over 150 van majoor's (temporary forest workers) organized under the banner of Maharashtra State Forest Guards, Forest Employees and Foresters Union stopped over 200 tourists from entering the Nagzira WLS in December. They were protesting the non-payment of wages for the period June to November 2009. The forest workers launched peaceful protests by sitting on a dharna in front of the sanctuary gates at Pitezari, Chorkhamara and Kosamtondi. 30 vehicles, including those of two MLAs were stranded at the Pitezari gate as a result.

The union also warned that if the wages were not released by January 1, they would boycott the forthcoming tiger census as well. Forest officials tried to pacify the agitated workers by promising them to pay wages for three months (June, July & August) but workers were firm on their stand. Official sources said that Rs 19 lakh and Rs 75 lakh had been released recently for wildlife and the Nagpur territorial circle towards payment of wages and other works.

The MLAs who were stranded on account of the agitation also offered to take up the matter of the non-payment of the wages and that of the regularization of the workers with the state forest minister.

The latest in the matter is not known.

Source: 'No wages, no entry into sanctuary', *Times News Network*, 14/12/2009.

## **2010**

### **Four policemen suspended for getting too close to tigress in Nagzira WLS**

Four policemen, all constables, were suspended recently for getting too close to

a tigress in the Nagzira WLS. They were held guilty of violating forest and wildlife regulations including carrying weapons inside the protected area, entering the park without proper authorization, alighting from the vehicle, and stepping close to a protected and endangered creature.

The four, all attached to the Bhandara district police headquarters, reportedly left their official vehicles and went very close to a tigress in an attempt to get a picture on their mobile phone cameras.

The tigress was resting near a waterhole around 7 a.m. when a dozen policemen came to the spot in two vehicles. Some of them belonged to the security provided to Justice RM Borde of the Mumbai HC (Nagpur Bench) who had gone for a visit to the park. Four policemen from the group disembarked along with their weapons and cameras and moved towards the tigress. When they did not heed her angry warnings, she roared loudly and jumped towards them. Shaken, they scampered back to their vehicles.

A group of tourists, who were present at the spot, complained to forest officials about the incident.

Source: 'Cops suspended for getting too close to tigress', <http://sify.com/news>, 16/06/2010.

## **2012**

### **Koka WLS proposed in Bhandara**

The Bhandara Forest Division has prepared a proposal for the creation of a 92 sq km Koka WLS, just 20 km from the town of Bhandara. If approved this will be the sixth wildlife sanctuary that has been notified in the region in the last two years.

The proposed sanctuary includes 28 compartments with an area of 89.84 sq km

leased out to the FDCM and one protected forest compartment of 2.50 sq km of Bhandara forest division making up a total area of 92.35 sq km.

The sanctuary idea was set rolling in August 2012 when Principal Secretary (Forests), Mr Praveen Pardeshi, asked officials to prepare a sanctuary proposal as the area was contiguous to newly declared 151.33 sq km New Nagzira WLS. The initial suggestion was for a sanctuary of 110 sq km, but as it included three villages—Chandrapur, Sonegaon and Dudhara—it was revised to the current proposal.

The proposed sanctuary is only about 20 km from Nagzira and would help secure wildlife corridors in the region. It is also hoped that the new sanctuary will help ease the tourism pressure on the other PAs in this region.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Koka sanctuary proposed in Bhandara', *The Times of India*, 22/11/2012.

### **Nearly 30 electrocution cases in and around Nagzira WLS in the last two years**



Nearly 30 cases of electrocution of wild animals have been reported in the last two years from forests in and around the Nagzira and New Nagzira WLSs. The animals killed include sloth bear, neelgai, chital, sambar, wild boar, bison, leopard and also tigers.

The maximum number of cases have been reported from the Gondia and Tiroda ranges in areas that include Khursipar, Nimgaon,

Indora, Ramatola, Kodelohara, Umarzari, Sarra, Maregaon, Ekodi, Mangezari and Navatola. It has been alleged that no action is being taken even though information about the offenders is available.

While the POR (primary offence report) was filed in all the cases, only 50% of the cases went to court. Court cases are reportedly pending since 2001 but are not being pursued. In several cases, charge sheets have also not been filed. Six cases of sloth bear electrocution since 2006 too have remained unsolved.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Poachers thrive as forest officials neglect prosecution', *Economic Times*, 05/12/2012.

## **2013**

### **MLA for shifting Gondia wildlife division's office to Sakoli**

BJP MLA, Nana Patole, has written to the State Forest Minister, Patangrao Kadam, urging him to shift the Gondia Wildlife Division's office to Sakoli to ensure better monitoring of wildlife and forests and also to enable effective administrative control. Naturalists and wildlife activists have already been demanding the same.

The issue is said to be particularly relevant in the context of increased poaching in the area, a matter that the FD is grappling with. Poaching is rampant in and around PAs in the area such as the Nagzira, New Nagzira and Nawegaon WLSs and the Nawegaon NP. Officers, who are based in Gondia, are unable to do much to prevent this and it has been suggested that a move to Sakoli will help, also in establishing a better rapport with the local people.

All the five PAs are at a distance of between 20 km and 27 km from Sakoli, whereas they are between 45 and 75 km from Gondia. Wildlife department officials too admit that shifting the office from Gondia is a good

option.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Patole pushes for wildlife office at Sakoli', *The Times of India*, 06/07/2013.

### **Cattle grazing poses threat to newly notified Nawegaon-Nagzira TR: FD**



The FD has said that cattle grazing poses one of the most significant threats to the recently notified Nawegaon-Nagzira TR. The 655 sq km reserve was notified in November 2013 and comprises of the New Nagzira, Koka, and Nawegaon WLSs and the Nawegaon NP. The government has excluded the 17.60 hectare Nagzira administrative and tourism complex in compartment numbers 97 and 125 of Nagzira WLS as well as 251.46 hectares of protected forest in Koka WLS from the core of the reserve.

The FD has noted that the small Koka WLS of about 100 sq km alone has 39 villages within one km of the park boundary and all these villages exert grazing pressure on the sanctuary forests.

The Nagzira DFO had said that the villagers had been granted grazing rights in one of the protected forest compartments but the practice needs to be stopped as the area has now been declared a tiger reserve. In 1977, when revenue department officials conducted an inquiry, they kept six compartments, around 4,000 hectares, from Pitezari for cattle grazing. 80% of this has

been incorporated into the New Nagzira WLS now and villagers graze cattle in the remaining 20% area.

Villagers from six villages in Pitezari, on the fringes of Nagzira, had collected Rs 20,000 each last year to replace cattle. The matching grant from the government never came and hence the cattle could not be phased out. The eco-development committee here has also informed that at least 35 families have not received LPG connections and pressure for fuel wood on the forest, therefore, continues.

According to the DFO, on the other hand, a Rs 10 lakh grant was received out of which Rs 7 lakh was spent to distribute LPG connections in Pitezari. The FD was left with Rs 3 lakh, but villagers were not ready to replace their cattle as they wanted a 100% grant.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Grazing poses biggest threat to Nawegaon-Nagzira tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 06/12/2013.

'Govt notifies Nawegaon-Nagzira as 5th tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 13/12/2013.

## **2014**

### **Tigress walks 70 km to reach Nawegaon from New Nagzira**

A tigress named Kaani (T6) is recorded to have travelled almost 70 km to reach the Nawegaon WLS from the New Nagzira WLS. Both the protected areas are part of the Nawegaon-Nagzira TR, though divided by the national highway NH-6.

T6 was one of the three siblings born in October 2012 in New Nagzira to a tigress named 'Alpha'. The cubs, one male and two females, were sighted for the first time in Gaikhuri of New Nagzira on May 1, 2013. Movement of the cubs with their mother was mainly found in the Gaikhuri

and Bandarzara areas. According to a recent study by the honorary wildlife warden of Gondia with inputs from the WTI, the family was reported in the adjoining Koka WLS in March 2014. T6 moved along the Koka-Chandrapur state highway and was frequently sighted on the edges of forests of Koka. As the rainy season of 2014 faded, she was seen moving to the north of Nagzira and was reported in the adjoining forests of Mangezari, Govindtola and Junewani, which connect to the Kanha and Pench TRs.

Some cattle kills were also reported in this area from October 21 to November 4. Subsequently, T6 was reported in camera traps in compartment number 92 of Nagzira WLS in November. Her movement was later observed towards Murdoli on the state highway following which she crossed Chulbandh and headed towards Jambhdi. On November 26, the tigress moved to Ghisamari, which is considered the richest part of the corridor. As movement was observed in Nawegaon, officials installed camera traps and the tigress was photographed again on December 3. The camera trap pictures were compared with available records confirming that T6 had moved from New Nagzira.

Quite a few migrations have been reported from Nagzira in the recent past. In 2009, it was Prince, a male, who travelled to Pench followed by another male Aayat, who moved along the Balaghat-Kanha corridor in February 2013. During the same year, another male, Jai, reached Umred-Karhandla WLS, travelling 120 km.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tigress Kaani travels 70km, New Nagzira to Navegaon', *The Times of India*, 31/12/2014.

### **NBWL approval needed for Adani power plant near Nawegaon-Nagzira TR**

Adani Power Maharashtra Ltd. will have to secure an approval from the NBWL before getting 148 hectares of forestland

for its Tiroda thermal power plant near the Nawegaon-Nagzira TR.

The state had approved the diversion, but the office of PCCF, which had to implement the order, had put it on hold. The PCCF's office had sought a clarification from the centre on whether 10 km or the proposed limit of 7.5 km in case of tiger reserve should be considered the ESZ. A 7.5 km ESZ has been proposed here in the direction in which company's proposed forestland is situated, but a notification has not been issued yet.

The MoEF has replied that notwithstanding anything else, all the relevant approvals have to be taken before diversion. The reply has also stated that though NBWL approvals have been de-linked from forestland diversion procedures from August 20, 2014 onwards, it does not mean that the former is exempted. All the relevant clearances, including NBWL clearance, if needed, have to be taken.

Source: Shishir Arya. 'Adani will have to get NBWL nod too for Tiroda land', *The Times of India*, 17/12/2014.

## **2015**

### **Relocated villagers return to Nawegaon NP and set forest afire**



Over 300 villagers shifted from the Nawegaon NP in Gondia district, stormed back into the park and set fire to the meadows that had come up on their abandoned agriculture fields. The villagers were demanding payment of their balance

compensation money.

The Gondia DCF said that 357 families of Kawlewada, Zankargondi and Kalimati villages were relocated to Shree Rampur near Saundad in 2013 in lieu of a compensation package of Rs 10 lakh per adult. Under the package, money towards an individual's assets is paid first and the rest is distributed equally among the project affected persons. Accordingly, each adult received around Rs 7.16 lakh. As per rules there is no provision of land to be given under this option. According to this official, the relocated families are now making additional demands that include payment of the balance amount of around Rs 2.50 lakh, agricultural land and a government job. The villagers plan to take up agriculture activity on the land that they had vacated.

This is the second time since February 2014 that the villagers have entered the park for their demands. They had stayed inside for 20 days last time, had destroyed FD property and had also beaten up forest officials and field staff that had gone to persuade them to move out as it was illegal for them to continue inside the national park.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Relocated villagers storm Navegaon park, set forest afire', *The Times of India*, 13/06/15.

## **PENCH TR<sup>3</sup>**

**1997-98**

### **Slow movement on alternatives in Pench NP**

Adding another chapter to the ongoing debate in Pench, the Minister of State for Forests, Vinod Gudadhe Patil, addressed a meeting at Totladoh on 27 October 1997, in the presence of officials from various government departments including Forests,

Irrigation and Fisheries, the Additional District Magistrate and representatives of local NGOs.

After considering the positions of all present, the following decisions were taken:

- a detailed report on the situation would be prepared by a committee headed by the minister and comprising of representatives of all concerned departments, NGOs and local people
- genuinely interested / affected people would be accommodated by the Fisheries Department for fishing in alternative sites
- employment would be provided by the Revenue Department outside the NP to the affected people under the Employment Guarantee Scheme
- affected people would be given priority over others inside the NP for any departmental works.

However, local NGOs claim that the concerned authorities were apathetic and indifferent when they tried to follow-up on the above decisions. They issued a request to all interested to intervene in this matter. Subsequently in April 1998, Bittu Sahgal, Editor, Sanctuary Asia, met FD officials and the State Planning Secretary in this regard and was assured by them that the commitments made will be honoured. However he felt that there should be timely and concerted effort by all parties involved to prevent the situation in Pench from becoming volatile.

Source: Minutes of the meeting held on 27/10/1998, prepared by Shree Bhagwan, Conservator of Forests (Wildlife).

**1999**

### **Inter-state Pench Tiger Reserve**

About 257.26 sq km of forests in Maharashtra on the Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh border were brought under Project

3 Pench TR was created in 2007 and includes the Indira Priyadarshini Pench NP and Pench Mowgli Sanctuary.



Tiger on June 29, 1999, creating the first inter-state tiger reserve in the country. Already 758 sq km of the Madhya Pradesh area of the forest had been declared a tiger reserve in 1992-93, with the creation of the Pench TR there.

Source: Shree Bhagwan, CF (Wildlife),

NGOs. I feel solving any problem requires steps from both the sides. If action is only expected from one side then no problem can be solved.”

Source: Letter from Shree Bhagwan, CF (Wildlife), Nagpur (letter No. 2(c)/1997/C.No.158/1026, dated 17 September, 1998.

### **On the relocation of residents of Totladoh from the Pench Tiger Reserve: Response from Shree Bhagwan, CF (Wildlife)**

“Pl. refer to your publication in the *JPAM Update* of July 1998. Under the caption “Slow Movement on Alternatives in Pench National Park”, the local NGOs claim that the concerned authorities were apathetic and indifferent is not understood by me. As per my information, the local NGOs have only contacted the wildlife wing of the FD for every activity of the government. As you are aware the wildlife wing is only one element in government activities and as per announcement by Hon’ble Minister at point No. 3, employment is to be provided by the Revenue Department, outside the national park to the affected people under the EGS. As per the EGS Act, people in need of job should get themselves registered in tahsil office in prescribed proforma. After that it becomes responsibility of the state to provide job within 8 km of the areas or with the camping facilities within 15 days.

As per my information, local NGOs have not made an impact on the mind of the people to complete this formality. If this formality is completed and either local NGOs or people contact concerned tahsil office, they are bound to be provided with job under EGS.

Regarding point No. 2 as per my information, the Fisheries Department has issued a letter for willing persons to contact, but it has not been done either by people or

## **2005**

### **Water tunnel proposed through Pench NP**



The Maharashtra Government has proposed the de-reservation of 4.56 hectares (ha) of land of the Pench NP for a tunnel to provide water through the Sagara Nallah for irrigation is a cluster of eight villages located around the park. The land is needed for the tunnel, which is 2.88 kms long and for an approach road of about 3.2 kms. It will also include 2.4 ha of land for some construction work related to the project. The land to be de-reserved lies in Compartment Nos. 528, 529 and 531 of the park.

A two member committee appointed by the MoEF comprising of Dr. Darshan Shankar, Member, NBWL and Dr. Asha Rajvanshi of the WII, visited the site on November 26. They met with the Maharashtra PCCF (WL), Mr B Majumdar, the park Field Director, Mr Jarnail Singh, and also had a meeting with local people at Sillari to discuss the impacts of the proposed project. Local political leaders also met the committee and tried to convince them of the benefits the project will bring for the villages as well as for the PA.

Kishor Rithe of the Satpuda Foundation

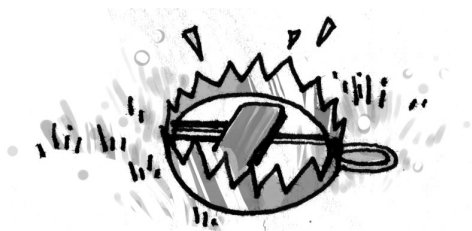
communicated to the committee their concerns regarding the impacts the project will have on Pench and the proposed Mansingdeo WLS. He also pointed out that this will set a wrong precedent and would result in more politicians and villagers demanding the use of the other nallahs and water from the Totladoh (Pench) reservoir for irrigation.

The committee is expected to submit its report to the MoEF, following which the proposal will be put up to the Standing Committee of NBWL for its permission. The proposal will also need the approval of the SC.

Source: Kishore Rithe, Press Release, 28/11/2005.

## 2007

### Dummy traps to train forest staff in Pench TR



A novel initiative to train forest staff in the Pench TR has been launched to locate tiger traps used by poachers. Dummy wooden traps, which look like the original steel traps generally used by poachers to snare tigers, will be laid in prime areas and the field staff will be asked to find them within four hours. The wooden traps would be laid by some unidentified forest officials. A team of six employees headed by a RFO that will be asked to find the traps would be provided clues on the basis of which they are supposed to work.

This is part of a number of new initiatives launched here by the Director of the Reserve, Dr. Mohan Jha. He pointed out that perpetrators of crime always leave

behind a trail in the forests but field staff was unable to identify these because of lack of training. In the next step, real steel traps will be laid for detection after removing the springs so that no harm is caused to humans or animals.

The TR authorities have also decided to take plaster casts of tiger pugmarks all round the year in an effort to create its own database. Around 150 pug impression pads (PIPs) are being created for the purpose in the park and their number will be subsequently increased.

The authorities also held a meeting with sarpanchs from surrounding villages during wildlife week to discuss and involve them in forest conservation efforts.

Source: Vinay Pinjarkar. 'Novel way to curb tiger poaching', *The Times of India*, 04/10/2007.

## 2012

### Panel for management plan for Pench TR buffer zone

A six-member committee has been constituted to study forestry operations and other management issues in the buffer area of Pench TR. The committee that was constituted on August 23, 2012, by the PCCF (Wildlife), SWH Naqvi, consists of the Additional PCCF (wildlife), AK Saxena as chairman and CCF and Field Director of Pench, MS Reddy, as member-secretary.

The other members of the committee include CCF Nagpur, SH Patil, General Manager of the FDCM, Jarnail Singh, representative of the WTI, Prafulla Bhamburkar, and honorary wildlife warden, Kundan Hate. The committee has been asked to submit its report within one month.

The terms of reference (ToR) of the panel include studying present forestry practices as per the prescriptions of the approved working plan and management plan being followed in the area falling in the

buffer zone of Pench and to recommend a set of activities that are in consonance with NTCA guidelines. The panel will suggest the ideal administrative set up for achieving the objectives and also make other recommendations in the interest of the overall management of the buffer zone.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Panel set up for Pench buffer management', *The Times of India*, 29/08/2012.

## **2013**

### **Deer from Maharaj Bagh Zoo to be released in Pench TR**

Deer from the Maharaj Bagh Zoo in Nagpur are to be released in the Pench TR to augment the prey base for tigers there.

There are 40 deer in the Maharaj Bagh Zoo at present, while as per the current guidelines of the National Zoo Policy, there cannot be more than 10 deer in a small zoo. The zoo has been granted permission by the CWLW to release the excess 28 animals. Of these, eight deer have already been released in the Nawegaon NP and the remaining 20 will now be released in Pench.

Earlier, around 36 animals including neelgai and chital from the Seminary Hills 'Deer Park' were released in Pench.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Maharajbagh Zoo deer to become live feed for Pench tigers', *Economic Times*, 12/10/13.

## **2015**

### **Efforts to introduce solar irrigation pumps in Pench TR buffer**



Satpuda Foundation, a NGO working on wildlife conservation issues, recently organized a workshop in the Pipariya village of Ramtek tehsil to introduce farmers from the Pench TR buffer zone to solar-powered irrigation pumps. About 25 farmers from five villages—Pipariya, Ghatpendri, Ghoti, Wagholi and Sillari—attended the event. The farmers observed the solar panels and controllers. They were made aware of various government schemes, which will provide them with benefits and subsidies for installation of such solar-powered irrigation units. The initiative is supported by Born Free Foundation and IndusInd Bank in Pench.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Pench buffer farmers take to solar irrigation pumps', *The Times of India*, 13/05/2015

### **NTCA nod for release of a captive tigress in Pench TR**

After six years the NTCA has finally given the Maharashtra FD a go ahead to release one of the two tigresses, kept in an enclosure in Pench TR, back into the wild. The tigress is one of three animals—one male and two females—that had been rescued from the Dhaba forest in Chandrapur district in 2009. The male was sent to a zoological park in Pune after it was found "not fit" for release.

The NTCA approval is reported to have followed an intervention of the Union Environment Minister, Mr Prakash Javadekar. Volunteers of the NGO Srushti, which had earlier taken care of the abandoned tigers in Bor, had recently met Javadekar to discuss the issue. A three-member committee consisting of Vaibhav Mathur of NTCA and Bilal Habib and Parag Nigam from the WII submitted a report to the NTCA based on which the decision was taken.

The decision of where the tigress (now six years old) should be released will be that of

the local wildlife officials. As per the original plan, a soft-release was proposed in Pench itself. However, Pench officials have written to the Assistant PCCF-Wildlife, saying that releasing the tigress in Pench will not be wise as Pench and the adjoining Mansingdeo WLS (450 sq km) already have 23 adult tigers and 6 cubs. If a decision is taken to not release the tigress in Pench, a meeting of the expert committee will be called to take a decision in the matter.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Green signal for tigress release, but where is the question', *The Times of India*, 15/04/2015.

### **Pench tigress re-captured**

The tigress TF2, who was radio-collared and released in the wild on May 17, had to be re-captured after she came close to Khapa village in Pench. Her stay in the wild lasted for only 24 days. The decision to re-capture her followed threats from villagers that they would attack her after she was spotted 50 metres from their cluster. The monitoring team tried to drive away the animal by bursting crackers but was unsuccessful. Unable to hunt on her own on being released into the wild, the tigress had been offered a goat on May 21, which she killed and consumed. Wildlife officials felt, however, that more time should be given to her to develop her hunting skills, and continued rigorous monitoring.

According to the Additional PCCF-Wildlife, looking at the rapid movement of the tigress, it seemed it was being chased or not being allowed to settle by other tigers. She lost 17 kg from the time of her release and was down to 80 kg by the time she was captured. She had turned anaemic too and an injury was also found on one of her front legs.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. '24 days after release, TF2 tigress back in cage', *The Times of India*, 10/06/2015.

## **SAHYADRI TR<sup>4</sup>**

**1999**

### **Meeting on joint management of Koyna WLS**

The Koyna Jivan Hakka Sanrakshana Sanghatana organized a three-day meeting on 'Forests, People, and the State', at Koregaon in Satara district, on 19-21 February, 1999. The main focus of the meeting was on how to work towards a joint management system for Koyna WLS, which contains many villages inhabited by Marathas and Dhangars.

The meeting was attended by villagers of Koyna and Bhimashankar WLSs, representatives of the NGOs Satyashodh, Vrikshmitra, RANWA, Kalpavriksh, Parisar, YUVA, and Shaswat, the ACF-Wildlife, and RFO-Wildlife, Koyna WLS. Discussions included the ongoing process of settlement of people's rights in PAs, and the impact of people's traditional resource use activities.

Special focus was on how to move towards a more participatory system of management, for both the sanctuary and its surrounds. Joint protected area management, joint forest management, ecodevelopment, and other possible paths to this were examined. Threats due to proposed mining along the boundary, and the possible connection of this with proposed denotification of a part of the sanctuary, were also discussed.

Source: B.J. Avinash, Satyashodh

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4 Sahyadri TR was created in 2012 and spreads over an area of 1165 sq km. The Chandoli WLS, Chandoli NP and Koyna WLS are now included in the Sahyadri TR and all stories from these PAs are included in this section.

**2000**

**FD opposes capacity enhancement of Koyna hydro project**

The Maharashtra FD has opposed the move to enhance the capacity of the Koyna Hydro Electric Project (KHEP). KHEP has an installed capacity of 1,920 MW and there are plans to raise it to 2,500 MW. The specific opposition of the FD has been to the proposed construction of the 400 MW plant in Humbarli near the Ozarde water falls.

This area is part of the Koyna WLS and the FD has argued that the construction activity would adversely affect the area. The blasting operations for the construction of the power house, roads and other such activities are also likely to have an impact on the wild animals here.

Source: 'Koyna hydro project faces rough weather', *The Indian Express*, 07/08/2000.

**NGO suggests that boundary of Koyna WLS be fixed after rehabilitation of all displaced**

The Koyna Association for the Protection of the Right to Live (Koyna Jeevan Hakk Samarakshan Sanghatana) has demanded that the final limits of the Koyna WLS be determined only after the rehabilitation of all those who are to be displaced on account of the sanctuary. There are a number of villages on the west bank of the Koyna reservoir that have been demanding resettlement for a long time.

The association has submitted a memorandum to the district collector in this connection.

Source: 'Relocate people before fixing Koyna sanctuary limits, govt. told', *The Times of India*, 28/10/2000.

**2002**

**10 yr management plan for Radhanagari, Sagareshwar and Chandoli WLSs**

The FD has approved a 10 year management plan for the Radhanagari, Sagareshwar and Chandoli WLSs in the Kolhapur Wildlife Division. The plan is aimed at providing fresh impetus to ongoing work on wildlife protection, eco-restoration and development projects with specific emphasis on tourism.

The FD expects substantial financial assistance from the Centre under these management plans wherein the thrust would be on categorizing wildlife sanctuaries into four program specific zones.

Source: Vishwas Kothari. '10-yr plans for three sanctuaries okayed', *The Indian Express*, 04/04/2002.

**Forest land diverted for resettlement of villagers from Koyna WLS**

The Central Government has agreed to the diversion of 413.06 hectares of forestland for the rehabilitation of persons who have moved out from the Koyna WLS. Additional details are however not available.

This land is part of a total of 6,145.01 hectares of forestland in Maharashtra that has recently been diverted for conversion of forest villages into revenue villages. This includes 4,073.95 hectares of forest, the additional conversion of 73 forest villages to revenue villages in Nandurbar district, diversion of 1,658 hectares for the regularization of agrisilvi plots in the same district, and that for rehabilitation from the Koyna WLS.

Source: 'Centre okays State plan on forest land', *Indian Express*, 28/12/2002.

## **2003**

### **Rs 2 crore rehabilitation package approved for villages affected by Chandoli WLS**



The Maharashtra State Government has agreed to provide a Rs 2 crore rehabilitation package for those families affected by the Chandoli WLS.

The affected families had launched an agitation in Kolhapur in the month of November for the same. They then called off their protest when the State Finance Minister assured them of the package and that the money would be released by December 5, 2003. The funds were to be given from the Chief Minister's Funds.

Source: 'Rs 2 crore for rehabilitation of project affected families', *Free Press Journal*, 11/11/2003.

## **2004**

### **Sahyadri TR proposed; to include Chandoli NP and Koyna WLS**

The Maharashtra Government has proposed the creation of the Sahyadri TR that will be spread over nearly 800 sq km. This will include the 327 sq km Chandoli NP, the 423 sq km Koyna WLS and the corridor between these protected areas. The tiger populations here have grown from two in

Koyna and three in Chandoli to eight and four respectively in 2004.

If approved this will be the fourth TR in the state after Melghat, Tadoba and Pench. It will be the first one in the state in the Western Ghats.

Source: Uma Karve. 'Now, Koyna may turn tiger country', *The Indian Express*, 15/11/2004.

'Tiger Reserve status could be pride of Sahyadris', *The Times of India*, 22/12/2004

## **2008**

### **Proposal for the Sahyadri TR**

The Maharashtra State Government is reported to have recently forwarded a proposal to the NTCA for the constitution of the Sahyadri TR. Covering an area of 741 sq km, it would be the first such reserve in the Western Ghats in Maharashtra and include 317.67 sq km of Chandoli NP and 423.55 sq km of Koyna WLS.

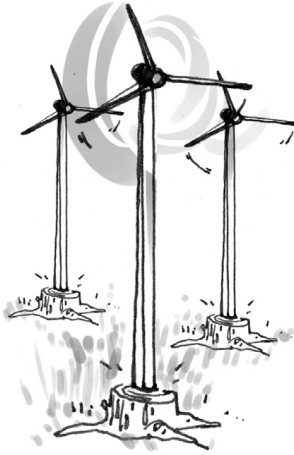
Source: Rajesh Sachdev. Email dated 13/03/2008.

## **2010**

### **HC stays construction of tourist resorts and installation of windmills in Koyna WLS**

The Mumbai HC recently issued an interim stay on the construction of tourist resorts and the installation of windmills in the Koyna WLS. The order was issued in response to a public interest litigation filed by the Satara based activist, Nana Khamkar. The petition had alleged that authorities had permitted the installation of windmills in the sanctuary and a number of trees had been cut for the purpose.

The FRO in his response, admitted that 500-550 trees had been felled in an area of about three hectares at Navaja inside the sanctuary and there were 215 windmills and 10 resorts in the sanctuary that had come up without the necessary permissions.



Source: Rosy Sequeira. 'Bombay high court comes to the rescue of state's flora and fauna', [www.dna.com](http://www.dna.com), 24/10/2010.

### **49 mining leases approved in Sindhudurg; corridor connecting Koyna, Radhanagari WLSs and Anshi-Dandeli TR to be impacted**

The Maharashtra state government is reported to have approved 49 bauxite and iron-ore mining leases in the Sindhudurg district. Sindhudurg is said to have the highest green cover in the state (49%) and was declared the first eco-tourism district in the country in 1997.

32 of the 49 mining permits have been given in the Sawantwadi-Dodamarg zone which is an important corridor connecting the Koyna WLS in Satara district, the Radhanagari WLS in Kolhapur district and the Anshi-Dandeli TR in Karnataka. The region has a number of perennial streams and rivers, and also supports a wide diversity of wildlife such as the leopard, gaur and deer. Forest

officials say there have been at least four tiger sightings here in the past two years.

Four mines, in fact, are already operational in the area. In the case of mining near Kalane village that started about a year ago, the villagers had passed a gram sabha resolution stating that they did not want mining as it would destroy both the rich flora and fauna and their agricultural farmlands. In the two public hearings held for the project, they had objected to the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report as it did not mention the existence of perennial water bodies, rivers and the RF in the adjoining areas.

Activists have pointed out that mining companies are increasingly eyeing Maharashtra ever since the MoEF imposed a moratorium on fresh mining leases in Goa.

Source: Viju B. 'Mining blow to Western Ghats', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com) 15/10/2010.

## **2011**

### **Mining leases in Sindhudurg put on hold**

The Maharashtra government has put on hold the 49 mining leases that had been granted in the Sindhudurg district. It had been pointed out that the leases were in rich forest areas that were also parts of forest corridors connecting the Koyna & Radhanagari WLSs and Anshi-Dandeli TR in Karnataka.

The Union Minister for Environment and Forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh had written to state Chief Minister in October demanding that the leases be relooked at.

Source: 'Maharashtra halts all Sindhudurg mining', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, 17/12/2010.

## **HC not against windmills in and around Koyna WLS**

The Mumbai HC has noted that windmills cannot be displaced from within and around the Koyna WLS as they are important for power generation. The observation was made by a division bench of justices Ranjana Desai and RJ Ketkar while hearing a PIL seeking the protection of the sanctuary.

Though the judges maintained that the corridor had to remain free of encroachments, they noted that the windmills are necessary for employment generation and hence, cannot be displaced. They also remarked that a balance between environmental concerns and the right of the people to earn their livelihood has to be found.

The additional government pleader also submitted a report of the state chief secretary in the matter. The state government has taken a position supporting the windmills in the area for promoting power and employment generation. It noted that the windmills contribute about 140 million units of power to the state grid, that the energy generated was one of the cleanest and that the land occupied for the windmills was not very large. It also pointed to the financial relief that has been provided by windmills to the people/villages who gave up lands for setting them up.

The petitioner also drew the court's attention to a newspaper advertisement of housing projects in the New Mahabaleshwar area. The judges subsequently directed the state to submit a report on the exact status of the New Mahabaleshwar project.

Source: 'Windmills can't be displaced: Bombay high court', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 15/04/2011.

## **FD issues eviction notices to windmills in Koyna WLS**

The Maharashtra FD has issued eviction notices to 49 windmills stating that they

have illegally encroached on forest land in the Koyna WLS. The parties have been told to remove the windmills within two months or face legal action.

The FD action has come following the Mumbai HC observation, which highlighted that around 206 windmills and resorts have been illegally built by private parties inside the sanctuary. The HC had, on October 18, 2010, directed the FD to take appropriate action against the erring windmills and resorts. The direction was given in a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by social activist Nana Khamkar.

The PIL stated that the Collector should cancel all illegal land deals which have taken place in violation of Section 20 of the WLPA as regard to illegal erection of windmills, resorts, tree cutting and construction of roads. It also asked the court to cancel all illegal land transfers that have taken place after 1985.

(Note: This news report however appears contradictory to the earlier report where the same HC was reported to have said that windmills cannot be displaced from within or around Koyna WLS as they were important for power generation).

Source: Mustafa Plumber. 'Windmills in Koyna forest told to evict', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 06/06/2011.

## **ZSI survey records 347 faunal species in Radhanagari WLS and Chandoli NP**

A three-year faunal diversity survey by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Pune, has recorded 347 faunal species in the Chandoli NP in Sangli district and the Radhanagari WLS in Kolhapur district. The species recorded include 35 species of zooplankton, 40 species of dragonflies, 10 species of molluscs (invertebrates), 10 species of grasshoppers, 88 species of butterflies, 40



species of freshwater fish, 82 species of birds and 69 species of mammals.

The survey started in 2007 and was conducted in three phases—pre-monsoon, monsoon and post-monsoon. Presently, the samples collected are being classified and documented by experts. It will take another year to come up with the final report. The survey also found that of the 16 endemic birds seen in Western Ghats, eight are found in Chandoli and Radhanagari. These include the Nilgiri wood pigeon, blue winged parakeet, Malabar grey hornbill, white-bellied blue flycatcher, rufous babbler and the grey-headed bulbul.

Source: Dipannita Das. 'ZSI survey records 374 faunal species in W Ghats', [timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 15/02/2011.

### **Violent protest against the Sahyadri TR**



Villagers agitating against the recently proposed Sahyadri TR turned violent during a protest march and pelted stones on the FD office. The incident took place in the first week of January in Patan in Satara district.

The rally led by local political representatives also raised slogans like 'Save man, not tiger'. Opposing the reserve, which is spread over four districts of Satara, Ratnagiri, Kolhapur and Sangli, they submitted a memorandum to the tehsildar. There are 90 villages in the buffer zone of the project and 83 villages in the core zone.

Source: Agitation against tiger project turns ugly in Satara', *DNA*, 05/01/2011.

### **Farmers, villagers oppose Sahyadri TR**

Thousands of farmers have been opposing the Sahyadri TR as they fear it would hamper developmental activities. A protest meeting was recently held at Taldeo village, about 15 kms from Mahabaleshwar.

Villagers raised a number of questions related to the reserve. It was noted that the people of Patan, Javali and Mahabaleshwar would be most affected as their primary sources of income are farming and tourism and that these activities would be stopped due to the notification of the tiger reserve. The Mahabaleshwar Taluka Sarpanch Sanghatana pointed out that several restrictions have already been imposed and villagers were having trouble getting permissions to even construct a house. It also pointed out that the government has still not relocated villagers displaced by the Koyna dam and that people were afraid that they would face a similar future.

The Sahyadri TR was initiated in 2010 by combining the Koyna and Chandoli WLSs. The reserve is spread over four districts, and 83 villages are said to be within its boundaries.

Source: 'Protests In Mahabaleshwar', *The Times of India*, 03/10/2011.

## **2012**

### **Proposal to drill deep bores inside Chandoli NP, Koyna WLS to study reservoir triggered seismicity**

Bores varying in depth from one km to 10 km are to be drilled at various sites inside the Chandoli NP and the Koyna WLS to study reservoir triggered seismicity (RTS). The proposal is linked to the fact that thousands of earthquakes have been experienced in Maharashtra's Koyna region following the

impoundment of water in the Shivaji Sagar reservoir in 1962. More than 225 quakes of 4-6.3 magnitude on the Richter scale have been recorded in a pocket of 600 sq km in the past 50 years. The creation of a second reservoir at Warna, about 20 km from Koyna, in 1993 made the RTS more pronounced.

Scientists are now looking at this situation as an opportunity to understand earthquakes and this is to be done by drilling deep boreholes in the region. In March 2011, Minister for Earth Sciences Mr. Ashwani Kumar said that a MoU for the same had been signed in January 2011 with the German Research Centre for Geosciences on behalf of the International Continental Scientific Drilling Programme (ICDP) for an initial period of five years.

The same month, 70 experts—26 of them from abroad—attended a workshop at the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), Hyderabad, on 'Deep Scientific Drilling to Study Reservoir Triggered Earthquakes at Koyna' to chalk out a project for studying the physical, geological and chemical processes and properties of this quake zone in real time. Funded by the Centre, the project involves drilling a seven km deep borehole and the cost was pegged between Rs 200 and Rs 400 crore. A few of the proposed drilling sites are inside the Chandoli NP, which, along with Koyna WLS, constitutes the Sahyadri TR. The results from the experiments that will be conducted will not be available till about a decade later.

In April, earlier this year, NGRI's senior principal scientist and project leader sought permission for site reconnaissance in the Chandoli NP from the state FD. The PCCF granted the permission and also forwarded the letter of permission to the NTCA, which then referred the project to NBWL. According to the PCCF, his permission was purely for reconnaissance purposes and

it did not allow any scientific experiment, digging or removal of stones.

The NGRI team, meanwhile, conducted a survey from 29-31 May. Officials explain that the teams will continue to examine different sites for feasibility. It will take another two years to pinpoint the most suitable site and start drilling. They have said that they are trying to avoid the Sahyadri TR but if there is a need to drill there, then they will seek all the necessary permissions.

Concern has, however, been expressed over the impact this will have on the forests and the wildlife here as the drilling will require heavy machinery. Road construction and vehicular movement apart, this will necessitate supply of water and electricity to the core of the tiger reserve through pipelines and power pylons. Aggressive chemicals are often used to clean materials brought up in drilling mud and these, it is feared, will cause substantial chemical pollution of the area.

Source: Jay Mazoomdaar. 'Tigers may soon feel the tremors', *Tehelka*, 16/06/2012.

## 2012

### Rare plant 'spiderwort' rediscovered in Chandoli NP

*Belosynapsis vivipara*, commonly known as spiderwort, was reported recently from the Chandoli NP. The last time it was reported was in 1851, when it was first collected at Parva Ghat in Maharashtra. It was believed that the plant had gone extinct. The re-discovery was made jointly by a team that comprised researchers from the Agharkar Research Institute, Pune; the Art, Commerce and Science College, Lanja in Ratnagiri; University of Pune, Pune; Botanical Survey of India, Howrah; and the Botanical Survey of India, Western Regional Centre, Pune.

Parva Ghat where the 1851 specimens were found lies at the junction of Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka, while the latest

discovery was in the northern-most extension of the northern Western Ghats of Maharashtra. The distance between the two points is sizable and it is hoped that a thorough study of the area lying in between could lead to similar discoveries.

The recent study found about 100 such plants growing on large tree trunks in the riparian forest patches of Male and Patharpunj villages in Chandoli NP, which forms the northern-most distribution of this vulnerable species.

Source: 'Researchers discover rare plant species', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 05/07/2012.

## **TADOBA-ANDHARI TR<sup>5</sup>**

**1998**

### **Set back for village protection force in Tadoba-Andhari TR**

A progressive partnership between the FD and local communities, which was developing in the Tadoba-Andhari TR, recently received a rude shock when a tribal youth was killed allegedly by vested interests. Under the centrally sponsored ecodevelopment programme, a Adivasi Youth Wildlife Protection Committee was established for the reserve. Five youths from six tribal villages situated in and around the Andhari WLS were trained and their services utilised for the protection of wildlife and its habitat in the tiger reserve. Ten protection huts were constructed in different parts of the reserve and patrolling parties were stationed at these huts in order to curb illegal activities. The committee's first success was the nabbing of 22 poachers from Jabalpur, after which several illicit bamboo cutters were also caught.

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5 Tadoba Andhari TR was created in 1955 and is spread over an area of 1,727 sq km. It is comprised of the Andhari WLS and Tadoba NP

Research undertaken by people from the Nagpur University suggests that the FD and the local tribals were working out a meaningful partnership. However, in May 1998, one of the tribals, Vinod Sidam, was found murdered. The FD reportedly moved fast to arrange compensation, but some local politicians have doubted the handling of the situation and complicated the matter.

Source: 'New Protection Force for TATR', *Tigerlink News*, Vol.4, No.2, September 1998.

**2001**

### **Survey and monitoring of Tadoba-Andhari TR**

A Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) funded project, 'Survey and Monitoring of Tiger Habitat in the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve' is being presently carried out in the tiger reserve.

The duration of the project is one year: from April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002. It includes survey and mapping of tiger habitat, dependency survey of 10 peripheral villages, giving of motivational rewards to five field workers and an year long monitoring of the reserve.

Source: 'Survey and Monitoring of Tiger Habitat Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve', *Tigerlink*, September 2001.

**2006**

### **Metal detectors to trace traps in Tadoba**

The Maharashtra FD will be attempting the use of metal detectors to trace traps laid out for wild animals by poachers in the forests of the Tadoba-Andhari TR. It is hoped that the detectors will be able to locate the long chains attached to the traps that are buried under the ground. A preliminary trial carried

out here recently gave positive results, encouraging the FD to try out the method further.

The FD has however said they want to be absolutely sure of the success rate of the method before its full application. Each detector that is to be procured from a supplier in Mumbai costs Rs 15,000.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'In a first, state to use metal detectors to trace tiger traps', *The Indian Express*, 14/10/2006.

## **2007**

### **Village relocation starts from Tadoba-Andhari TR**

The process of relocation of the six villages from the Tadoba-Andhari TR has started. The first of the six villages is Botezari where the process of shifting was started in the month of March 2007. The relocation work started with shifting of the cow shed belonging to the Shri Shankar Patil, who is also the police patil of the village. The relocation site is known as Tolewahi or Kesalaghat and is located on the Chandrapur Mul state highway.

In the wake of paucity of funds provided by the central government for the relocation, efforts have been made to pool in funds from various governmental development programs to provide facilities like roads, electricity, drinking water, panchayat building, school, and an anganwadi.

The function was attended by the Collector, CCF Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad, Field Director and ACF of the reserve; DCF and RFO of Chandrapur; and the Superintendent of Police.

Source: Email by Rucha Ghate.

### **No plan to move out VIP guest house complex from Tadoba**

Senior forest officials have said they don't know when the VIP guest house complex

located within the Tadoba-Andhari TR will be moved out. The complex which is situated on the southern shore of the Tadoba Lake includes the FD colony of 15 quarters, the VIP guest house, the forest officers guest house, holiday homes and a canteen.

This is being seen in sharp contrast to the FD's insistence and recent move to relocate six villages from inside the reserve.

The complex is known to be a major source of disturbance to wildlife as it adjoins an important source of water for the entire Tadoba valley. The staff and families living here also regularly celebrate festivals like Diwali and other important occasions like marriages by playing music and indulging in other activities detrimental to wildlife. The tourism complex itself generates its own garbage and disturbances.

It has also been alleged that this shifting is being purposefully delayed as the complex consists of the support staff of the VIP guest house that is set on a hillock over looking the Tadoba Lake and that ministers and VIPs want to continue enjoying the exclusive privilege of staying inside a tiger reserve.

Source: 'Fence eating farm – Forest Colony inside Tadoba Tiger Reserve', *The Hitavada*, 20/06/2007.

### **Opposition to proposal to open Kolara gate for tourists**

The proposal of the FD to open a new entry point from Kolara on the eastern side of the Tadoba-Andhari TR has come in for sharp criticism from some NGOs.

The wildlife management plan for the tiger reserve has proposed three tourist entry points into the park. The plan retains the Moharli gate as the main entry point from Chandrapur to the south. It proposes closure of both gates on the western boundary, which are connected by tar roads to the

important towns of Warora and Bhadravati, which is also the tehsil headquarters of the park.

Two new gates are proposed at Kolara and Pangari. The Kolara gate will be for tourists visiting from Nagpur, although no tourist, reportedly, visits Tadoba via this route. The main national highway NH-7 / state highway 31 (SH-31) route to Chandrapur is preferred as the main access to Tadoba as it is better maintained and has support infrastructure. The third gate at Pangari will also be from the eastern side and will send tourists straight into some of the quietest forests of Tadoba.

It has been alleged that forest officials and their relatives have purchased land near the Kolara gate and hope to make financial gains when the gate here is opened for tourists. The FD has also proposed the construction of tourist facilities at this gate. It has also been pointed out that the entry gates at Kolara and Pangri would lead into the remotest parts of Tadoba and will negatively impact the forests and wildlife here.

Source: 'Proposal to open TATR's Kolara Gate for tourists draws flak', *The Times of India*, 23/06/2007.

### **Minister visits Tadoba-Andhari TR after midnight in violation of rules**

Maharashtra Finance Minister, Jayant Patil, was reported to have illegally entered the Tadoba-Andhari TR after midnight in the first week of December 2007 in violation of existing rules.

The tiger reserve permits entry of visitors only between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays except Tuesday. The minister, along with Principal Secretary (Reforms), Sunil Soni, and some friends entered during the prohibited period even

after forest officials apprised him of the rules.

The minister justified his visit, saying he was there for a meeting with forest officials as they had approached him for funding for the reserve management but could not reach in time as he was delayed in a meeting in Gondia. The TR director, SH Patil, said that the minister had reached late on account of his meetings in Gondia and Bhandara and he was given permission because he was part of the government and was here to discuss issues related to the management of the reserve. He also added that the minister did not move around the park at night.

Wildlife activists have expressed serious concern over violation of rules by the minister and pointed out that if government officials themselves violate rules in this manner it would be difficult to expect the common citizens to abide by the law.

Source: Pradip Kumar Maitra. 'Minister's midnight visit to tiger reserve', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 07/12/2007.

## **2008**

### **Villagers inside Tadoba-Andhari TR threaten mass suicide if forced to relocate**

110 families from village Kolsa, located within the Tadoba-Andhari TR, have threatened to commit collective suicide if forced to relocate without proper facilities. Some 49 landless households from the village had relocated to the village Tolewahi outside the reserve in March 2007 under a relocation drive by the Forest and Revenue Departments. The village of Botezari was also relocated at the same time.

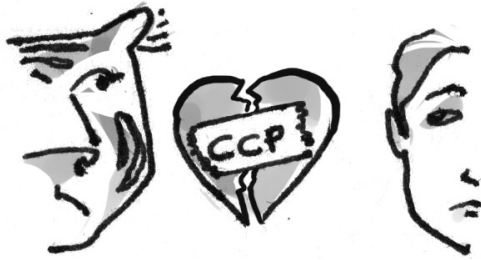
The villagers are of the opinion that the 49 who had agreed to relocate had done so on the promise of land. They are now facing problems because the land they received is

not fit for cultivation and the irrigation tank that had been promised has also not been constructed. The land used for resettlement was forest land and its status has still not been changed to revenue.

The villagers who are refusing to move say that the forest and revenue officials have been harassing them by halting all development work in the village, by shutting down the ration shop, and by threatening to cut off of the village's electric supply.

Source: Mohan Kothekar. Kolsa villagers threaten mass suicide if forced to relocate'. Email dated 27/04/2008 on [forestrights@yahooogroups.com](mailto:forestrights@yahooogroups.com).

### **Rs 35-lakh plan to end human-tiger conflict in Tadoba-Andhari TR**



The NTCA has sanctioned Rs 35.58 lakh for the implementation of a special plan to contain human-tiger conflict around the Tadoba-Andhari TR.

The three-year plan, called the 'Corridor Conservation Programme' is to be executed jointly by the FD and the NGO, Tiger Research and Conservation Trust. It envisages a survey in the area to assess the population and distribution of the tigers, and to understand the reasons behind the conflict. It would also improve the protection and monitoring system, and look into issues concerning habitat degradation, water bodies and other physical features. The training would be on wildlife management—monitoring carnivores, studying their movements and undertaking

community awareness programmes to reduce human interference.

At least 35 human deaths have been reported in the forests of the tiger reserve here in attacks by tigers since 2006.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Rs 35-lakh plan to end human-tiger conflict', *The Indian Express*, 22/07/2008.

### **Tiger attacks continue around Tadoba Andhari TR; six more killed since March 2008**

Attacks by tigers have continued around the forests of the Tadoba-Andhari TR resulting in the death of at least six more people since March 2008. Two shepherds, Rajeshwar Kumre and Ramesh Ichkape, were found dead in the Balapur part of the FDCM territory in the latest incident that occurred in the last week of July. Both were from Janakpur in Nagbhid tehsil.

The villagers suspect that both were victims of a tigress that was sighted with two of its cubs in forests near Janakpur.

Nearly 20 similar incidents of attacks by tigers have been reported here since July 2007.

Source: Mazhar Ali. 'Two more killed in tiger attack', *Times News Network*, 28/07/2008.

### **Govt. admits that wrong tiger was killed as man-eater in Tadoba in 2007**

Maharashtra officials have admitted that a wrong tiger was killed as a man-eater in the Tadoba forests in 2007. The clarification came in response to a RTI query filed recently by Mumbai resident Ajay Madhusudhan. The reply said the officials shot dead a male tiger whereas the maneater in Chandrapur district's Brahmapuri forests was a tigress. It is clear from the reply that the FD had acted

in haste under political pressure. The reply refers to letters from local politicians who had threatened to agitate and even kill the man-eater themselves.

Chimur MLA, Vijay Wadettiwar had, in a letter, served an ultimatum to the CCF to capture or kill the man-eater within 15 days, the RTI reply said.

Villagers had complained in October 2007 that a tigress was killing people and cattle in and around the Tadoba-Andhari TR. The FD began to look for the animal in November but failed to capture it. Local politicians then turned up the heat on the FD. During the operation, the officials sighted a tiger eating its kill. The team fired 39 bullets, 12 of which had hit the mark.

Source: 'Tigress kills, tiger shot', *The Telegraph*, 10/11/2008.

### **RFO posts vacant in Tadoba-Andhari TR for a year**

Reports in November 2008 revealed that protection in the Tadoba-Andhari TR was being seriously compromised as RFO posts had been lying vacant for nearly a year.

There are five RFOs for the reserve, one each for Tadoba, Moharli and Kolsa (the three ranges of the 625-sq km tiger reserve), and one each for protection and research. The high tiger-density Tadoba Range was without a RFO for nine months while the post in Moharli has been lying vacant for 21 months.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Is Tadoba headed the Sariska way?', *Times News Network*, 14/11/2008.

### **Coal mining leases in vicinity of Tadoba-Andhari TR**

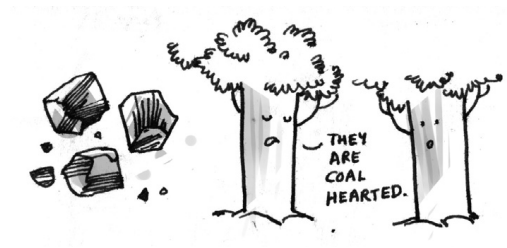
The Central Government is reported to have given coal-mining leases totaling 3,350 hectares to three companies in

forests adjoining the Tadoba-Andhari TR. The largest lease of 1,600 hectares has been awarded to Adani Enterprises for its opencast mining project in western Lohara village. The company recently submitted an EIA report for its 140-million-tonne project and is in the process of obtaining other clearances.

On examining the EIA, local NGOs, Green Planet Society and Eco Pro have alleged that the report does not include the project's impact on the adjoining tiger reserve. Moreover, the company's plans mention the rehabilitation only of the Lohara village, while 11 others that will also be affected have been ignored. The NGOs further allege that much more land will be required than has been suggested in the EIA. The Adani project itself will need another 1,750 hectares of forestland for housing, roads, and workshop construction.

Fears have also been expressed over the effects of the mining activity on the hydrology and water security of region. Finally, the EIA's wildlife survey does not take into consideration the fauna found in the area nor does the report mention the tiger, despite the fact that the region has some of the best tiger habitats in the country.

Public hearings for the project that were to be held on September 11 and November 4, 2008, could not be completed successfully because of altercations between project supporters and opponents. In the meanwhile, park officials have written to the PCCF reiterating that the project and the tiger reserve cannot co-exist. Residents of Lohara village have supported the project but have demanded compensation of Rs 20 lakh per acre against Adani's offer of Rs 2 lakh. They are confident that they will be able to negotiate a good deal, and are said to have considerable local political support for the same.



Source: 'Clearing forests for coal', *Down to Earth*, 15/12/2008.

## 2009

### Two tiger deaths in Tadoba-Andhari TR in February

Two tiger deaths, one in Bhanuskhindi and another in Dewada in the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve were reported in the month of February 2009. The death of the tigress in Bhanuskhindi was, most likely, a case of starvation as the post mortem revealed that the animal's stomach was empty. Its body parts, skin and nails too were intact, ruling out the role of poaching in the death.

Poaching, however, was being suspected in the case of the other tiger death in compartment number 163 in the reserve's Dewada beat. Bones and a tiger skin were recovered at the spot giving credence to the belief that the animal was indeed poached. Forensic and DNA tests were being done to understand the exact cause of death.

Source: 'Two tigers die in Tadoba, one may be poached', *The Times of India*, 27/02/2009.

### Adani's mining lease near Tadoba-Andhari TR runs into trouble

The coal mining project of the Adani Power Limited (APL) in Lohara (west) in the vicinity of the Tadoba-Andhari TR appears to have run into trouble. It has been revealed that the MoEF had rejected the application

of Nippon Denro Ispat Ltd (NDIL) for the same block about a decade ago on the ground that it was too close to the reserve.

The NDIL had set up Central India Coal Company and was allotted three virgin coal blocks with a proven geological reserve of about 334 million tonnes of power-grade coal for its proposed power plant at Bhadravati in 1995 by the coal ministry.

In a letter written in this matter to the Maharashtra State Forest Secretary in April 1997, the then Additional Inspector General of Forests (AIGP) had stated: "After careful consideration of the proposal, the central government conveys its inability to approve the proposal for diversion of 745.54 hectares of forest land for extraction of coal in Lohara (west) under Section 2 of the FCA, 1980, since the proposal is not conducive to either environment or forest conservation."

In a further development, 61 members of the Maharashtra State Legislature have also jointly opposed the mining in these forests.

Source: 'Adani block too denied nod earlier', *The Times of India*, 26/03/2009.

'Tadoba Vyaghra Prkalpat Khan Nako', *Loksatta*, 01/04/2009.

### 1,067 sq km buffer zone for Tadoba-Andhari TR

A special committee appointed by the Maharashtra State Government has identified an area of 1,067 sq km to be notified as the buffer zone of the Tadoba-Andhari TR. It will include a little more than 671 sq km of forested area and about 394 sq km of non-forested area. The area of the core zone of the reserve is 625 sq km.

There are 79 villages in the proposed buffer zone. 66 of these are located in the Chandrapur Forest Division while the remaining 13 are in the Brahmapuri division. It has been clarified that none of the villages



included in the buffer zone of the tiger reserve will face displacement and that, in fact, funds for their development will be easier to access through centrally sponsored schemes.

Although the buffer includes 125 sq km area of West Chanda division, not a single village falls in the proposed area. The proposal also includes compartment number 390, where coal-mines of Adani Power Limited have been proposed. The buffer also includes some 7-9 compartments proposed for mining by the Maharashtra State Mining Corporation near Agarzari near Tadoba. These have been included in the buffer zone because they fall within 10 km of the boundary of the reserve.

The buffer zone proposal will now be sent to the NTCA, which will then refer it to the state government for notification.

Source: 'Now, Tadoba tigers to help villagers', *The Times of India*, 10/05/2009.

### **Villagers relocated from Botezari arrested for 'violating' and entering Tadoba-Andhari TR**

16 residents of the Bhagwanpur village, who were relocated from Botezari village in the Tadoba-Andhari TR in March 2007, were arrested on May 21, 2009 after they re-entered the reserve to gather tendu leaves and start cultivation on their old lands.

The FD charged the group with having felled 60-70 trees and booked them for several offenses. The villagers claimed that they were in a state of semi-starvation in their new location due to lack of irrigation facilities and employment, and all efforts to communicate with officials in this regard had proven futile.

The main bone of contention between the forest and revenue departments of the district on the one hand and the residents

of Bhagwanpur on the other is an irrigation tank that was promised to the residents at the time of relocation. The village had been provided a tank situated lower than their fields, and hence unsuitable for irrigation. As a result they have been unable to take a single crop in the last two crop seasons.

In meeting held in the village on May 20, and attended by the Tadoba-Andhari TR Field Director, Sheshrao Patil, RFO Arun Tikhe and District Collector, Pradeep Kalbhor, the residents demanded that they be allowed to cultivate their old lands in Botezari village till irrigation facilities were provided at the relocation site. Villagers have alleged that the officials threatened them with arrest during the meeting. Following this a group of people from 24 different households went into the tiger reserve for tendu leaf collection and for cultivation.

16 of these (eight men and eight women) were subsequently arrested and presented in court where the women were granted bail on personal bonds. The women, however, refused to accept bail and demanded that the men be freed too. All sixteen people were then remanded to magisterial custody.

Bhagwanpur residents have demanded that the arrested residents be released and all charges against them be dropped. They have also reiterated their demand for cultivation rights on their old lands till all necessary facilities are provided at Bhagwanpur. Villages Kolsa and Rantalodhi located inside the reserve have also supported these demands.

Source: Manohar K. Email to forestrights@yahooogroups.com dated 08/06/2009.

### **Shifting of villages from Tadoba-Andhari TR to be expedited**

The Maharashtra State Government has asked the Revenue and FD officials to

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

expedite the relocation of villages from the Tadoba-Andhari TR. This includes five villages that are still inside the reserve and some families from the village of Kolsa that have continued to stay on.

The issue was discussed in a meeting called by the State Principal Secretary in Mumbai in October. This meeting was followed by another one that was called by the Divisional Commissioner and attended by the CCF for Nagpur Wildlife Circle, who has also been named as the nodal officer for the work. Others attending included the Chandrapur District Collector and officials from Chandrapur Zilla Parishad and the irrigation department.

Officials were asked to prepare a revised estimate for resettling 778 families from four villages - Jamni, Nawegaon (Ramdegi), Palasgaon (Shingru) and Rantalodi. Individual families were to be asked whether they wanted money or wanted to be resettled by the department.

As per the new norms, each family will get a Rs 10 lakh package. It includes 35% for agricultural land, 30% for settlement of rights, 20% for house construction, 5% as incentive and 10% for community facilities like drinking water, electricity, irrigation, sanitation, roads, place of worship, and cremation and burial. Those not wanting to be resettled can opt for Rs 10 lakhs in cash.

Till now, around 116 families - 45 landless families from Botezari and 71 from Kolsa have been rehabilitated in compartment number 524 in Tolewahi in Mul forest range. However, over 70 landholders from Kolsa still remain and efforts are on to persuade them to move out.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Shifting of Tadoba villages gets fillip', *Times News Network*, 12/11/2009.

### **MoEF rejects mining project near Tadoba-Andhari TR**

The MoEF has refused permission to the Adani Power Limited and the Maharashtra

Coal Company to mine coal near the Tadoba-Andhari TR. The decision was taken in a November meeting of the environmental appraisal committee of the ministry. Adani Power Limited had applied for environment clearance for mining at Lohara, while the Maharashtra Coal Company Limited had applied for mining near Agarzari.

After detailed discussions, the committee came to the conclusion that at the time of grant of the terms of reference (ToR), the MoEF was not aware that the projects were so close to the tiger corridor. It also recommended that the MoEF and the Ministry of Coal must work together in the future to identify 'go' and 'no-go' areas while considering allotment of coal blocks in the country.

Source: Ashwin Aghor. 'No mining at Tadoba, says forest ministry', *DNA*, 04/12/2009.

## **2010**

### **Village inside Tadoba-Andhari TR to sue FD for mining on their community land**



The village of Kolsa inside the Tadoba-Andhari TR has decided to sue the FD for mining sand and gravel from their community (nistar) land. The decision was taken in a Gram Sabha meeting held on the 26th of January after the FD had ignored an earlier notice from the village asking for a fine of Rs 11 lakhs.

The villagers have said that the FD was regularly extracting sand, gravel and boulders from their land for road repair inside the tiger reserve and this was a violation of the provisions of the FRA.

Source: Aparna Pallavi. 'Tribals challenge forest department' *Down to Earth*, 01/03/2010.

### **NHAI proposes eight underpasses on NH-6 through forests between Nawegaon-Nagzira and the Tadoba-Andhari TRs**

The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has been recommended the construction of eight underpasses on the 80 km stretch of the national highway NH-6 in Bhandara and Gondia divisions. The road cuts through the corridor that joins the forests of the Nawegaon NP and Nagzira WLS with those of the Tadoba-Andhari TR. The recommendations have come from two former forest officials, RN Indurkar, former CCF-Wildlife, and SS Deshpande, former ACF, who had been appointed consultants for the project.

The NHAI has planned to expand the NH-6 from the Chhattisgarh border to the Wainganga bridge near Bhandara to four lanes. Of the total 80 km stretch, about 24 km pass through forests. The NHAI had submitted a proposal to divert 85 hectare forestland for the project. In order to mitigate the damage that this project would cause to the wildlife, the consultants have recommended eight underpasses of 10 feet height and 20 feet width at every two km in the forest patch.

The mitigation plan has suggested other measures including fencing, water conservation works and providing a tractor and tanker with a pump for the Nawegaon NP – water being an important constraint that makes wildlife move to

fringes of protected areas. The consultants also identified nine places, including two compartments (202 and 203) of Nawegaon NP, for water conservation works that include dam repairs, de-silting water holes, deepening of tanks and construction of nulla bunds.

The implementation of these mitigation measures would cost the NHAI Rs 10 crore. This includes Rs 45 lakh for each underpass, Rs 1.20 crore for erection of fencing upto 40 km, Rs three lakhs towards 10 rescue gates and ramps, Rs 2.10 lakh for 14 cattle guards, Rs 32,000 for each gate and other expenses towards sign boards. An additional expense of Rs 35.65 lakh for repair of old water tanks and construction of new ones has also been recommended.

A copy of the report will be submitted to the forest department and the NHAI headquarters in Delhi. It was also noted that that the right of way (ROW) of NH-6 will now be 45 metres instead of 60 metres in forest stretches, and the requirement of land had subsequently reduced to 38.32 hectares.

The WTI, had in June 2009, moved an application before the SC appointed central empowered committee (CEC) pointing out that the proposed four-laning would cut the corridor between Nagzira-Nawegaon and Tadoba-Andhari TR. It was pointed out that the road widening would impede the dispersal of tigers as its falls between nine tiger reserves in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Following the objection, the CEC members had inspected the stretch and asked for the CCF (wildlife) to send a report in the matter. The report that was submitted in August 2009 had recommended 8-13 underpasses in five stretches - Shirpur-Nawatola; Maramjob-Duggipar; Duddipar-Bamhni; Soundad-Sendurwafa; and Mundipar-Sakoli.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Build eight underpasses on NH6', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, 18/08/2010.

## **HC asks for relocation of villages from Tadoba-Andhari TR within a year**

The Nagpur Bench of the Mumbai HC has directed the government to remove all villages located inside core area of Tadoba-Andhari TR within a year. The court came down heavily on the FD for its failure to relocate the villages for over two decades. It added the Divisional Commissioner as a respondent and asked him to take quarterly reviews of the relocation process, conduct a monthly meeting of responsible officers, and submit a report. The judges also asked the FD to take help of two NGOs – Satpuda Foundation and Eco-pro - to convince the villagers to move.

The court's direction came while hearing a suo-moto plea related to the removal of bamboo from the tiger reserve. The court had taken serious cognizance of various media reports on bamboo depletion and tree felling in the reserve. It has been pointed out that villagers from nearby areas such as Rantalodi, Jamni and Palasgaon were involved in the illegal extraction of bamboo for preparing articles, including mats. Large amount of bamboo is also used to prepare baskets for use in the coal mines that have proliferated in the areas surrounding the tiger reserve.

Source: 'Relocate Tadoba villages within a year: High Court', <http://www.sanctuaryasia.com>, 28/10/2010.

## **2011**

### **Corridor adjoining Tadoba-Andhari TR threatened by Gosikhurd Canal project**

Concern has been expressed that ongoing work and the creation of the Gosikhurd Right Canal will damage forests and a wildlife corridor adjoining the Tadoba-Andhari TR.

The impacted forests will include those under the Brahmapuri Division and those in the adjoining Paoni area of Bhandara District.

This area is experiencing severe human-wildlife conflict and it is feared that this project would further complicate matters. Two persons were killed and one was seriously injured in tiger attacks between March 18 and March 27 here, while two leopards were found dead in Brahmapuri Division between April 4 and April 7.

The second leopard was found trapped in a stack of centering materials used in the construction of a canal under the Gosikhurd Irrigation Project near village Bhuigaon.

Source: 'Wildlife corridor in eastern Maharashtra threatened', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 10/04/2011.

### **Naxals trying to make inroads into Tadoba-Andhari TR**

A senior naxal cadre has allegedly corroborated the police's suspicion that naxals are trying to constitute a 'dalam' (military unit) for villages in and around the Tadoba-Andhari TR. A state committee (CPI-Maoist) member and secretary of Chandrapur Area Committee was arrested along with his wife in the Gondia district a day before Home Minister P Chidambaram's visit to Gadchiroli in December 2010.

He is reported to have admitted that a survey was done in the tiger reserve and surrounding villages in the recent past with the intention to form a dalam. A series of raids followed the couple's arrests in places such as Mul and Sindewahi, situated near the tiger reserve. Some hand-written material, most of it survey reports, was also seized. One of the reports was about the survey in the tiger reserve.

The report mentions the "demarcation of a 8-km road from Mul to Somnath" (a Shiv

temple nestling in the north-eastern fringe of the reserve) and identification of men in the villages along it. It mentions the names of prominent villages such as Ghodazari, Piparda, Madnapur, Khutwanda, Mudholi, Pangdi, Moharli, Kolara, Karwa, Vasera and Shivni which the cadre had visited.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Naxals trying to make inroads into tiger reserve area: cops', *The Indian Express*, 20/04/2011.

### **NTCA seeks minor changes in TCP for Tadoba-Andhari TR**

The NTCA has suggested some minor changes in the tiger conservation plan (TCP) of the Tadoba-Andhari TR. A meeting of the expert committee was held in Delhi in the last week of August where the plan was presented by the CCF and Field Director, Tadoba Andhari TR.

As per the provision for preparing a TCP under the amended WLPA, TCPs for Pench and Tadoba-Andhari TRs were prepared and sent to the state government in 2009. The government approved the TCP for Tadoba-Andhari and sent it to the NTCA while the TCP for Pench is still lying with the government. The preparation of the TCP for the Melghat TR is reportedly under process.

Source: 'NTCA suggests minor changes in Tadoba plan', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 27/08/2011.

### **Coal mining destroying tiger habitat around Tadoba-Andhari TR: Greenpeace report**

A recent report by a Greenpeace India fact-finding team has suggested that coal mining poses a serious threat to tigers around the forests of the Tadoba-Andhari TR. The fact-finding team was made up of Praveen Bhargav of Wildlife First, Biswajit Mohanty of the Wildlife Society of Orissa and

Rahul Chaudhary, a lawyer with the New Delhi based Legal Initiative for Forests and Environment. The work on the report was executed in September 2011.

The key recommendations of the report are the following:

- a. that no new mines should be given forest clearance in the region and further expansion of operational mines in tiger habitat should be stopped.
- b. that Tadoba-Andhari TR risks being completely cut off from surrounding forests by mines and dams, and that the ecological impact will be irreversible and cannot be compensated by afforestation. A fundamental shift in policy towards a scientific landscape approach that is focused on minimizing fragmentation of large blocks of contiguous forests instead of the present emphasis on forest density and measuring area lost is therefore the way forward.

In its 2010 report, the NTCA had estimated that the larger Chandrapur region holds 66 to 74 tigers spread over 3,241 sq km. Coal mining is threatening connectivity between forest patches that are important for the long term survival of this tiger population.

In 2010, the MoEF had denied clearance to Adani's coal mining plans in the Lohara block on these grounds. However, the report says, there are several other mines also proposed in critical areas that serve as connections between the Tadoba-Andhari TR and other forests. These include among others, the Chinchpalli mining block to the south and the Bander mining block to the north of Tadoba-Andhari.

With over 2,558 hectares of forestland already diverted for coal mining in Chandrapur district since 2000, any other mining, it is feared, will damage corridors to the north, south and southeast of the reserve. These corridors are used by tigers to move from Tadoba-Andhari TR to

other forests in the landscape, including the Chaprala WLS, the Indravati TR, Bor WLS and the Nawegaon-Nagzira belt. The entire report can be downloaded from <http://www.greenpeace.org/india/Global/india/report/2011/Report-Undermining-Tadoba%27sTigers.pdf>



Source: 'Coal mining destroying critical tiger habitat around Tadoba tiger reserve, says fact finding team', Greenpeace India Press Release, 22/11/2011.

## **2012**

### **Jamni villagers set for relocation from Tadoba – Andhari TR**

Over 104 families from Jamni village, located inside the Tadoba-Andhari TR, have received the first installment of Rs one lakh for their relocation from the reserve. They have opted for total cash compensation of Rs 10 lakh per family as per the rules of the NTCA.

Another 114 families from the village have opted for the proposal where they would be rehabilitated by the government. As part of this scheme, the government would construct a house for them, besides giving them cash of Rs 50,000. They will be relocated to Ambdi village on the Khadsangi-Samudrapur road in Chimur tehsil. It is about 30 km from their present village.

Around four years back, the entire Botezari village and 49 families of the Kolsa village

within the Tadoba-Andhari TR were rehabilitated at Bhagwanpur village, during the first phase of relocation.

Source: 'Tiger conservation: Maharashtra villagers get first installment of rehab package', *Business line*, 01/03/2012.

### **Jaw traps near Tadoba-Andhari TR get tigers, injure forest guard**



A tiger was killed and another injured after being trapped in iron jaw traps laid by professional trappers in the Palasgaon range in the buffer zone of the Tadoba-Andhari TR in the last week of April 2012. The tiger that was found dead was believed to have been clubbed to death by the poachers. One forest guard was also injured while approaching the dead tiger when his leg got trapped in a jaw trap.

Multiple iron jaw traps were found to have been laid in compartment no. 559 under Vanmali beat of Palasgaon range and the trapped tigers were found by forest staff who went to the area as part of a camera-trapping exercise. Tranquillizing experts were summoned to the spot to rescue the still alive but trapped tiger. It was finally tranquilised eight hours after it was first seen and an alert was issued for the poachers who are believed to belong to the Baheliya and Bawariya communities.

Source: 'Tiger dies in trap, another found trapped near Tadoba', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 27/04/2012.

## **Wildlife conservation plan for Chandrapur district**

The Maharashtra FD is chalking out a plan for wildlife conservation in the Chandrapur district. This is being done in response to the demands made by wildlife activist Bandu Dhotre during his recent fast in Nagpur to save tigers. Principal Secretary (Forest) Praveen Singh Pardeshi has directed officials to take measures in this direction. CCF Virendra Tiwari has been asked to review the action taken on a monthly basis. In July, Bandu Dhotre, under the banner of his organization Eco-Pro, had launched an indefinite fast in Nagpur to press 16 demands for the protection and conservation of tigers in Chandrapur. The fast was called off nine days later after the state government conceded to nearly all his demands.

Forest officers have been directed to prepare a 'wildlife conservation plan' for the area under the FDCM and non-buffer areas in the district for tiger protection on the lines of the Tadoba-Andhari TR. This plan will incorporate a number of measures, including alleviating burden on forest guards, building protection huts and raising check posts.

A proposal has already been forwarded for the re-formation of beats in the Tadoba-Andhari TR and re-acquiring the fire fighting rights in the core area from the FDCM. The Tadoba-Andhari TR presently has 32 forest beats, which will be restructured into 85 beats. Fire fighting responsibility in the reserve is now shouldered by the FDCM. The department is contemplating handing over the fire fighting responsibility to the reserve authorities. This, however, will need recruitment of additional staff.

Steps have also been initiated for mapping of tiger corridors and of declaring these corridors as ESZs. The Forest Minister, Mr. Patangrao Kadam, has reportedly also agreed to declare Chandrapur a tiger

district. This will be done once the tiger conservation plan for the FDCM and non-buffer area is prepared. The announcement is likely to be made in the winter session of the assembly in Nagpur. Proposals for installing electronic eye surveillance in the reserve and raising heights of parapet walls of wells in the fringe areas have also been set into motion.

Source: Mazhar Ali. 'Wildlife conservation plan being chalked out for Chandra district', *The Times of India*, 06/08/2012.

## **2013**

### **An update on the implementation of the FRA in the Tadoba Andhari TR**

A buffer area comprising of 1,101.99 sq km was notified for the Tadoba-Andhari TR in August 2012. Earlier, in May 2010, the 625.82 sq km reserve was declared as 'Critical Tiger Habitat', raising the need for an additional buffer.

A recent visit to some of the villages that fall in the buffer zone brought out some interesting facts. Firstly, most of the 89 villages that fall within the newly formed buffer, did not know of the notification. While villages like Mamla, Vaygaon, Nimbada Chak and Walni were emphatic about their unwillingness to be included in the buffer area (the unwillingness was endorsed by the gram sabha), in other villages like Mohadi, Jamsala, Wasera, Singadzari they were not even aware of the mandatory consultations that the FD is supposed to organize.

In response to information sought under the RTI Act, the Tadoba-Andhari TR field office provided resolutions of 12 gram panchayats, all of which indicate their unwillingness to be included in the buffer area in 2008. Yet, the buffer area was notified in 2012. It was also found out that

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

in 2008 the RFO in Chichpalli had held consultations with villages like Pahami, Zari and Peth to find out if the villagers were willing for relocations after the area was declared as buffer. The villagers had rejected the proposition.

There is also considerable confusion about the applicability of the FRA in the reserve as well as in the buffer area. The project office of the tribal development department, which is mainly responsible for disseminating information regarding individual and community rights under FRA, reportedly, conducted only a few workshops in the region. This has resulted in filing of only a small number of individual claims and even fewer community claims by the villages in the buffer area. Most of these claims too have not yet been accepted.

Officials of the TR have also mentioned that all the claims of the five villages located inside the reserve were settled, and FRA is not applicable for these villages as the area has already been declared as 'inviolable'. Due to this misinformation, individual as well as community claims are almost absent from the villages like Palasgaon and Kolsa. Two villages, Nawegaon and Jamni, are ready to be moved out, and hence they have not shown much interest in registering their claims under FRA. Only Rantalodi village has gone ahead and used the provisions to put in their claims, though there is no progress in the long process of acceptance of these claims.

Source: Note from Rucha Ghate.

Email: ruchaghate@gmail.com

### **NTCA releases funds for STPF in Tadoba-Andhari and Pench**

Just three days ahead of the financial year coming to a close, the NTCA released over Rs 1.73 crore for the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) in the Tadoba-Andhari and Pench TRs. The wildlife wing had proposed

Rs 12.94 crore for the two platoons to procure weapons, vehicles, equipment and infrastructure for personnel. However, that money has not been released.

The NTCA had, in February 2009, mandated setting up of STPFs in all TRs. Accordingly, Maharashtra set up one STPF battalion each in Tadoba and Pench in January 2012. The project is a 100% supported scheme of the Centre. However, even with the financial year (2012-13) coming to a close, the NTCA had failed to release funds towards salaries and other infrastructure and to raise the STPF.

Also, the Centre has objected to the fact that locals were not recruited to the STPF and the appointed foresters were above 40 years of age, violating the norms. CCF and Field Director, Pench TR, has explained in response that a ban on direct recruitment of foresters in the state has made it difficult to get foresters below 40. Hence, the composition of the STPF was modified and posts of foresters were completely withdrawn. These posts will be replaced with van majoors or local forest watchers.

Earlier, each platoon consisted of 112 personnel, including 90 forest guards, 18 foresters and 3 range forest officers, to be headed by an ACF. Now there will be no foresters, but 81 forest guards and 27 van majoors. The replacement of foresters in STPF at Tadoba and Pench is in progress.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Breather as NTCA releases Rs 1.73cr for STPF', *The Times of India*, 31/03/2013.

### **One tiger cub killed, another injured in train accident in buffer zone of the Tadoba-Andhari TR**

A speeding passenger train killed a tiger cub and seriously injured another near Kelzhar, the railway station situated in the buffer zone



of the Tadoba-Andhari TR. The accident occurred early on April 15, at about 6:15 am, when a tigress was reportedly crossing the railway track along with her three cubs.

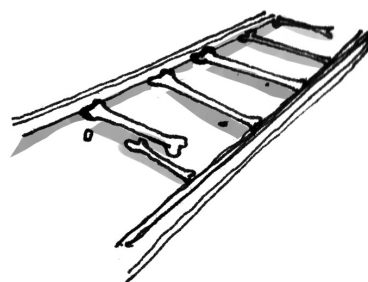
The tigress and one of her cubs succeeded in crossing the track but the remaining two could not, and were hit by the passenger train running from Gondia to Chandrapur. One of them died on the spot while the other was seriously injured. The cub was shifted to the wildlife rescue centre at Nagpur in the evening.

Other wild animals have also been similarly killed in train accidents in this section in the recent past. This includes among others, a sloth bear and a leopard a couple of years ago. The Wildlife Wing of the FD has reportedly booked the railway authorities under various sections of the WLPA.

A subsequent meeting between senior officials of the Railway Board and MoEF has decided to put in place safeguards to prevent such deaths in the future. A decision was made to identify the sensitive stretches of the Gondia-Chandrapur railway sector, to limit the speed of trains to 40 km per hour in the entire sector and to put in place electronic-surveillance of tiger movement using 24X7, intelligent, thermal cameras at sensitive points near railway tracks.

A system will be installed for sharing of 'tiger spatial use data' in advance between the FD and the Railways using wireless technology on a day-to-day basis, with monthly joint reviews by senior officials of the Railway and the FD at the division level. Wildlife sensitization workshops, with help from the officials of the NTCA will also be organized for railway personnel.

The meeting also reviewed the country-level status on tiger deaths due to train hits and the on-going tiger monitoring protocol that has been put in place.



Source: Pradip Kumar Maitra. 'Tadoba tiger cub run over by train', *Hindustan Times*, 16/04/2013.

'Electronic surveillance of tiger movement to be put in place', *The Times of India*, 23/04/2013.

### **Leopards kill six, tigers two, in and around Tadoba-Andhari TR, Umred-Karhandla WLS**

Leopards are reported to have killed at least six people in a month's period between March and April 2013 in and around the forests of the Tadoba-Andhari TR and those of Chandrapur district. The places where the leopard attacks occurred included Sadagadh in the Saoli Range and Adegaon. The Adegaon leopard was reportedly trapped by the FD, which said it was different from the one in Sadagadh.

In another incident in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of April, a woman, Lalita Pendam, from Pathri village in Brahmapuri area of the FDCM was killed by a tiger. The 50-year old had gone to the jungle with other women to collect mahua flowers. Pendam was alone near a nullah when the tiger is said to have attacked her. The FD made an immediate ex-gratia payment of Rs 25,000 to her family and installed traps for the tiger.

In another incident a few days later, a 65 year old woman, Laijabai Bhagwan Fukat of Ranbodi village located within the sanctuary, was killed by a tiger in the Umred-Karhandla WLS situated about 55 km from the Tadoba-Andhari TR. She too was out

collecting mahua flowers and when she did not return home till late in the afternoon, a search was launched. Her body was found in compartment number 364 in Wanoda. Officials said that she had been killed near a solar water hole in compartment number 435, following which the tiger had dragged her body for around 500 metres.

At least 25 other villagers have also been injured in attacks by animals here. Ranbodi, with a population of 550, is situated inside the sanctuary and is scheduled for relocation.

Source: 'Chandrapur again: Tiger kills woman; killer leopard caught', *The Indian Express*, 13/04/2013.

Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tiger kills woman in Umred-Karhandla sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 18/04/2013.

### **Tiger death in railway accident near Tadoba-Andhari TR: MoEF and Railways differ on the speed limit for trains**

After a tiger died on being run over by a passenger train on the Gondia-Chandrapur track in April earlier this year, the MoEF had insisted on restricting the speed of trains to 40 km/hr on this route. The Railways have, however, said that the trains will continue to run at the regular speed, though the drivers will take extra care to spot wildlife movement and ensure that accidents are avoided. It has been suggested by the Railways that there are several technical aspects related to controlling the speed; for instance, a specific speed has to be maintained when a train is running on a curve as against straight tracks.

The decision to restrict the speed to 40km/hr had been taken following a meeting between the Minister for Environment and Forests, Ms Jayanthi Natarajan and Railway officials immediately after the accident. Other steps announced to prevent accidents included tracking tiger movement through thermal imaging, camera traps and keeping the Railways informed through wireless.

According to the Divisional Railway Manager for SECR, drivers have been instructed to be on the lookout for big cats trying to cross the tracks on this route. Some 15 trains run on the track daily, including 5-6 express trains, which have an average speed of 100 km/hr. The passenger train, which hit the tiger, was reported to be running at a speed of 80km/hr. It is the 23 km stretch between Kelzar and Chanda Fort that is the risk area. This is also because there are a few water holes along the tracks, which attract animals.

The PCCF, however, said that it is the responsibility of the Railways to control the speed of trains while other steps such as not littering tracks with food can also help prevent wildlife movement.

Source: Shishir Arya. 'Railways, environment ministry differ on slowing trains in tiger area', *The Times of India*, 07/06/2013.

### **Sanctuary status proposed for Kanhalgaon forests**

The Maharashtra FFD has proposed sanctuary status for the forests of Kanhalgaon that form a corridor between the Tadoba-Andhari TR in the north and the Kawal TR in Andhra Pradesh to the south.

The proposed sanctuary will comprise of the 58.13 sq km area of the Kothari range in Central Chanda and 311.34 sq km of area presently under the control of the FDCM. The total area includes 152 compartments of RFs, besides 176.78 hectares of private area. Almost 90% of this area is in the possession of FDCM, which has been carrying out felling operations as per the approved working plan. As per the 2012 estimation, there are 10 tigers in Central Chanda division overlapping the proposed Kanhalgaon area.

Some political leaders have, however, expressed concern that the proposed

sanctuary is surrounded by villages in the Dhaba range. Rajura MLA Subhas Dhote has questioned the need for Kanhalgaon to be declared a sanctuary when two PAs - Tadoba and Chaprala already exist in the region. He said he plans to talk to the people before giving his consent.

The Chandrapur Honorary Wildlife Warden Bandu Dhotre has allayed the MLA's fears. He said that the 30-40 villages in Dhaba and the forest area here would not be included in the proposed sanctuary. Only two villages - Ganpur and Kanhalgaon - will fall within the new sanctuary. He noted that Ganpur being on the roadside needs no relocation. He also added that locals have been deprived of employment as the FDCM engages labour from neighbouring MP and Chhattisgarh for its felling operations and the sanctuary will bring income from ecotourism for the locals.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Kanhalgaon in Chandrapur proposed to be a sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 22/08/2013.

### **Radio collars for two female leopards in the Tadoba-Andhari TR**



The Maharashtra FD in collaboration with the WII has radio collared two female leopards – one that was captured from the Adegaon area in the buffer zone of Tadoba-Andhari TR and the other from within the city limits of Chandrapur. The animals had been captured following public pressure and an outcry over the increasing human-leopard conflict in the region.

The collaring was accomplished at Moharli in the first week of August. The collaring process had been delayed by nearly two months due to a delay in procurement of the costly radio collars.

The imported collars would last for eight to nine months and would drop automatically from the neck of the animal. This radio collaring is part of WII's long term programme to study the habitat use, behavior and kill pattern of these carnivores. The two animals will be monitored by WII personnel and local field officers.

Source: Mazhar Ali. 'TATR, WII officials radio collar two leopards', *The Times of India*, 04/08/2013.

## **2014**

### **Tadoba-Andhari TR leopards to be radio-collared to track them, prevent human-animal conflict**

Officials in the Tadoba-Andhari TR have decided to radio-collar leopards that have attacked villages in order to track their movement once they are released back into the forest. It is hoped that this will help in ensuring that conflict is avoided. Two such leopards were recently radio-collared in the tiger reserve.

It is likely that the initiative might be repeated in the Sanjay Gandhi NP, in Mumbai, as well.

Source: Mustafa Plumber. 'Leopards being radio-collared to avoid man-animal conflict', *DNA*, 06/01/2014.

### **Increased camera fees raise over Rs 6 lakh for Tadoba-Andhari TR**

The decision of Tadoba-Andhari TR authorities to levy a fee of Rs 500 for cameras with a lens of 250 mm or above has helped the reserve raise Rs 6.82 lakhs for the

period October-December 2013. Another Rs 2.76 lakh was earned from private tourists cars and unregistered vehicles entering the park. These figures were for receipts at the reserve's Moharli gate alone and park authorities have said that the figure will rise once the collections made at other gates like Khutwanda, Kolara, Nawegaon, Pangdi and Zari are also taken into account.

A total of Rs 56 lakh have been earned by the reserve since the launch, in October 2013, of an online booking facility for jungle safaris.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'High-end cameras rake in moolah for Tadoba tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 10/01/2014.

### **Tourism earns over Rs 1.5 crores for villages around the Tadoba-Andhari TR in for the period 2010-13**

The Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Conservation Foundation (TATRCF) has, over the last three years, distributed over Rs 1.5 crore to Eco-Development Committees (EDCs) in buffer villages for individual and community development. This is money that has all come in in the form of tourism receipts. In 2011-12, 52 EDCs were given Rs 26.52 lakh from the Tiger Conservation Fund while 12 EDCs were given a total amount of Rs 14.72 lakh for the year 2012-13. One EDC in the core area was given Rs 90,000 and Rs 9.84 lakh for LPG distribution.

Reserve officials said that the EDCs that did not get funds from CAMPA, the 13th Finance Commission, or from other sources would be supported through these funds. The villages that have benefitted include Alizanja, Malbamni, Nimdhela, Mohbodi, Katval, Khatera, Gonmohadi, Vihirgaon, Mamla, Sitarampeth, Madanapur, Vasera, Bembala, Katvan, Petgaon, Maroda, Kitoli and Kolara.

Kolara village was recently given Rs 1.95 lakh for solar lights. Rs 20 lakhs were provided for solar fencing in Ghosri, Khutwanda, Kolara and Wadala on the fringes of the reserve and Rs five lakh was also given for eco-friendly chulhas in some of the villages.

A plan has been finalized to start an agarbatti project in Kolara and the rehabilitated village of Nawegaon Ramdegi at a total cost of around Rs 20 lakh. Around Rs 16 lakh has been set aside for toilets for 128 families in Bhagwanpur in Mul, where two Tadoba villages have been resettled. Meadow development at Nawegaon will be done with Rs 10 lakh and Rs 25 lakh will be used for creation of water bodies in the buffer zone. Another project being implemented is to construct parapet walls for open wells in vulnerable villages. The department also felicitates outstanding senior and higher secondary students in the villages with the help of these funds.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tigers bring money to Tadoba buffer villages', *The Times of India*, 07/02/2014.

### **MoEF approves ESZ proposal for Tadoba-Andhari TR**

The MoEF has given its approval to the proposal for an ESZ around the Tadoba-Andhari TR. The ESZ will cover an area of about 1,347 sq km, which is more than double the area of reserve (625 sq km) itself. Nearly half of this ESZ area is constituted of RFs. The physical boundary of the Tadoba-Andhari ESZ will be made up of the Chandrapur and Nagpur forest circles in the north, and the railway line between Gondia and Chanda Fort in the south. It will share a boundary with Chandrapur and Brahmapuri division in the east and Irai dam and its backwaters in the west.

Apart from the entire notified buffer zone, the additional area that forms the corridor to

the Umred forest region and another patch that goes towards the Chaprala WLS near Tadoba has also been included in the ESZ.

The creation of the ESZ will result in the prohibition of polluting units such as mines, crushers, power-plants and saw mills in the vicinity of the protected area. It will now also not allow controversial mines like those at Bandar and Lohara.

Source: 'Environment Min okays ESZ around Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve', *The Pioneer*, 07/02/2014.

### **125 sq km FDCM area brought under the control of the Tadoba Andhari TR**



125.51 sq km of dense forests in the West Chanda division that had been leased out to the FDCM have finally been brought under the control of Tadoba-Andhari TR. A government resolution handing over control of the area to the reserve authorities was issued on June 13, 2014.

The state government had notified the 1,103.34 sq km Tadoba-Andhari buffer zone on May 5, 2010. Barring the 125 sq km under the FDCM, 901.66 sq km with the Chandrapur division and 76.17 sq km with the Brahmapuri division had been brought under the administrative control of the tiger reserve for better wildlife management. The State Forest Minister, Mr Patangrao Kadam, had given an assurance in April last year that this 125 sq km would be given over to the TR authorities. The NTCA too had written

to the Maharashtra Forest Secretary in the matter.

Now, the area will be under the Deputy Director (Buffer) who would implement projects related to forestry, joint forest management and eco-development while ensuring coordination with other sectors.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Finally, 125 sq km FDCM area comes under Tadoba control', *The Times of India*, 30/06/2014.

### **Radio-collars for three tigers, two leopards in Tadoba-Andhari TR**



The WII has initiated an exercise to radio collar three tigers in the Tadoba-Andhari TR as part of its research project for the 'Long-term monitoring of tigers, co-predators and prey species in TATR and adjoining landscapes'. The state government had, last year, cleared the Rs 1.64 crore project that is to be implemented by the WII on a 70:30 cost sharing basis between the State government and the NTCA.

The project is aimed at studying the population density in addition to the abundance and demographic structure of tigers. It will be conducted in two phases and also includes capacity building of local staff for managing man-animal conflict.

## State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra

A couple of leopards will also be radio-collared as a part of the project.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar & Mazhar Ali. 'WII experts radio-collar tiger in Tadoba', *The Times of India*, 19/10/2014.

### 2015

#### Tadoba-Andhari TR to get high-tech surveillance system

The Tadoba-Andhari TR will soon have a high-tech surveillance system. Aerially-mounted 360-degree view cameras would be installed to provide 24x7 inputs on movements of animals and villagers, forest staff, guards and poachers. Thermal cameras would be mounted on an elevated platform or masts and the mounts would have solar panels to keep the cameras running. The feeds would reach a control room, which would have multiple-screens to have real-time view.

State Forest Minister, Sudhir Mungantiwar, said that this is being done on a pilot basis and the experiment, if successful, would be replicated elsewhere in the state.

Source: Mrityunjay Bose. 'Tadoba tiger reserve to have hi-tech surveillance', *Deccan Herald*, 14/06/2015.

#### Poachers caught on camera traps, arrested in Tadoba Andhari TR

Forest officers of the Nagbhid range of the Tadoba Andhari TR were successful, recently, in busting a gang of poachers and nabbing the three accused from different villages in Nagbhid and Brahmapuri tehsils. A muzzle loading gun and other poaching equipment were seized from them during the raid. The poachers were apprehended on the basis of their photographs captured in camera traps installed in the jungle, when they were on their poaching trips.

Camera traps had been installed in compartment no. 733 in Nagbhid range on November 4, to follow the movement of a full-grown tiger in the area. When the camera traps were recovered by forest staff a couple of days later they found pictures of a gang of four poachers moving through the jungle with a muzzle loading gun, sharp weapons and other poaching equipment. The camera trap had captured the tiger at 7.12 pm on November 4 and the poachers too appeared at the same location at 1.30 am the same night. The foresters identified the poachers and tracked them to village Kosabi Gawli in Nagbhid and Chorti Vaigaon in Brahmapuri tehsil.

Explaining the use of muzzle loading guns in poaching, wildlife experts said that poachers walk into the jungle with loaded guns equipped with other electrical gadgets. They carry a battery-powered flashlight mounted on their head and a special sound making device to catch the attention of animals. The poachers creep up close to the targeted animal and suddenly focus the flashlight on their eyes, while buzzing their sound device. The animal captivated by the sudden flash of light and buzzing sound, is then shot from close range with the muzzle loading gun.



Source: Mazhar Ali. 'Poachers caught on camera traps, arrested', *The Times of India*, 11/12/2015.

## **GENERAL TIGER RELATED**

### **2000**

#### **Meeting on tiger conservation in the western region held**

A meeting was held in Mumbai on June 4, 2000, to take stock of the status of the tiger and the possible steps that need to be taken to protect the species in the western region, comprising Maharashtra and adjoining states, principally in the Western Ghats and the Satpudas.

The meeting was attended by representatives of various organizations like WWF – I, the WWF – Tiger Conservation Programme, BNHS, Ranthambhor Foundation and Kalpavriksh. Forest Department officials including the CWLW of Karnataka also participated. The participants agreed that a special tiger (protection) cell should be set up to initiate and coordinate action.

Source: Ashish Fernandes, Sanctuary Asia Magazine, Mumbai

### **2002**

#### **Tiger population declines in state**

The 2001 census in Maharashtra has reported a decline in the tiger population in the state. 238 tigers were counted this time as against 276 in 1993 and 257 in 1997. 15 of the 31 protected areas in the state reported tiger populations. Of these, Melghat TR has 70 - 75 tigers, Tadoba-Andhari, 36-40 and Pench, 12-15.

Significantly more than half the tigers (total number 155) in the state have been reported from outside protected areas.

Source: 'Tiger population in state declines', *Free Press Journal*, 01/04/2002.

### **2005**

#### **Mobile Health Clinic for tribals around tiger reserves**

Nature Conservation Society, Amravati (NCSA) has recently started a mobile health clinic for the welfare of tribal communities living in and around five tiger reserves in Central India—Tadoba, Pench, Melghat and Bori-Satpuda. It was inaugurated in the month of May at Hataru in the Melghat TR.

The clinics are to be run by the NCSA in collaboration with respective tiger reserve authorities and partner NGOs working there. The initiative has been funded by the Born Free Foundation.

Source: 'Mobile health clinic for tribals', *The Indian Express*, 01/06/2005.

#### **Census puts tiger nos in state at 268**

The four yearly census conducted in May has put the tiger numbers in Maharashtra at 268, up from 238 counted in the 2001 census.

243 of these tigers were counted in the Vidarbha region alone. 95 tigers were found outside the protected area network in the state. This number too has increased from the 85 reported in 2001.

The total number of leopards counted during the census was 717. Of these 317 were in Vidarbha.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Panchpute's tiger count cuts a sorry figure', *The Indian Express*, 03/08/2005.

### **2007**

#### **Fires in Melghat and Tadoba Andhari TRs**

Large-scale fires and related damage were reported to forests in the Melghat and Tadoba-Andhari TRs.

Fires were reported in five compartments in the Jamni beat under Khatoda in Tadoba in early April followed by more fires in Compartments 112, 111 and 113. The total area affected in the Tadoba- Andhari TR was 111 hectares, while that in Melghat was 62 hectares.



Source: 'Fresh fires in tiger reserves', *The Times of India*, 10/04/2007.

## 2008

### **Villagers from Pench, Tadoba-Andhari and Melghat TRs denounce relocation moves**

Representatives of villagers living inside the Pench, Tadoba-Andhari and Melghat TRs have jointly denounced the move of the Maharashtra government to relocate 108 villages from inside these three reserves after their declaration as Critical Tiger Habitats. A resolution to this effect was issued during a meeting convened in Nagpur in the last week of July 2008 by the National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW), a national federation of forest rights movements in the country, and Shashwat, a Pune based organization.

Those attending the meeting detailed the harassment they were facing at the hands of the FD, which was apparently trying every trick in the book to force the people out of the forests. Documents were also presented as evidence of various irregularities committed by the revenue and forest departments.

A coordination committee of the relocation affected people; the Van Visthapan Prabhavit Samanvaya Samiti (VVPSS) was also constituted at the meeting under the presidentship of Ms Kusum Karnik of Shashwat. In its resolution, the committee denounced the state government's decisions regarding the notification of critical wildlife habitats and the relocation of villages without either consultation with or consent of the affected population. It argued that the government moves violated the 2006 amendment of the WLPA and also the guidelines to notify Critical Wildlife Habitats issued by the MoEF in October 2007.

Source: Press Release 31/07/2008 issued by the Van Visthapan Prabhavit Samanvaya Samiti.

## 2010

### **NTCA regional office to be set up in Nagpur**

A regional office of the NTCA is to be set up in Nagpur. It is hoped that this step will help better co-ordination between Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh.

The setting up of regional office in Nagpur is significant as there are seven tiger reserves in the region: Melghat, Tadoba-Andhari, and Pench in Maharashtra, Pench, Kanha and Satpuda in Madhya Pradesh and Indravati in Chhattisgarh. Besides, there are at least 15 sanctuaries in the Satpuda region bearing tigers. These reserves and part of its landscape supports over 500 tigers as per WII's report of 2008.

The office will be handled by an officer of the rank of CF and it is hoped that it will be operational within the calendar year 2010.

Source: 'NTCA office in city soon', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>.



### **Concern over process of declaration of buffer zones around critical tiger habitats**

The WLPA Amendment Act 2006 mandates the declaration of buffer areas around core or critical tiger habitats of tiger reserves. It specifies that in these areas meant for dispersal of tigers, the objective should be co-existence with local villagers. Accordingly, a number of state governments have initiated processes of delineating and constituting buffer areas, and undertaking consultations with local communities on various relevant issues.

The Maharashtra government has formed a committee of government and non-government persons to assist it in this process. The members include VB Sawarkar, former Director, WII, Harshwardhan Dhanwatey, Kishore Rithe, Satpuda Foundation, Ashish Kothari, Kalpavriksh Environment Action Group and senior members of the state Forest Department.

The process for the declaration of the buffer zone (BZ) is going on in the case of the Tadoba-Andhari, Pench and Melghat TRs. One of the members, Ashish Kothari, has however expressed serious problems in the process being followed. In a recent communication addressed to the CCF-Wildlife and the other members of the committee he raised the following issues:

- that consultations have been carried out in the proposed BZs without informing the members of the committee
- full details of the consultations including number of villagers attending, information presented to them and their responses was not available
- no information on the status of the FRA in these villages in the BZ

Similar specific concerns raised earlier with regard to the Tadoba-Andhari buffer area

committee were not acted upon, prompting Mr. Kothari to resign from the committee.

Source: Email communication from Ashish Kothari.

## **2011**

### **Forest union threatens to shut down tiger reserves**



In a development in the last week of April 2011, the Maharashtra Forest Guards, Forest Employees and Forest Workers' Sanghatana (MFGFEFWS) threatened to close down the Pench, Tadoba-Andhari and Melghat TRs if wages of van majoors (forest workers) were not paid immediately. It was reported that over 1,500 of these forest workers in the three tiger reserves had not been paid wages since December. A similar problem had occurred in the past as well.

The sanghatana noted that forest workers were the backbone of any protected area as they man the protection huts deep inside tiger reserves and conduct patrolling. Their neglect had become a chronic problem and forest officials had failed to address it. The sanghatana threatened to prevent entry of tourists into the three tiger reserves if the dues were not settled within eight days.

According to wildlife and forest officials, the problem had arisen because the tiger reserves did not receive the second installment under the centrally sponsored scheme (CSS). The NTCA is reported to have released Rs 41.39

lakh for Tadoba-Andhari TR; Rs 13 lakh for Pench and Rs 61.35 lakh for Melghat towards the second installment only on March 31, and this meant the money could not be spent as it was the last day of the financial year. The officials said that they would have to keep the funds in abeyance unless the Centre revalidated the payment.

The apathy of the state government is visible in its actions as well. While the financial year begins in April and the MoEF releases its share under the CSS in September, the state government issues a government resolution (GR) to release this money only in January. This results in the delayed submission of the utilisation certificates (UCs) for the first installment leading to the delayed release of the 2nd installment by the MoEF.

It is not clear how the stand-off was resolved and when, if at all, the wages were paid to the forest workers.

Source: 'Forest union threatens to shut tiger reserves', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 26/04/2011.

### **Rules for Tiger Conservation Foundations approved in Maharashtra**

Rules for the operation of the Tiger Conservation Foundations (TCF) for the Tadoba-Andhari, Pench and Melghat TRs in the state were recently approved by State Forest Minister.

The TCF rules include a number of provisions that are expected to help in tiger conservation. They include delegation of the power to the respective field directors to levy gate entry fees, involvement of local youth in conservation and fire protection initiatives, provision to increase gate fees by 10% per year, use of income for eco-development of surrounding villages and for activities that create biomass alternatives for village dwellers like cooking gas connection

and subsidy for gas cylinders to reduce fuel wood consumption, creation of fodder plots in villages and to reduce free grazing by cattle in open forests.

The TCFs for Tadoba-Andhari and Pench were set up in November and December, 2008 respectively, while that for Melghat was set up in February 2009. They could not start functioning because no rules for governing them had been framed.

A three-member committee of field directors was set up to frame the rules, which have now been finalized and accepted.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Nod to tiger conservation foundation rules', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 18/08/2011.

## **2013**

### **Two new TRs proposed for Maharashtra**

The FD plans to send fresh proposals to the state government for setting up two more tiger reserves (TRs). The state currently has four TRs in Melghat, Pench, Tadoba-Andhari and Sahyadri. The fifth TR would be formed by integrating the Nagzira and Nawegaon protected areas in Bhandara-Gondia districts, while the Bor WLS in Wardha district will once again be proposed as the sixth TR. Bor had been proposed as a TR in 2010 by the then minister of environment and forests, Jairam Ramesh, but it was considered too small.

The Nagzira protected area complex includes the Nagzira WLS, the New Nagzira WLS and the recently constituted Koka WLS. These three protected areas collectively have an area of around 400 sq km. The Nawegaon NP, covering an area of around 130 sq km, and the Nawegaon WLS with an area of 120 sq km, together with Nagzira will constitute the other new TR.

In March 2012, the state had notified 61 sq km area around existing Bor WLS as the New Bor WLS. Together, they cover an area of 129 sq km. Despite being small the area has around six tigers and is connected to the Pench and Melghat TRs as also the forest areas in adjoining Madhya Pradesh.

Source: Neha Madaan. 'Forest dept to send fresh plans for two more tiger reserves in state', *The Times of India*, 07/08/2013.

## **2014**

### **Tiger estimates for Vidarbha TRs: preliminary results**

Assessment of tigers under Phase III (camera traps) in wildlife sanctuaries and national parks under the Pench and Nawegaon-Nagzira TR has shown the presence of a minimum of 37 tigers. The population does not include cubs. The preliminary results are part of the 2014 national tiger assessment exercise conducted every four years by the NTCA and the WII. The final results of the estimation exercise will be announced in December 2014. These latest figures include 23 tigers in Pench & Mansingdeo; four in Bor & New Bor, four in Umred-Karhandla, and six in the Nawegaon-Nagzira TR.

As per the assessment carried out in 2010, there were 69 tigers in the Tadoba-Andhari TR, 35 in Melghat, 21 in the Sahyadri TR, 20 in Nawegaon-Nagzira, 12 in Bor, and 65 in Pench (Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra).

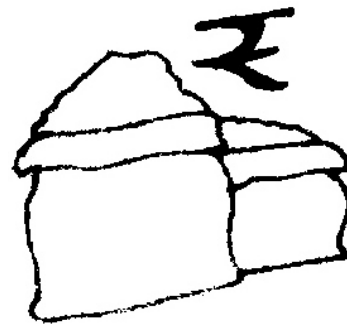
Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Decline in tiger numbers in several Vid sanctuaries', *The Times of India*, 29/07/2014.

### **NTCA announces ration allowance for frontline staff at tiger reserves**

The NTCA has announced an additional ration allowance of Rs 860 per month for

frontline staff of tiger reserves and their buffer zones. Currently, a tiger reserve forester is paid Rs 1,200 per month as tiger allowance and a forest guard is paid Rs 700. The Rs 860 allowance will be in addition to this. A notification in this regard has already been issued and over 10,000 foresters, forest guards, van majoors, fire-watchers, and jawans of special tiger protection force are expected to benefit from this. The ration allowance was recommended first by the Tiger Task Force in 2005.

Another recommendation was for housing camps for families in neighbouring towns, where the tiger reserve headquarters are based. Creation of a staff welfare fund for medical benefits out of the income from tourism had also been recommended.



Source: 'Rs 860 per month extra pay for tiger reserve staff', *The Times of India*, 01/08/2014.

### **PMO seeks report on Vidarbha tiger poaching cases**

Almost 16 months after large-scale poaching of tigers in Vidarbha was exposed, the Prime Minister's office (PMO) has sought a report in the matter from the Maharashtra FD. The report has been sought following complaints from local NGOs demanding action against the Nagpur wildlife wing and territorial forest officials, who, they alleged, were not taking steps to nab those who are guilty. They have also alleged a lack of seriousness in pursuing some of the

poaching cases whose preliminary offence reports have been filed but no investigations are being done by the officials concerned.

After the letter from the PMO, a closed-door meeting of the steering committee headed by Assistant PCCF for wildlife and investigating officials from Nagpur and Amravati was held. An official, however, said that it was a pre-decided meeting, and nothing to do with the PMO's letter.

At least 25 tigers were poached in 2012-13 from Vidarbha by groups involving members of the Baheliya community. The FD has arrested at least 26 poachers and 15 offences of tiger poaching have been registered. 30 others are said to be still absconding.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'PMO seeks report on tiger poaching in Vidarbha', *The Times of India*, 18/10/2014.

### **New initiatives for conservation, protection in TRs**



A number of initiatives for forest protection and wildlife conservation have been proposed by the new government in Maharashtra. This includes an ambitious tourism development and promotion plan for the buffer areas of the Tadoba-Andhari and Pench TR, which the state expects, will eventually generate an annual income of Rs 10,000 crore. The focus will be to divert pressure from the core forest areas to buffer zones and to transform the livelihood of people living in forests and around protected areas. The government will also aim to provide the families living on the fringes of

forests with alternatives like cooking gas, biogas and solar energy so that they don't have to enter forests and cut trees for their fuel wood requirement and also to avoid getting into conflicts with wild animals.

In order to make working in forests a lucrative job, the government would balance pay scales of forest officials and ensure periodical promotions and incentives. Two new special tiger protection forces, one for Melghat and the other for Nagzira, each of 85 people, would also be established.

Source: 'Maharashtra government to boost eco-tourism in buffer areas of woodlands', *DNA*, 28/12/2014.

## **2015**

### **48 tigers outside protected areas in Chandrapur district**

As many as 48 tigers have been found inhabiting forests outside protected areas in the Chandrapur district in Maharashtra. The estimation was done jointly by the Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) and the Maharashtra FD in forests situated outside PAs in the Chandrapur, Bhandara, Wardha, Nagpur, Gondia and Yawatmal districts of Maharashtra. The first phase, which covered 2,000 sq km of tiger habitat outside PAs in Chandrapur district, was conducted under the WCT-USAID Tiger Programme, in collaboration with the FD and the NGO, Panthera.

As many as 600 camera traps were deployed simultaneously across forested areas in Chandrapur. The forests of Chandrapur were divided into several blocks for logistical convenience. Every block was further divided into three sq km grids and one camera trap pair was installed in each block for 25 days, fulfilling the guidelines mandated by the NTCA. The technique of DNA identification through scat collection was also used to identify the movement of

tigers. The exercise involved data collection of over 18,000+ camera trap nights, through which the WCT's research team was able to identify 48 adult tigers, including 15 breeding females.

As per the survey, the total number of big cats in the district stands at 120, including 60 in core area and 12 in buffer area of Tadoba Andhari TR. A particularly interesting aspect of the study was that tiger density in some RF blocks was found to be higher than that of some TRs. For instance, tiger density in the Kanhalgaon (a proposed wildlife sanctuary)-Central Chanda block is 2.34, which is more than that of the Melghat TR. In the Junona-Central Chanda block, tiger density stood at 1.77, higher than that of the Sahyadri TR.

Source: '48 tigers in non-protected Chandrapur forest areas: survey', *The Hindu*, 26/05/2015;

Anish Andheria, 'Tigers Outside Protected Areas In Chandrapur', [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com)

### NTCA says no to tourism in TRs in the monsoon



The NTCA has issued a directive that there will be no tourism in the monsoons in any of the tiger reserves in the country. The primary impact of this will be seen in Maharashtra, the only state to allow partial tourism in its Tadoba-Andhari and Pench

TRs on account of the good condition of the roads here.

Part of logic of allowing tourists in is that a state transport bus already operates between Chimur and Chandrapur through Tadoba. In Pench too, Madhya Pradesh State Electricity Board and irrigation department staff already work there and hence there is restricted movement of vehicles. Tourists are allowed into Tadoba during the monsoons from the Moharli and Nawegaon gates in Tadoba and from Sillari in Pench.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'No monsoon tourism in Tadoba, Pench this year', *The Times of India*, 26/06/2015.

### Mega project for scat DNA analysis of wildlife in Maharashtra



The wildlife wing of the Maharashtra FD has approved a mega project on scat DNA analysis of tigers, leopards, sloth bears and dholes in the state. A MoU is expected to be signed soon and it is likely the project will be implemented early next year.

The Rs 74 lakh project will be implemented by the WII in six tiger reserves—Nawegaon-Nagzira, Sahyadri, Melghat, Tadoba-Andhari, Pench and Bor—and other tiger-bearing national parks and sanctuaries, and areas outside PAs as well. The forest areas to be surveyed will be around 15,000 sq km. It is hoped the scat analysis will help understand landscape history, genetic structure of tigers and their co-predators and forest connectivity at a finer scale.

Similar analysis done by the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, a few years ago had provided evidence of movement of tigers from Pench to

Kanha, Nagzira to Kanha, and Kanha to Nagarjunsagar and to Pench.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Scat DNA of four carnivore species to be studied across Maharashtra', *The Times of India*, 20/10/2015.

### **Special tiger protection force to keep watch outside TRs too**

The Maharashtra government has decided that the Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) will be deployed in tiger bearing areas even outside of the tiger reserves. The decision has been taken following the death, recently, of four tiger cubs in the FDCM's Pathri range following the disappearance of the mother tigress.

The FD has also formally informed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Wildlife Wing, to institute a special investigation team (SIT) to trace the missing tigress. The SIT will consist of an officer each from the CBI, forest and police departments. The FD has also increased the number of camera traps in the forests to track the mother tigress. Forest officers have not ruled out the possibility of the tigress being involved in the recent killing of a woman. Hence, camera traps have also been installed at the place where the woman was killed.

Source: Mazhar Ali. 'Special tiger protection force to keep watch outside reserve too', *The Times of India*, 30/12/2015.

## **GENERAL NEWS FROM MAHARASHTRA**

### **1995**

#### **Decisions from the Jungle Jivan Bachao Yatra**

##### Bhimashankar

1. A yatra took place through 16 villages of Bhimashankar from the 22nd of March, to spread the message of the Jungle Jivan Bachao Yatra.

2. Another yatra is proposed from Bhimashankar to Kalsubai in April- May.

3. In Bhimashankar there is an attempt to get the involvement of the FD, local people, voluntary organizations, and independent observers to plan a people's sanctuary, which can extend beyond the existing boundaries. Many villages outside will declare their own sanctuaries with their own rules.

##### Koyna

1. The Indian Institute of Public Administration will help to assess the legal status of land use in Koyna.

2. Satyashodh, an NGO that has started working recently in Koyna will try to help implement the two resolutions which local villagers made during the yatra: that they would not permit any sale/transfer of forest produce and forest land by the FD without their permission, and that they would themselves not sell any private or village land to outsiders.

##### Sanjay Gandhi NP

1. The Indian People's Tribunal (IPT) on Environment and Human Rights will move a case against the quarries here.

2. IPT will also take up the cause of the Warli tribals, staying inside the park, whom the FD is proposing to oust.

## State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra

### Radhanagari WLS

1. IPT will explore possibilities of filing a case against bauxite mining here.

### Satpuda Bachav Abhiyan

The Nature Conservation Society of Amravati, Maharashtra, proposes to undertake a march along the Satpuda range in Central India to highlight the growing fragmentation of forest and wildlife habitats. They will travel along four protected areas, Melghat (Maharashtra), Bori, Satpuda, and Pachmarhi (Madhya Pradesh), to investigate the threats to them and to the corridors connecting them, and to campaign for declaration of the whole area as a biosphere reserve. Attempts will be made to generate public support in the area. The march is planned for January 1996.

Source: Kishor Rithe, Nature Conservation Society, Amravati

## 1996

### **Satpuda Bachao Abhiyan**

The Nature Conservation Society, Amravati, in association with other organizations, organized a Satpuda Bachao Abhiyan in the last week of January 1996. The aim was to highlight the continuous fragmentation of wildlife habitats in the Satpuda range and plead for the conservation of what remains of this rich forest tract. The abhiyan consisted of a march starting simultaneously from Pachmarhi in Madhya Pradesh and Chikhaldara (Melghat) in Maharashtra, and meeting at Betul.

Source: Kishor Rithi, Nature Conservation Society, Amravati,

### **New sanctuaries in the state**

According to newspaper reports (The Hitvada 10/08/96), the Maharashtra State Wildlife Board, at its meeting in Mumbai in

July 1996, is reported to have recommended that nine new protected areas be established in the state. It is estimated that these sanctuaries will together cover an area of 854.02 sq km. Seven of the new sanctuaries are in the Vidarbha region.

There are currently 29 protected areas (five national parks and 24 sanctuaries) in the State, covering an area of approximately 14,775 sq km.



Proposed Sanctuary	District	Area (sq km)
1. Bhamragarh	Gadchiroli	104.38
2. Tipeshwar	Yavatmal	148.63
3. Karanja-sohol	Akola	17.81
4. Narnala	Akola	12.35
5. Dnyanganga	Buldana	205.23
6. Ambabarwa	Buldana	127.11
7. Wan	Amravati	211.00
8. Yedshi-Ramlingaghat	Osmanabad	22.37
9. Mayureshwar	Pune	5.14

## 1997

### **Third conference on sanctuaries in Maharashtra**

The Third Conference on Sanctuaries in Maharashtra, held at Malwan, Sindhudurg District, from 25-27 October 1996, was attended by local people representing several protected areas in the state (Radhanagari, Koyna, Bhimashankar, Borivili, Melghat, Pench, Nagzira, etc.), environmentalists, scientists and FD officials.

A paper 'People-oriented Sanctuaries: Principles and Practices', drafted by Vasant Palshikar, was presented and discussed at

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

the start of the meeting. Several experiences from various protected areas were reported, which highlighted the following issues:

1. Local communities continue to remain unaware of the process of declaration and management of protected areas.
2. People living in and around protected areas have to endure a confusing system of rights and concessions, which makes certain activities legal and others illegal.
3. Management of protected areas is becoming an increasingly difficult task in the absence of a dialogue between the FD and local people. Specific cases that came up for discussion included bauxite mining in Radhanagari WLS, fishing in Pench NP and the Malwan Sanctuary.

The meeting concluded with a call for greater involvement of local people in the management of protected areas, greater transparency in government processes regarding protected areas and a lift on the ban on fishing in protected areas.

Source: Kusum Karnik, 'SHASHWAT', Manchar, Pune district.

### **1998**

#### **Several state-wide meetings and activities**

**I)** A group of about 25 wildlife conservationists, government officials and media persons met in November 1997, at Kolkhas, Melghat TR. The meeting was called by the Mobile Tiger Conservation Action Force of the Nature Conservation Society of Amravati (NCSA), in an attempt to explore new working policies for the protection and conservation of wildlife and forests in Central India. Following is a summary of the discussions held:

(i) Pench NP (Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh): The residents of the Totladoh

colony (M.P.) continue fishing in the reservoir, rejecting alternate suggestions being provided to them by the FD. Commercial fishing too is carried on in violation to the directives of the SC. This should be contested in the SC and evidence in the form of video recordings and photographs should be provided. Media persons have offered to provide support against illegal fishing in Totaladoh reservoir.

(ii) New PAs in Vidarbha: The seven new sanctuaries created in the Vidarbha region require special protection from grazing. Sanctuaries such as Ambabarwa and Pal are facing a tremendous problem due to the influx of thousands of migratory sheep. There appears to be a nexus among some politicians, forest officials and the sheep owners. An ordinance to deal with this needs to be developed.

(iii) Proposed PAs: A decision regarding the conversion of five more areas into protected areas is suggested. The areas include Pohara Malkhed, Mahendri (Dist. Amravati), Mansingdeo (Nagpur), Lonar and Budhaneshwar Girda (Buldhana).

(iv) The Bhingara forest which links Ambabarwa and Yawal (Pal) WLSs is also facing threats. The Maharashtra government should take steps to deal with the issues.

(v) Melghat Tiger Project: Participants strongly opposed the Maharashtra government's decision of deleting certain areas from the Melghat WLS. This deletion, they feared, is to facilitate the Rs 1,400 crore Upper Tapi Irrigation Project.

(vi) A new Aurangabad Wildlife Division was suggested to control the biotic pressure and divert traffic from the road passing through the Gautala WLS and to specify the boundaries of the Jaikwadi Bird Sanctuary.

Additional recommendations that came forth in the meeting include:

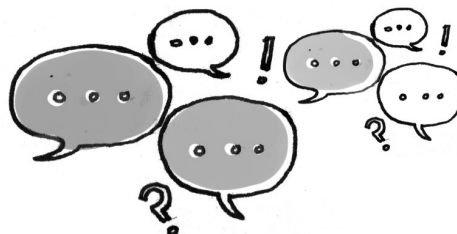


- (i) NCSA would immediately conduct a village study in Melghat for collecting information and the peoples' opinions
- (ii) Traffic should be banned on the Paratwada Dharani road at night
- (iii) The water contribution data (by rivers and forest in Melghat) should be used by the Tiger Project Office to focus on the tiger reserve as a water conservation/recharging unit
- (iv) Joint patrolling of the MP-Maharashtra border area is essential
- (v) A monthly inspection should be made in core areas of PAs by a committee appointed by the FD, comprising journalists, lawyers, NGOs and nature lovers,
- (vi) The next meeting of the State Wildlife Advisory Board should be held in the Vidarbha region to give the PAs here more attention.

**II)** A meeting on people and protected areas of Maharashtra, earlier scheduled for 16-18 January, has been postponed. The meeting, being organized by the Sahbhagi Vanjivan Sanwardhan Samanvay, Maharashtra, is being held at Sevagram, Wardha. Issues for discussion include official and people's perceptions of PAs, and possibilities of participatory management. NGOs and forest officials are expected to participate.

**III)** With the completion of the draft Directory of National Parks and Sanctuaries in Maharashtra, prepared by a team at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, a state-level meeting on the management of protected areas is to be called towards the middle of 1998. The draft, which runs into several hundred pages of data, maps, and analysis, has been reviewed by several experienced conservationists and forest officials of the state, and is soon to go to press.

## **Workshop on Protected Areas in Maharashtra**



The Maharashtra FD organized a meeting, 'Biodiversity Conservation in Maharashtra: Vision Beyond 2000' on 3-4 September 1998 at Nagpur, to discuss various issues relating to the management of protected areas and other conservation matters in the state. The meeting was spurred by the preparation of a Directory of National Parks and Sanctuaries in Maharashtra, part of a series of directories being produced at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (and now being produced by an independent team of researchers, funded by WWF-India). This directory is in a draft stage and its authors felt that a discussion on the various issues raised during its compilation would help both in its finalization and be an occasion to take decisions regarding the future of wildlife conservation in Maharashtra.

Over 100 persons from the FD, conservation and social action NGOs, and independent wildlifers attended the meeting. Discussions were held on management, research and monitoring, awareness/education, conservation and development interface, and other issues. Though the topic of the workshop was conservation in general, much of the discussion was focused on PAs.

The recommendations of the workshop are being finalized by the FD. A first draft of these recommendations has the following critical points: the need to strengthen the legal and other capacities of the PA staff, joint custodianship of PAs with local communities, guaranteeing the right to life (including to bona fide biomass resources)

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

of local communities, strong steps against destructive developmental and commercial activities in and around PAs, and the need for conservation measures across the entire landscape and not just restricted to PAs.

Source: M.G. Gogate, CWLW, Maharashtra

### **Meeting of people affected by PAs in Western Maharashtra**

A meeting was held at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, on 7 September 1998, of villagers affected by protected areas in western Maharashtra including Bhimashankar, Koyna, Radhanagari, Malvan, Harishchandragad and the Kalsubai WLSs. Among the issues discussed were the situation arising from the WWF-India case regarding settlement of rights of people in PAs, and the proposed changes in the WLPA.

Source: Kusum Karnik, Shaswat, Manchar, District Pune

### **1999**

### **Tourism development in PAs in Vidarbha**

A master plan is being prepared to develop basic facilities at 14 tourist destinations in the Vidarbha region. Protected areas on this list include the Nawegaon and Tadoba NPs, and the Nagzira WLS. It has been suggested that once the facilities have been developed, they would be handed over to private parties for operation. Grants have been sanctioned by the Central government for this purpose.

Source: '14 Vidarbha tourist spots identified for revamp', *The Indian Express*, 02/07/1999.

### **Satpuda Foundation set up**

The Nature Conservation Society, Amravati (NCSA), has set up the Satpuda Foundation

in an attempt to protect the biodiversity and tigers in the Satpudas. The first training programme of the foundation was held in the Katepurna WLS from December 24–26, 1999.

Source: Kishore Rithe on email dated 28/12/1999.

### **2000**

### **PA coordination committee for Vidarbha**

NGOs working in protected areas in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra have decided to set up a Vidarbha level PA coordination committee. It will comprise of the Vidarbha Nature Conservation Society (VNCS), Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA), KHOJ and Srujan. This decision was taken in a meeting held in Nagpur on March 17-18, 2000. The issue of settlement of rights of people in protected areas will be taken up on a priority and a larger region level meeting has been planned for the middle of May. Outside NGOs like Kalpavriksh are also assisting this process.

### **Meeting on settlement of rights in PAs**

The Yeshwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA), Pune, organized a workshop on the settlement of rights process in national parks and sanctuaries of Maharashtra, from May 29–June 2, 2000.

The Maharashtra government had, earlier, held two meetings in October 1999 to discuss the progress of the process. The current workshop brought together the Sub-Divisional Officers (Revenue), who on behalf of the Collector are inquiring into the rights of people within protected areas, and the concerned forest officials from all the protected areas of Maharashtra.

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

The workshop enabled an interaction between the revenue and forest officials, to sort out their problems in order to complete the process in a time-bound manner. The protected areas in the Pune, Nashik and Konkan divisions were discussed on May 29-30, and those from the Aurangabad, Amravati and Nagpur divisions were discussed on June 1-2.

A meeting of the wildlife officials was held on May 31 to discuss issues related to wildlife management. The CWLW and other senior officials of the FD were present in the meeting. The workshop was also attended by some NGO representatives.

Source: Dr. Bharat Bhushan, Associate Professor, YASHADA, Pune.

### **State launches forest website**

The Maharashtra FD has launched its own website, [www.mahaforest.gov.in](http://www.mahaforest.gov.in), which will also have information on various national parks and sanctuaries in the state.

Source: 'Forest website launched', *The Times of India*, 10/06/2000.

### **Two new sanctuaries at Rajmachi and Tamhini-Sudhagarh**

The dense forests of Rajmachi and Tamhini-Sudhagarh, bordering Pune and Raigad districts are to be declared as wildlife sanctuaries. Rajmachi lies between the Bhimashankar and Mayureshwar WLSs while Tamhini-Sudhagarh is a bridge between the forests of Mahabaleshwar and those of the Chandoli WLS.

The Rajmachi WLS would cover an area of 122 sq km and forms the catchment area of the Andhora, Shiroti and Walwan lakes. Tamhini-Sudhagarh would cover an area of 228 sq km in the catchment area of the Mulshi lake.

Source: 'Maharashtra to have two new wildlife sanctuaries', *Financial Express*, 13/08/2000.

### **Rs 37 crore plan to check poaching**

The government of Maharashtra has launched a Rs 37.27 crore plan to tackle the threat of poaching of wild animals in the state. The plan aims to arm 720 officers with pistols and to equip 514 squads with one rifle for each member. The plan was announced by the CM of the state, Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh in Mumbai in the month of August.

Source: 'Rs 37-crore plan to check poaching', *The Hindu*, 25/08/2000.

### **Workshop on 'NGO Networking for Wildlife Conservation' in Vidarbha.**

Nature Conservation Society Amravati (NCSA) and the BNHS jointly organized a workshop on 'NGO Networking for Wildlife Conservation' in the Pench TR from December 22 to 24, 2000. The meeting was attended by about 30 people from various sectors including groups working for wildlife conservation, human rights, forest officials, teachers and honorary wildlife wardens.

The protected areas in Vidarbha that were discussed at the meeting included Bor WLS, Melghat TR, Tadoba-Andhari TR, Chaprala WLS, Nagzira WLS, Nawegaon NP, Katepurna WLS, Narnala WLS, and the Pench TR. Various recommendations and suggestions were made to resolve the outstanding issues.

There were also recommendations for extension of the Tadoba-Andhari TR, and Nagzira WLS, and for the creation of new protected areas at Mansingdeo (adjacent to the Pench TR), the Pohara Malkhed RF near Amravati, the Irai reservoir in Chandrapur

district and the Mahendri RF where the highly endangered Forest spotted owl was rediscovered in 1997.

Source: Kishore Rithe. Email dated 15/02/2001.

### **Workshop on 'Wildlife Trade' in Vidarbha**

The Nature Conservation Society, Amravati (NCSA) and the BNHS jointly organized a workshop on 'Wildlife Trade' at Totladoh in Pench TR from December 24 to 26, 2000. The main participants included wildlife staff, Honorary Wildlife Wardens, and some wildlife activists from NGOs.

The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- a) expose participants to the wildlife trade activities in their field of working, and the quantum of wildlife trade in India
- b) introduce them to various aspects like law enforcement, technical investigation and raids and
- c) to introduce the wildlife staff to wildlife activists and create a formal Government-NGO-activists network for effective anti wildlife trade operations. The first training of this kind had been organized by NCSA in the Tadoba-Andhari TR in February 1998.

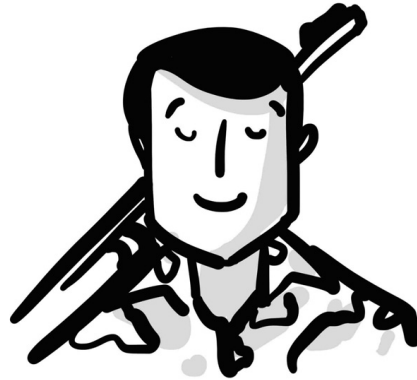
Source: Kishore Rithe. Email dated 15/02/2001.

## **2001**

### **State forest staff to get firearms**

Forest officers and guards in Maharashtra will be provided with firearms. This decision was taken following a recent public interest litigation in the Mumbai HC after which a high powered committee was set up to suggest measures for revamping the forest protection system.

Orders have been placed for guns and pistols of various types, which will be provided to guards and range officers. As per a special arrangement, the state police would impart arms training to the forest staff at the Nashik Police Academy and the Regional Police Training School in Nagpur. 140 forest guards and 40 range officers have been shortlisted for the first batch of training.



Source: Ramu Bhagwat. 'State forest staff will be given firearms', *The Times of India*, 19/01/2001.

### **PAs to charge vehicle entry tax**

The Maharashtra government has decided that visitors to national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in Maharashtra will now have to pay a vehicle entry tax for their vehicles. Individuals in the vehicles will also have to pay an entry tax while those individuals who come walking or in bullock carts will be exempt.

The entry tax to be charged is Rs five for two wheelers, Rs 20 for medium vehicles like cars and jeeps and Rs 50 for heavy vehicles like buses and tractors. This rule will be applicable to all PAs in the state with the exception of the Sanjay Gandhi NP in Mumbai.

Source: 'Sanctuaries and parks to charge vehicle entry taxes', *The Indian Express*, 21/02/2001.

## **State okays killing of wild boar, neelgai for crop damage**

Following a meeting of the State Wildlife Advisory Board (SWAB) in February 2001, the State Forest Minister announced that the killing of neelgai and wild boar that are suspected of damaging crops, will be allowed henceforth. This has been a demand of a lot of communities living around protected areas and the organizations and NGOs who work with these communities. Organizations like the Ekjoot Sanghatana which works with tribal communities around the Bhimashankar WLS have welcomed the order.

Wildlife conservationists and forest officials, have however, severely criticized this decision of the government. It also came as a surprise to many because in the earlier meeting of the SWAB, a decision had been taken that the BNHS would be commissioned to study the problem of crop damage in detail and come up with an ecologically sound solution for the problem.

The State Forest Secretary has defended the decision saying that they were merely following section 11 (b) of the WLPA which says that the 'CWLW of the state, if satisfied that any particular animal under Schedule II, III or IV has become damaging to human life and property (including standing crop on any land), may permit the animal to be killed.' Forest officers have however, pointed out that in the past Section 11 was used only in the case of an extreme eventuality, as in the case of man-eating carnivores.

There continues to be a lot of debate and discussion related to this decision of the state.

Source: Purna Bindra. 'State okays killing of 'protected' nilgai, wild boar', *The Indian Express*, 23/02/2001.

State minister's license-to-kill worries wildlife enthusiasts', *The Indian Express*, 25/02/2001.

'Adivasi ani Vanvyavasthapan', note by the Ekjoot Sanghatana, 02/03/2001.

## **Wildlife, forest protection wings suffer as World Bank withdraws aid**

378 posts in the wildlife wing of the FD have been abolished as part of a restructuring plan of the Maharashtra government. The move follows the completion of the World Bank (WB) funded, Maharashtra Forestry Project (MFP) in early 2001. In 1992, the WB had provided Rs 413 crores to the state and this was used to initiate the MFP. The MFP was scheduled to end in April 2000, but was given an extension till October 2000, followed by monthly extensions for a few more months. With the funds now over, the first decision has been to abolish these posts in the wildlife wing.

Another consequence of the termination of the MFP has been the decision of the state government to also wind up its forest protection wings in four circles in the state.

Source: Vaishali Kirpekar. 'Now who will protect our forests?' *Pune Times of India*, 06/03/2001.

Sanjeev Unhale. 'Forest department loses yet another wing as WB stops aid', *The Times of India*, 27/03/2001.

'378 posts threatened', *Tigerlink*, March 2001.

## **Wildlife census in state**

The first phase of the wildlife census in Maharashtra took place in the month of April 2001, and is to be followed by the second round in May. The herbivore count was made on April 7 followed by the carnivore count from April 17-13.

In Melghat TR, 14 tigers and 20 leopards were reportedly counted in the first phase. Results for the 2nd phase in May are not yet known. All the information from both the

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

counts will be brought out in a collated form in November, later this year.

Source: Aishwarya Mavinkurve. 'Census goes wild: headcount begins', *The Indian Express*, 12/04/2001.

'14 tigers, 20 leopards seen at Melghat Tiger Reserve', *The Indian Express*, 15/04/2001.

### **Workshop on wildlife conservation in Chandrapur and Gadchiroli**

The Green Pigeon Nature Society, Chandrapur, recently organized a workshop on 'NGO Networking for Wildlife Conservation and Management' for the Chandrapur and Gadchiroli districts in Maharashtra. It was organized on March 3-4, 2001 in the Tadoba- Andhari TR. Around 40 participants from various sectors including researchers, forest officials, teachers, and NGOs participated.

Various issues discussed included the need for active networking among NGOs in the region, increase in poaching and illicit felling in the forests here, issues related to crop damage by wildlife and damage compensation, the extension of existing protected areas and also the creation of new ones.

Source: Atul Dhamankar. Letter to the *Protected Area Update*

### **Wildlife census in Satara district**

The results of the recent census of wildlife in the seven forest divisions of the Satara district have now been released.

The numbers of tiger, leopard, bear, hyena and the peacock are reported to have increased whereas those of gaur and deer have reduced. The census has also indicated that there is a rise in the number of animals in the three wildlife sanctuaries

of Radhanagari, Chandoli and Sagareshwar that are located in the region.

Source: Nandkumar Dhavalikar. 'Wildlife census brings good news on endangered species', *The Times of India*, 28/05/2001.

## **2002**

### **Forests being opened up for eco-tourism**

Starting from March 21, World Forestry Day, the Maharashtra FD has initiated a big scheme for promotion of ecotourism in the forests of the state.

Instructions have been issued to all divisions to identify tourist spots within forest areas for the purpose. As a first step the FDCM was allowed to take over the forest guest houses at Kolsa and Sillari in Totladoh in Pench TR for providing accommodation facilities to the tourists.

Melghat TR launched its own website [www.melghattiger.com](http://www.melghattiger.com) that gives information of the conservation history and the ecology of the park. Some steps were also initiated to promote tourism in the park.

It is also proposed to create a nodal cell in every division in the state to promote ecotourism in a big way, while at the forest-circle level, the CF is supposed to oversee, plan and implement the projects.

Source: 'State to open forests for eco-tourism', *The Times of India*, 15/02/2002.

Madhav Gokhale. 'Eco-tourism could end up a paper tiger', *Indian Express*, 23/02/2002.

Neil Pate. 'State goes on eco-tourism trip', *The Times of India*, 23/03/2002.

Press Note from the Forest Dept, 08/04/2002.

### Kolhapur Forest Division gets Rs 2.16 crores

The Kolhapur Forest Division has been sanctioned Rs 2.16 crores for a period of five years for afforestation and eco-development of the forest villages. The funds are going to be released directly by the Central Government to the Forest Development Agency (FDA).

Rs 79 lakhs have been allocated for 2001-2002, out of which the first installment of Rs 40 lakhs was to be released in the month of April. Out of the 510 forest villages on record in Kolhapur, the division plans to develop 36 villages in the first year's pilot project.

25% of the allocated amount under this scheme can be used for the development of the forest villages through water harvesting structures like check dams for irrigation and drinking water purposes, digging of wells, creation of roads, construction of sheds for schools, installation of energy saving and energy alternative devices, and rural electrification through solar power.

Source: 'Kolhapur forest division to get Rs 2.16 crore', *The Times of India*, 26/03/2002.

### Population rise in wildlife in Western Ghat sanctuaries

A recent census conducted by a committee of CFs and DCFs has shown a major increase in the population on wild animals in four wildlife sanctuaries in the Western Ghats—the Radhanagari, Koyna, Chandoli and Sagarshwar WLSs. The animals counted include the tiger, leopard, gaur, barking deer, mouse deer, sloth bear and blackbuck.

Source: Neil Pate. 'Population of wild animals in western ghats on the rise', *The Times of India*, 04/04/2002.

### State to set up 'Forest Courts'



The Maharashtra FD has proposed the setting up of special forest courts in Nagpur and Thane for conducting a more efficient and speedy trial of forest offences. There are presently more than 7,000 forest related cases pending before the courts and more than two lakh cases before the forest officials empowered with quasi-judicial powers.

Forest officials say that these special courts will help in the quick disposal of the pending cases and further help curb violations of the IFA, the FCA and the WLPA. If the proposal comes through, Maharashtra will be the first state in the country to have such special 'forest courts'.

Source: 'Forest crimes need special courts: dept.', *The Indian Express*, 20/04/2002.

Prafulla Marpakwar. 'Govt. to set up forest courts', *The Indian Express*, 24/07/2002.

## 2003

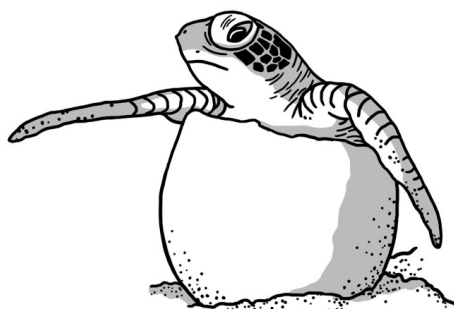
### People's 'Marine Turtle Conservation Project' in Ratnagiri district

The Sahyadri Nisarg Mitra (SNM) based in the Chiplun town of Ratnagiri district has launched an informal 'Marine Turtle Conservation Project' for the protection

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

of the Olive ridley turtles that nest on the coast here in small numbers. The initiative was launched in the wake of the rising incidence of poaching of the turtles and the destruction of their eggs and hatchlings in this Konkan belt.

During the turtle nesting season that has just ended, the SNM took its project to 45 villages in the district. They now want to spread their campaign along the entire Konkan coast. The group has also been involved in conducting status surveys of the White bellied sea eagle along the Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg coasts and had also helped the local police to prevent the destruction of the nests of the edible nest swiftlets in south Konkan.



Source: Neil Pate. 'Chiplun group comes to the aid of Olive Ridleys', *The Times of India*, 22/03/2003.

### **State government in favour of hydro-electric projects in wildlife sanctuaries**

The Maharashtra State Government, led by Chief Minister, Sushil Kumar Shinde, is keen on going ahead with four hydro-electric projects that the MoEF has refused clearance on grounds that they will affect forest areas and wildlife sanctuaries. The CM has urged that the issue of their clearance should be pursued with the Centre. The four projects are those at Chikhaldara in Amravati district, Humbarli in Satara district, Kardi-Bhogiv in Kolhapur district and Malshej Ghat in Pune district.

The 400 MW Chikhaldara project was rejected on the grounds that it would affect the Melghat TR. Site clearance has been denied to the 400 MW Humbarli project, as the project area comes under the Koyna WLS.

Project officials have said that while the sanctuary had an area of over 40,000 hectares, what was required for the project was only 109 hectares. They have pointed out that of this 32.71 hectares have already been deleted by the Satara District Collector. They have also made the claim that the reservoir that will be created because of the project will benefit the forests and the wildlife here.

The jurisdiction of the 400 MW Karadi-Bhogiv project in the catchment of the Warna dam is under RF in Chandoli, of which 678 hectares are needed for the project. As far as the Malshej Ghat project is concerned, 74 hectares of the land needed is forestland.

Source: Radheshyam Jadhav. 'CM for hydro projects shot down by MoEF', *The Indian Express*, 21/08/2003.

### **Political lobbying obstructs declaration of Rajmachi and Tamhini-Sudhagarh WLSs**

The final declaration of the Rajmachi and Tamhini Sudhagarh WLSs in the Western Ghats in the Pune and Raigad districts, is reportedly being obstructed by powerful political and corporate bigwigs to safeguard their lavish farmhouses, weekend resorts and health parlours.

The creation of a protected area in this region had been approved in principal by the State Wildlife Advisory Board in 1998-99. It had been decided to split the proposed sanctuary into two—the Rajmachi WLS, measuring 122.96 sq km along the northern portion, and the Tamhini-Sudhagarh WLS, measuring 228.24 sq km along the southern portion.



The proposal was submitted to the state government in 1999-2000 but objections from some local villagers and later from a powerful political lobby prevented the proposal from seeing the light of the day.

Some of the villages that come under the projects are Walvan, Rajmachi, Waksai, Kane, Tungarli, Pangoli, Jevrewadi, Budhle and Karandoli.

Source: Neil Pate. 'Political lobbying blights sanctuary projects', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 14/11/2003.

## **2004**

### **Bird sanctuary proposed at Bhigwan**

The Bhigwan wetland located some 80 km from Pune is being proposed as a wildlife sanctuary. Spread over an area of roughly 180 sq km, the wetland attracts a large number of migratory waterfowl every winter. The wetland is part of the backwaters of the Ujni dam built on the River Bhima.

The proposal is an outcome of a major 'Inland Wetlands of India, Research Project' that has been undertaken by the MoEF, and an initial amount of Rs nine lakh is also reported to have been sanctioned. The study team has been asked to submit another detailed report after three years following which the MoEF will take the final decision regarding the sanctuary.

Source: Gaurav Thakur. 'Pune scores a sanctuary', *Times News Network*, 31/05/2004.

### **Proposal for tourism development in Konkan, Vidarbha; focus on PAs**

The Maharashtra Government is reported to have made a comprehensive budgetary allocation to tap the tourism potential in the Konkan and Vidarbha regions of the state.

A budgetary proposal of Rs 34.50 crore has been made to upgrade tourism facilities in Konkan, while an integrated tourism plan worth Rs 170 crore has been chalked out for the Vidarbha region with the help of the Tata Consultancy Services. The areas that would be covered under this include Ramtek, Chikhaldara and the protected areas of Melghat, Tadoba and Nagzira. One of the main thrust areas will be forest, eco and wildlife tourism.

Source: 'Maharashtra to tap tourism potential of Konkan, Vidarbha', *Business Line*, 05/06/2004.

### **FDMC seeks modification of order banning tree felling in wildlife corridors and ESZs**

The FDCM and the Maharashtra Government have moved an application seeking modification of an earlier HC blanket ban on felling of trees in ESZs and wildlife corridors. The ban was effective within 10 km of the boundary of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. According to the FDCM, the HC ban would result in a loss of revenue of Rs 1,400 crores, adversely affecting its operations.

Source: Amrut Dhanwatay. Email to [nathistoryindia@Princeton.edu](mailto:nathistoryindia@Princeton.edu) based on news item in *The Hitavada* dated 14/07/2004.

## **2005**

### **Wildlife census 2005 in Maharashtra**

The Maharashtra FD is carrying out a detailed wildlife census this year that will involve the participation of all its different wings. The FD has also decided for the first time that the census would be held on private lands to get a detailed figure of the fauna.

Following is the schedule that had been worked out for the purpose of the count:

1st Phase: Field surveillance: 18-22 April 2005.

2nd Phase: Actual census count: 23-24 April 2005.

3rd Phase: Count at water holes: 22-23 May 2005.

Source: Email dated 05/04/2005 from Manish Moghe to defendingwildindia@yahooogroups.com

### **GIB under threat in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra**



The Maharashtra FD conducted a Great Indian Bustard (GIB) census on July 17, 2005, during which six GIBs were seen in the vicinity of the village Marda-Vanoja within the Warora Forest Range in Chandrapur District.

According to the villagers, open cast mining is being done in the area by Western Coalfields Limited (WCL). Nine villages—Marda, Ekona, Vanoja, Charur, Nagara, Naidev, Khanji, Mohabada and Varora—are being affected by this. The entire area is a good GIB habitat as well. It is feared this will seriously impact the GIB and a proposal is being made to declare this area a community reserve for its protection and conservation.

Source: Dilip Virkhade, Secretary, Vidarbha Paryatan Va Paryavaran Vikas Sanstha, Wardha

## **2006**

### **2nd meeting of the State Board for Wildlife**

The 2nd meeting of the Maharashtra State Wildlife Board was held in December in Nagpur under the Chairmanship of the Chief Minister, Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh. This was the 2nd meeting of the board after it was constituted in 2002, when the stipulation is for two meetings every year. The last meeting was held in 2005.

The main issues listed on the agenda of the meeting included relocation of the 1000 odd villages from protected areas in the state, the demand from Ayurvedic companies for legal permission to use sambhar horns and shells, funds for the eco-development program, establishment of a separate eco-development and tourism board, protection of wildlife outside protected areas and quick disposal of compensation cases for human and cattle kills made by wildlife.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'State Wildlife Board meets, only 2nd time since inception', *The Indian Express*, 11/12/2006.

## **2007**

### **Money for tourism projects in PAs not yet released**

The Rs 8.4 crore sanctioned to the FD for tourism development in PAs in Maharashtra had not been released till the middle of January. This has given rise to concerns whether the money could be spent before the end of the financial year in March. The proposal for tourism development that had been waiting for a go-ahead from the state government for many years was finally approved in the recent session of the Maharashtra Legislature in Nagpur.

The PAs where the projects are to be implemented are the Melghat TR, Tadoba-

Andhari TR and the Sanjay Gandhi NP (Rs 1.6 cr each); Pench TR (Rs 1.2 cr), Nagzira WLS (Rs 0.8 cr), Gautala Autram Ghat WLS (Rs 0.62 cr), Bhimashankar WLS (Rs 0.6 cr), Bor WLS (Rs 0.2 cr) and the Jaikwadi WLS (Rs 0.18 cr).

The facilities to be created with the money include roads, camp sites, nature interpretation centers, elephant rides, nature trails, additional accommodation, training of forest guides and guards, tree top huts and renovation of British period rest-houses.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Eco-tourism plan on track, but where's money?', *The Indian Express*, 16/01/2007.

### **Officials with wildlife training posted in non-wildlife posts**

Of the 78 officials in the state that have wildlife related training, 68 are reported to have been posted in non-wildlife areas in the state. None of the three directors of tiger, reserves of Melghat, Tadoba-Andhari or Pench have any training in wildlife. The state has 141 officers posts sanctioned for the state's wildlife areas, which indicates a serious shortfall of availability of appropriately trained personnel. Even those who have been trained are not being deployed in the right areas.

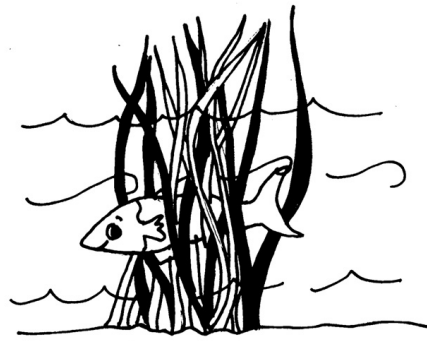
Further, 126 (or about 10%) of the 1295 posts of officers, forests and forest guards in protected areas are vacant. Of these 15 vacancies are of the RFO where the sanctioned strength is 93. The PCCF-Wildlife, Maharashtra, is reported to have acknowledged the problem but pointed out that he has no say in the deployment of personnel in wildlife areas.

In a response to a writ petition filed in the Mumbai HC in 2002 in a matter related to tree felling and wildlife protection, the FD had said that it would send two DCFs

or DFOs, five ACFs and 12 RFOs to the WII for training at a cost of Rs 16 lakhs per annum. The cost was to be borne by the Centre.

Source: Vivek Deshpande. 'Only 10 trained officers in wildlife areas', *The Indian Express*, 09/08/2007.

### **Govt identifies 94 wetlands for regulatory framework; three in Maharashtra**



A draft regulatory framework for wetlands which would be notified under the provisions of the EPA has been prepared by a special multi-disciplinary expert group constituted for this purpose. The announcement was made in the Lok Sabha recently by the Union Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Mr. Namo Narayan Meena.

The proposed framework has the provisions for regulatory authorities at the central, state and district levels and comments on the same have been invited from state governments and other stakeholders. The classification of wetlands would be based on their size, threat perceptions, and importance at various levels.

The ministry has identified 94 wetlands, many of which are protected areas, under the National Wetland Conservation Programme. The wetlands identified for the same in Maharashtra are the Ujni, Jaikwadi and the Nalganga wetlands.

## **2008**

### **PAs in Vidarbha, Aurangabad to be promoted for tourism**

Maharashtra's Vidarbha region and Aurangabad are among the 20 mega destination circuits the tourism ministry will promote under a new initiative. The destinations have been selected on the basis of their national importance, tourist footfall and potential arrivals. The centre will provide Rs 50 crore to the state for tourism promotion in Vidarbha and Rs 25 crore for Aurangabad. The Lonar Crater (also a wildlife sanctuary) and the tiger reserves of Vidarbha are the major focus areas for the tourism development plans.

Source: Vineeta Pandey. 'Vidarbha set to take a big leap on tourism map', *DNA*, 22/05/2008.

### **CAT asks state to appoint head of Forest Force within eight weeks**

The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) has directed the Maharashtra State Government to appoint the Head of the Forest Force (HoFF) from among the senior-most PCCFs within a period of eight weeks.

The Maharashtra government had sought clarification on April 24 from the MoEF asking whether the post of PCCF (General) automatically stood elevated as HoFF. The MoEF had clarified on June 2, that one of the existing posts of PCCFs in each state had been upgraded to a higher administrative grade in the apex scale of Rs 80,000 from September 27, 2008. It said that in Maharashtra, the post of PCCF (General) should be upgraded as HoFF. It also made it clear that HoFF had to be appointed from among the officers holding the rank of PCCF.

It has been suggested by some that the CAT ruling now has tied the hands of Maharashtra Forest Minister, who is it alleged, wanted to appoint a person of his choice to the post after sidelining seniors. The FD has been without a chief since December 31, 2008.

Source: 'CAT tells state to name forest chief in 8 weeks', *The Times of India*.

### **FD employees warn of strike**



FD employees threatened, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of September, to go on strike in support of their demands for pay parity and absorption in the service after the state's forthcoming assembly elections.

The Maharashtra State Forest Guards and Promoted Foresters Union (MSFGPF) and the Maharashtra State Forest Employees and forest Labour Union (MSFELU) said that employees—forest guards, foresters, permanent labour and daily wage labour—would wait for a month after the formation of the new government in the state before resorting to the strike.

The forest guards are demanding pay parity with revenue inspectors, and foresters with naib tehsildars of the revenue department. The existing pay scales (Fifth Pay Commission) are Rs 2,750-4,400 for forest guards as against Rs 4,000-6,000 for revenue

inspectors, and Rs 4,000-6,000 for foresters against Rs 5,500-9,000 for the naib tehsildar.

The unions pointed out that the demands were being raised since 1993, and the PCCF had recommended as long back as in 2002 that pay parity be granted. The government, however, is still to issue the necessary orders.

Source: 'Maharashtra Forest Dept employees warn of strike' <http://news.webindia123.com/>

## **2009**

### **Large scale transfers; PAs left unprotected**

The Maharashtra Forest Minister, Babanrao Pachpute, recently effected large-scale changes in the postings of forest officers in the state leading to concerns that a number of PAs would now remain unprotected. Over 350 forest personnel including over 240 RFOs and the Field Director (FD) and CF of the Tadoba-Andhari TR have been transferred without replacements. The same situation is seen with more than a dozen other RFOs from other wildlife areas.

It has been pointed out that many of these transfers have been effected regardless of continuity of postings and this has left a number of important posts vacant.

The Tadoba Andhari and Pench TRs are believed to be worst affected. The transfer of the Director of TATR, and of RFO Tadoba without replacements has left the tiger reserve headless. Similarly, posts of the other RFOs in the reserve—Kolsa, Moharli and the one for protection will be vacant because of transfers and retirement of officers.

Similarly, two RFOs at Pench TR, for East Pench and the other in charge of the anti-poaching squad have been shifted to Paoni and Kuhl respectively, without any replacements. The RFOs post for West

Pench too is to fall vacant as the present officer is to be promoted to the rank of an ACF.

The other PAs that are expected to be affected because of the transfers include the Melghat TR, the Bhamragarh WLS, the Chaprala WLS, Yawal WLS, Bhimashankar WLS and the Chandoli NP.

It has also been pointed out that in the eight PAs in the Nagpur Wildlife Circle, of a total of 17 RFOs only three had training in wildlife.

Source: 'Minister ignores wildlife areas again' <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/NEWS-City-Nagpur-Pachpute-ignores-wildlife-areas-again/articleshow/4796507.cms>

## **2010**

### **Expert Panel on Western Ghats constituted**

The MoEF recently announced the constitution of a 'Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel' to recommend measures and to assist the government in the preservation, conservation and rejuvenation of this environmentally sensitive and ecologically significant region.

The 14 member panel will be chaired by Prof. Madhav Gadgil. Dr G V Subrahmanyam, Adviser in the MoEF will be Member-Secretary of this panel. The other members of the panel are Mr BJ Krishnan, Senior Advocate, Dr Nandkumar Kamat, Goa University, Dr KN Ganeshiah, ATREE, Dr VS Vijayan, Kerala Biodiversity Board, Prof Renee Borges, IISc, Prof R Sukumar, IISc, Dr Ligia Noronha, TERI, Ms Vidya Nayak, Nagrik Seva Trust, Dr. DK Subramaniam, Dr PL Gautam, National Biodiversity Authority, Prof SP Gautam, CPCB, and Dr. RR Navalgund, Space Applications Centre.

The first task of the panel will be to assess the current status of the ecology of the

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

Western Ghats region and to demarcate areas within the region that should be earmarked for notification as ecologically sensitive under the EPA. The panel will furnish its report to the MoEF within six months. A comprehensive consultation process involving people and governments of all the concerned states will take place after that.

The Minister of Environment and Forests, Mr Jairam Ramesh, also met 43 Members of Parliament representing the 51 districts in six states that are part of the Western Ghats: Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat. It was decided that this parliamentary group of Western Ghats MPs shall meet regularly to take stock of issues concerning the ecology and the suitable development of the region.

Source: Expert Panel on Western Ghats constituted, PIB Press Release <http://www.pib.nic.in/release/release.asp?relid=58899>, 04/03/2010.

### **Big reshuffle in Maharashtra FD**



In a major reshuffle seven CCFs, 19 CFs, and three DCFs were recently shifted from their present posts in Maharashtra. Officials said the transfers were routine and that more were in the pipeline.

SWH Naqvi, CCF (HRM), Nagpur, has been shifted to Pune as social forestry director (SFD). He will be replaced by Prakash Thosre, who is SFD director. Amravati

territorial CCF, SD Sontakke, has been shifted to Aurangabad. He will be replaced by Sarjan Bhagat, General Manager, FDCM, Nagpur. Shree Bhagwan, CCF, Thane, will replace Bhagat at the FDCM. Suresh Thorat has been shifted from Borivili to Thane while he will be replaced by Sarvesh Kumar from Aurangabad.

Mohan Jha, Field Director of Pench TR, has been shifted but his posting is awaited. He will be replaced by A Ashraf, Joint Director of Social Forestry, Aurangabad. Sanjay Thakre, Field Director of the Tadoba-Andhari TR, has also been shifted to FDCM as Regional Manager (Headquarters). VK Sinha, who is in the FDCM, will replace Thakre. Thakre's exit comes as post of Tadoba CF is to be upgraded to CCF rank.

Gorewada Zoo director, AR Mande, has been shifted to working plan, Amravati. Similarly, RS Yadav, who headed the North Chandrapur Circle, has been brought to PCCF's office as CF, JFM-II. Yadav will be replaced by GRK Rao. CS Gajbhiye, who looked after JFM-II, has been shifted to HRD in PCCF's office.

FS Jafry of the working plan division, Nagpur, has been shifted as joint director, social forestry, Pune. Virendra Tiwari, who was with working plan, Amravati, has been shifted as CF (tendu), Nagpur. YLP Rao, who headed Kolhapur wildlife division, will be replaced by MK Rao. YLP Rao has been shifted to Nagpur to the land record department in place of PCS Singh. Singh has been transferred to Chandrapur in silviculture.

The three DCFs shifted include Anwar Jamal Ahmed to Alibagh, SU Hiwlekar to Shahapur and DB Shrikhande to Pandharkawda. Shrikhande has been posted in place of Gopal Kale, who had committed suicide a few months ago.

Source: '29 top officials shifted', <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> 15/07/10.

## **2011**

### **Reshuffle at the top of the Maharashtra FD**

A major shuffle has happened at the top of the Maharashtra FD. Additional PCCF, SK Khetarpal, has been named as the new PCCF (Wildlife). The post was lying vacant after DC Pant retired on March 31, 2011. Khetarpal has been holding the additional charge since then.

Prakash Thosre, who was APCCF (Human Resource & Management) at Nagpur, has been promoted as PCCF (Production & Management). Tasneem Ahmed, who was CCF-Protection at Nagpur, has been promoted as PCCF & Director General of Social Forestry, Pune.

The government had promoted eight 1978 and some 1979 batch IFS officials as APCCFs. Those CCFs who have been promoted include Nandkishore, Alinda Chandra (on deputation at Centre), VK Mohan, Krishna Mohan, Sarvesh Kumar, AK Saxena, Ashok Sharma and Sarjan Bhagat. Apart from the IFS cadre posts, it has been agreed to create ex-cadre posts of two PCCFs, 11 APCCFs, 25 CCFs, 5 CFs.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Prodded by Ramesh, Maharashtra creates two more posts of PCCF', *Times News Network*, 20/04/2011.

### **Large scale promotion of IFS officers in Maharashtra**

In what might be one of the biggest one time upgradation and promotion exercise of its kind, 39 officers of the Indian Forest Service (IFS) have been promoted in Maharashtra at one go. Those promoted to upgraded posts include 12 CCFs, who are now Additional PCCFs, and 27 CFs who are now CCFs. There will now be 19 APCCFs in the state while earlier there were only three.

The 12 CCFs who have been promoted as APCCF include Ramanuj Choudhary for Monitoring & Evaluation (Tendu); Ashok Sharma (Medicinal plants, FDCM); Sarjan Bhagat (Resource Utilization); Anil Mohan (Ecotourism & Wildlife Administration); AK Jha (CAMP); SD Sontakke (Wildlife, Nashik); ASK Sinha (Working Plan, East), and RR Sahay (Information Technology & Policy).

Similarly, SA Thorat will be Additional Director General for Social Forestry Directorate, Pune. NB Majumdar was posted on upgraded post APCCF (Conservation) and Anmol Kumar as APCCF (Personnel). Shree Bhagwan, who was tipped to head NTCA's regional office at Nagpur, will be the new APCCF (Budget, Planning & Development). The post was lying vacant for nearly a year.

Meanwhile, CCFs Shailendra Bahadur and Shirish Asthana, both facing departmental enquiry in the recruitment scam at Yavatmal and Pune land scam respectively, have been dropped from the promotion list.

The CFs shifted after upgradation include FS Jafri (Evaluation); Jarnail Singh as CCF (Territorial, Dhule); Anup Wadhwa (NTFP); Anurag Choudhary (Silva, Pune); VS Bardekar (Working Plan); and Mohan Jha (Territorial, Amravati). The 37 CFs promoted as CCFs include Maheep Gupta as general manager, FDCM, Nagpur; PR Yeole, World Food Programme, FDCM; SG Tembhurnikar as Human Resource and Management (HRM); BS Hooda as CCF (Working Plan, Aurangabad); RK Pole as CCF (Thane); and Nitin Kakodkar as the new CCF (Territorial, Pune).

Similarly, N Rambabu, CF with Nagpur division, has been posted as General Manager (Planning) at the FDCM. TK Choubey has been posted as CCF (Working Plan, Nagpur); while A Ashraf has been promoted as CCF Pench. Virendra Tiwari

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

has been promoted as CCF (JFM, Nagpur); RS Yadav has been promoted as CCF (Forest Regulation) while MN Gawli will be new CCF (Vigilance & Welfare).

Source: 'IFS officers promoted at one go', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 15/07/2011.

### **Recovery plan for GIB and Lesser Florican**

A draft national recovery plan for the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (GIB) and the endangered Lesser Florican has been submitted to the MoEF by a task force constituted for the purpose. The MoEF had constituted a 'Task Force on Conservation of Bustard species in India' to address issues in the conservation of bustard and florican species and to prepare an action plan for their recovery. The guidelines for recovery, prepared by the BNHS, WWF - India, the WII and ministry officials in consultation with various field scientists and state FDs, has been submitted to the ministry recently.

They have prepared a three-tier recovery plan for both the GIB and the Lesser florican. First is a national level plan, the second is at the state level and the third is a site-specific plan for different local sites in the state where the birds are found. The recovery plan concentrates on both habitat recovery as well as species recovery. The plan applies to Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka where these birds are found. State FDs, BNHS, WWF-India, WII, and local NGOs will be involved in the implementation of the plan.

The species recovery plan has a two pronged approach: study of population ecology and management intervention. The population study will include identifying lesser known and non-breeding areas through distribution surveys and satellite telemetry programs. The management intervention will include

awareness programmes through workshops and protection of birds through setting up of local monitoring networks and minimizing infrastructure such as electric poles, which is unsuitable to the birds. The intervention plan for GIB will also include a captive breeding program. Some of the threats to both the birds are poaching, habitat loss due to encroachment, mining and overgrazing and use of pesticides.

Habitat level recovery for both birds will include protection of core breeding areas through construction of fences and appointing forest guards to exclude disturbances and other threats to nests such as dogs in the case of the GIB. Locals will also be involved in conservation by linking their livelihoods to it and the state government would try to acquire other conservation partners.

Source: Aakriti Vasudeva. 'Plan to protect endangered birds submitted to MoEF', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 07/12/2011.

## **2012**

### **New sanctuaries adjoining Nagzira WLS, Bor WLS and Nawegaon NP**

The Maharashtra government has notified three new sanctuaries in the Vidarbha region. These are in the Umarzari forests adjoining the Nagzira WLS, and forests adjoining the Bor WLS and the Nawegaon NP. Notifications for this were issued in February and March 2012.

The Umarzari WLS will be spread over an area of 151 sq km that will include 121 sq km of land of the FDCM. 60 sq km will be added to the present 61 sq km of the Bor WLS.

These new declarations are in lieu of the denotification that was done to the GIB Sanctuary in the year 2011.



Source: 'Vidarbha gets three new sanctuaries', *The Hitavada*, 05/03/2012.

### **Honorary wildlife wardens appointed in Vidarbha districts**

Following is the list of Honorary Wildlife Wardens that have been announced for the districts of the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra: Nagpur - Rohit Karoo of the NGO, Wildlife Conservation and Development Centre (WCDC), and Kundan Hate; Chandrapur - Bandu Dhotre of the NGO, Eco Pro, and trustee of Tiger Research and Conservation Trust (TRACT), Poonam Dhanwatey; Akola - Prashant Gahale and Devendra Thelkar; Amravati - Jayant Wadkar and Vishal Bansod of Satpuda Foundation.

The honorary wardens for some of the other districts in the state are as follows: Gondia - Jagdish Bahekar; Aurangabad - Dilip Yardi; Satara - Rohan Bhate; Nanded - Vasant Mayya; Nashik - Amit Khare; Navi Mumbai - Sunjoy Monga; and Raigad - Ulhas Thakur.

Source: '4 Vidarbha dists get more wildlife wardens', *The Times of India*, 04/10/2012.

## **2013**

### **Workshop held on 'Conservation and Management of Rocky Plateau Biodiversity'**



The Pune based Biome Conservation Foundation (BCF) conducted a workshop on 'Policy for Conservation and Management of Rocky Plateau Biodiversity' in Pune on 2 February 2013. About 60 scientists, NGOs, experts and students from the

Konkan Sahyadri belt of the Western Ghats participated in the event.

BCF has prioritized conservation and management work on 15 plateaus in the Konkan Sahyadri Corridor. All of these are outside the protected area network and the effort is aimed at encouraging collaboration, innovation and inclusiveness in pooling data and ensuring protection.

The workshop resulted in suggestions to identify all the plateaus by gathering baseline data and then compiling an overview, to prepare a photo documentation of the species and sites, maintain a community biodiversity register, develop a zoning plan to mark sites that are still in a natural condition with those that already have projects like windmills setup, create a map database to mark rocky plateaus with relation to protected areas, declare community reserves and a create a master tourism plan to be submitted with local groups involved in controlling specific areas.

Source: Aparna Watve, BCF.

### **Bustard Conservation Committee to be set up by FD in Nashik district**

The Maharashtra FD has proposed the setting up of a Bustard Conservation Committee in the Nashik district based on the Centre's guidelines for preparation of a state action plan for the Great Indian Bustards' (GIB) recovery programme. The plan has been forwarded to the state government and an approval is awaited.

As per the Centre's directions, each forest range in the states where the bustard is spotted will have a committee chaired by the CCF. The committee is to include representatives of a scientific institution working on bustard ecology and conservation or in a related field, an ecologist or conservation biologist in the vicinity of the project area,

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

a representative from a local NGO well-versed with the socio-ecological issues in the vicinity of the project, representative(s) of the local panchayat(s), officer in-charge of the project and member secretary. The chairman can also add additional members.

The Nashik range committee has members from the BHNS, veterinarians and wildlife experts, members of the NGO Nature Conservation Society of Nashik (NCSN), a retired RFO, a bird-watcher from Ozar where the birds have been spotted the most, joint forest management committees (JFMCs) of three villages and the DCF, East division, as the member secretary.

The FD has said that it is looking at Nanaj in Solapur and Nashik as breeding centres for these birds in the state. An area of over 500 ha opposite the Ozarkhed dam has also been earmarked for specific conservation action. The grassland area will be fenced off and no trees will be planted here. Surveys have been initiated in Ozar, Chandwad and Dindori and the FD plans to make the local communities part of the conservation effort.

Ozar, in particular, is a good area for the bustards. Eleven years ago, nine females and five males were spotted in 150 acres of land in Ozar. Over time, however, the conditions have deteriorated rapidly. Seven years ago, a total of 11 birds were spotted; five years ago there were seven while three years ago there were only three.

Source: Sumita Sarkar. 'Panel set up to conserve the endangered bustard', *The Times of India*, 11/07/2013.

### **Maharashtra State Wildlife Board reconstituted**

The Maharashtra State Wildlife Board was reconstituted recently, five months after the term of the previous team ended. The 33-member board will be chaired by the

Chief Minister while the CWLW will be the member-secretary.

Executive director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India, Belinda Wright, Sanctuary Asia editor, Bittu Sahgal, BHNS Director, Asad Rahmani, Satpuda Foundation's Kishor Rithe, wildlife expert, Anish Andheria, Wildlife Conservation Trust's Hemendra Kothari, Eco-Pro president, Bandu Dhotre, social worker, Prakash Amte, Devaji Tofa from Mendha-Lekha and MLAs Anandrao Gedam from Armori and Jagdishchandra Valvi are some of those who have been nominated as members.

The Forest minister is the de facto vice-president of the board while the Minister of State for Forests, Managing Director of the FDMC, head of the forest force, Field Directors of tiger reserves, Principal Secretary (Forest), and Principal Secretary (Tribal Development), among others, are also on the board.

Source: 'Maharashtra State Wildlife Board reconstituted', *Economic Times*, 03/09/2013.

### **Panel to get views on ESZ status for the Sawantwadi-Dodamarg wildlife corridor**

The Maharashtra state government has set up a four-member committee to get views and comments of stakeholders on declaring the Sawantwadi-Dodamarg wildlife corridor as an ESZ. The committee comprises the CCF (Kolhapur), Collector (Sindhudurg), Chief Agricultural Officer (Sindhudurg) and DFO (Sawantwadi). There are 22 villages in the wildlife corridor.

The MoEF recently accepted the Dr K Kasturirangan high-level working group (HLWG) committee report on the Western Ghats, which had recommended that except for the wildlife corridor, the moratorium on mining in the rest of

Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts be lifted. The moratorium now applies only to Khed, Chiplun, Sangameshwar, Lanja and the Rajapur talukas of Ratnagiri, and the Kankavli, Sawantwadi, Dodamarg, Deogad, Vaibhavwadi and Kudal talukas of Sindhudurg.

Environmentalists and wildlifers such as D Stalin of the NGO, Vanshakti, and Sumaira Abdulali of the Awaaz Foundation have expressed concern that the setting up of this panel is merely an attempt to subvert the orders of the Mumbai HC that has directed the government to declare the area as an ESZ by December end. Stalin noted that the process was probably being initiated at the instance of the mining lobby, while Abdulali has pointed out that resolutions of each of the 22 gram sabhas asking the area to be declared an ESZ were already with the government.

Source: Clara Lewis. 'Panel to seek feedback on green tag for wildlife corridor', *The Times of India*, 02/11/2013.

## 2014

### Five species of tarantulas discovered in and around PAs in the Western Ghats

Researchers have discovered five new species of tarantulas in and around PAs in different parts of the Western Ghats. The species were described in a recent research paper in the journal *Plos One*.

One of the five species was found at Aarey Milk Colony in Mumbai and has been named as *Heterophrius aareyensis*. The other four are *Heterophrius ravenii* from near Bhimashankar, *Neoheterophrius amboli* from Amboli Ghat (both from Maharashtra); *Neoheterophrius smithii* from near the Sharavati WLS, Karnataka, and a new genus and a new species from Trissur (Kerala), *Sabydroaraneus hirsti*.

Researchers involved in the discovery are Zeeshan Mirza, a wildlife biology and conservation researcher; Rajesh V Sanap, a post-graduate student in ecology and environment, Indian Institute of Ecology and Environment, New Delhi, and Harshal Bhosale, a post-graduate student in environmental sciences, Fergusson College, Pune.

Source: Vijay Singh. 'New spider species discovered in Aarey', *The Times of India*, 22/02/2014.

### Moratorium on mega projects in the Sawantwadi-Dodamarg wildlife corridor to continue

In an interim order passed recently, the Mumbai HC stayed the decision of the MoEF to lift the moratorium on large-scale projects in the Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts that fall in the Sawantwadi-Dodamarg wildlife corridor. The court said that the October 2013 moratorium on development projects would continue.

The order came in response to a petition filed by Sumaira Abdulali of the Awaaz Foundation, which said that the corridor acts as a crucial link between forest areas in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa. The 35-km long and 10-km wide green corridor connects the protected areas of Anshi Dandeli, Bhimgad and Radhanagari and environmentalists have been demanding that it should be declared as eco-sensitive.

The MoEF had on July 25, 2014, lifted the moratorium on development projects in 38 of the 51 villages in Dodamarg and justified its decision by saying that they were not part of the ecologically sensitive areas of the Western Ghats as described by the high-level working group headed by K Kasturirangan.

Source: Shibu Thomas. 'Mumbai HC stays lifting of moratorium on mega projects in Dodamarg corridor', *The Times of India*, 13/08/2014.

### **Initiative for protection of grasslands and wolves in Pune forest division**

The Pune Forest Division has taken up an initiative to protect the grassland habitat in its jurisdiction with special focus on the Indian wolf. The project will be conducted under the guidance of Assistant PCCF Dr. Vinay Sinha and CCF Jeet Singh.

The first of the training programmes for forest staff under the project was conducted at Baramati on November 1, 2014. The training broadly covered topics such as grassland habitat and the mammals dwelling in it with specific focus on the wolf. Experiences were shared on matters relating to mammal identification, animal behavior, how the grassland ecosystem works, the role of each carnivore in the grassland, threats to these animals, specific encounters, as well as techniques to be used in field.

Source: 'Wolf conservation program by Pune forest division', Facebook post by Mihir Godbole, Pune.

### **Non-functioning anti-poaching squad in Vidarbha**

The non-functioning of the anti-poaching squad attached to the Nagpur territorial circle has resulted in a spurt in illegal wildlife trade in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. For the past one year, the post of ACF and RFO (anti-poaching) are under additional charge. Only one guard is posted with the squad, whose jurisdiction spreads over Nagpur, Amravati, Chandrapur forest circles, covering roughly an area of 32,000 sq km.

This anti-poaching unit is one of two such units that were created by the state government in August 1980. The other one was in Thane. The units were attached to the DCFs (Wildlife) in Thane and Nagpur. They were then transferred to the respective territorial circles in light of the fact that

wildlife crime was seen to be more focused outside protected areas.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'With anti-poaching squad defunct, wildlife trade flourishes', *The Times of India*, 31/12/2014.

### **WCCB asks for the setting up of state-level 'Wildlife Crime Control Units'**

The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) has asked all states and union territories to set up exclusive 'Wildlife Crime Control Units' of local police and FD officials. The need for these units has been felt by the WCCB as it is facing problems in coordinating with different state agencies and in crimes involving several states.

WCCB's Additional Director, SB Negi, wrote recently to all state chief secretaries recommending formation of such units. He has written that effective combating of wildlife crime requires systematic identification and busting of organized networks by dedicated crime control units. The existing wildlife crime enforcement infrastructure in the country has certain institutional weaknesses that hinder its effective functioning requiring urgent attention.

The advisory has suggested that these units get powers to collect intelligence related to wildlife crime activities, establish a wildlife crime databank, prevent, investigate and prosecute organized wildlife crime cases and also act as nodal point for the WCCB. They should also be able to advice governments on issues relating to wildlife crime and related laws. Constitution of 'State Level Inter Agency Co-ordination Committees' for combating wildlife crimes has also been suggested.

Source: Mayank Aggarwal. 'States asked to form wildlife crime control units', *DNA*, 27/11/2014.

## **WLPA to protect endangered plants**

The government is planning to bring endangered species of flora under the aegis of the WLPA. Officials have proposed a new schedule under the WLPA that will provide legal protection to rare plants. They have suggested that plants be ranked on their 'extinction probability'. Thus, the more endangered a plant, the more severe will be the punishment meted out to any person caught smuggling it.

Currently, a person found carrying an endangered plant species can only be booked for cutting a tree and can be subjected to a maximum of six months imprisonment and a fine of Rs 500. However, if the schedule is accepted, plant smugglers will be dealt with as severely as poachers.

Source: Chetan Chauhan. 'Rare Plants To Receive Protection Under WLPA', Hindustan Times 14/11/2014.

## **BNHS to be renamed Bharat Natural History Society**



The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has decided to drop 'Bombay' from its name. The 131-year-old non-governmental organization will, however, retain its abbreviation by adopting the name Bharat Natural History Society. In 2010, the Shiv Sena had blackened the word 'Bombay' on the BNHS's name board arguing that the institute should rechristen itself as the city had been renamed Mumbai since 1996.

Established in 1883, the BNHS, which specializes in conservation and biodiversity research, first proposed to change its name

in 2003. According to a BNHS official, the organization's work is spread over several states, including Maharashtra, Nagaland, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir. Hence, Bharat would be a proper replacement for Bombay.

Source: Kiran Tare. 'Bombay Natural History Society all set to be rechristened', *The Indian Express*, 10/12/2014.

## **2015**

### **Environment laws to be amended**

The Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Mr Prakash Javadekar, has said that the government will be bringing in amendments to five environment laws enacted between 1971 and 1986 in the upcoming budget session of parliament. This will be a follow up to the recommendations made by the High Level Committee headed by former Cabinet Secretary TSR Subramanian.

The committee had been given the mandate recently to review the EPA, 1986; the FCA, 1980; the WLPA, 1972; The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

The changes could be brought into parliament by the month of April following which they will go to a standing committee for finalization.

Source: 'Govt to bring amendments to 5 green laws in Budget Session', *Daily Excelsior*, 01/01/2015.

### **Budget for MoEFCC cut by nearly 25%**

The budget allocation for the MoEFCC has seen a significant cut in the current year's budget by the Finance Minister, Mr Arun Jaitley. The current allocation of Rs 1,681.60

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

crore is about 25% less than the amount budgeted for the fiscal year 2014-15.

The allocation for Project Tiger too has been reduced by about 15%, from Rs 161.02 crore in 2014-15 to Rs 136.46 crore for 2015-16. The budget has earmarked around Rs 750 crore for ecology and environment, which includes Rs 100 crore for a national coastal management programme, Rs 76.10 crore for environmental monitoring and governance and around Rs 150 crore for the National Afforestation Programme.

Source: Mayank Aggarwal. 'Jaitley cuts allocation to environment ministry', *Mint*, 28/02/2015.

### **MoEFCC asks states for proposals to declare wild animals vermin**

The MoEFCC has asked states to send in proposals to declare wild animals vermin for a specified period in a given area. If implemented, this will apply to wild animals listed in various schedules of the WLPA, in addition to Schedule I & Part II of Schedule II that lists the most endangered and iconic species. The new advisory will apply not only to neelgai and wild boar that destroy crops but also to animals like the wild dog, chital, sambar, langur, and many species of birds that damage crops.

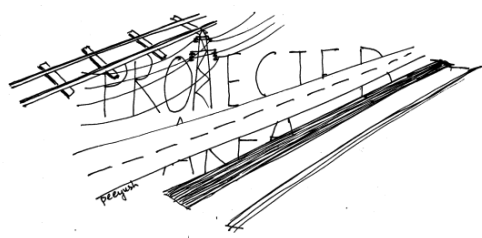
The MoEFCC has asked states to send proposals to declare wild animals or their herds as vermin if they have become dangerous to life or property, or if they have become disabled or diseased beyond recovery. The issue has come up amidst pressure from politicians who have been raising these issues in parliament.

Wildlife officials and environmentalists have, however, expressed fear that protected species could be hunted in the name of eliminating vermin. They pointed out, for instance, that it was not easy for field staff to

differentiate meat of chital from a neelgai's or that of a wild boar's. An analysis by the WII for neelgai management and the recent recommendations by TSR Subramanian committee have also said that such a move will serve no purpose.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Centre eases process to declare wildlife vermin', *The Times of India*, 30/01/2015.

### **NGT stays Centre's order on felling trees for linear projects**



The NGT has imposed a stay on the felling of trees for all linear projects in the country right after stage one clearance. The decision to allow for the felling of trees had been made by the BJP government for fast tracking projects like roads, railway lines, transmission lines, pipelines and highways. A bench headed by the NGT chairperson, Swatanter Kumar, stayed the operation of two communications of the centre dated August 8, 2014, and January 15, 2015, which relaxed forest clearance for felling of trees for linear projects, allowing the felling and commencement of work right after obtaining in-principle clearance. The Centre has been claiming that the relaxation in norms will bring in expeditious implementation and execution of linear projects of public utility.

The NGT was hearing a petition filed by wildlife biologist Milind Pariwakam, who contended that the relaxation given by the centre is contrary to the procedure prescribed in the FCA, 1980, which states that "in-principle approval is not an approval as contemplated in law". The petitioner also pointed out that some of the

important linear projects that have attracted attention in the recent past are the railway line and canal bifurcating the Rajaji NP and the proposed expansion of national highway NH-7 passing through Kanha-Pench and Kanha-Indravati tiger corridors.

High-voltage power lines have also been in the news recently because of large-scale deaths of elephants due to electrocution. Linear projects and their expansion have also put the wildlife at great risk, like in the Kaziranga NP in Assam where elephants and rhinos are killed in accidents on national highway NH-37.

Source: Akanksha Jain. 'NGT stays govt. order on felling of trees to push linear projects', *The Hindu*, 21/02/2015.

### **337 villages from nine talukas in Pune district grant no-objection to ESZ**



As many as 337 villages across nine talukas of the Pune district have granted their 'no-objection', paving the way for them to be covered under the proposed ESZ. This includes 37 villages in Ambegaon taluka, 56 in Bhore, four in Haveli, 32 in Junnar, 51 in Maval, 22 in Khed, 66 in Mulshi, nine in Purandar and 60 in Velhe. Some villagers in Mulshi and Maval talukas were reported to have expressed their reservations initially, but agreed later.

The ESZs have been demarcated after the Kasturirangan committee recommended a ban on development activities in a 60,000 sq km ecologically-sensitive zone spread over six states of Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In Maharashtra, the notification will be applicable in the districts of Ahmednagar, Dhule, Kolhapur, Nandurbar, Nashik, Pune, Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sangli, Sindhudurg, Satara and Thane.

As per the report, the biologically rich areas with some measure of contiguity are about 37% of the Western Ghats. They are considered to have high biological richness, low forest fragmentation, low population density and comprise protected areas, world heritage sites and tiger and elephant corridors. As per the environment ministry's notification, there can be no mining, quarrying, setting up of thermal plants or big building complexes in ecologically-sensitive areas as identified by the Kasturirangan committee.

The committee had recommended a no-tolerance policy with respect to highly interventionist and environmentally damaging activities like mining or polluting industries. This would also restrict activities like mining for stone and sand, atomic energy projects, construction up to 20,000 sq meters or development of townships up to 50 hectares.

Source: Nisha Nambiar. 'Eco-sensitive zones: 337 villages issue 'no-objection' certificate', *The Indian Express*, 08/05/2015.

### **The Blue Mormon is Maharashtra's 'State butterfly'**

The Blue Mormon *Papilio polymnestor* has been declared the state butterfly of Maharashtra. The decision was taken at a recent meeting of the State Wildlife Board, making Maharashtra the first state to have a state butterfly.



The Blue Mormon is a large, swallowtail butterfly found primarily in Sri Lanka the Western Ghats of Maharashtra, South India and coastal belts. It may occasionally also be spotted in the Maharashtra mainland between Vidarbha and Western Maharashtra.

Source: Omar Rashid. 'Maharashtra gets 'State butterfly' *The Hindu*, 23/06/2015.

### **State wildlife board meets sans experts, clears 11 projects**

The Maharashtra State Wildlife Board (SWB), in its meeting in June, cleared 11 projects that fall within the 10 km ESZ of a number of protected areas. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister (CM), Mr Devendra Fadnavis, and was its first meeting under the new BJP-Shiv Sena government in the state. The last meeting of the SWB had been held in February 2014 when the state was being ruled by the Congress CM, Mr Prithviraj Chavan. The new board meeting was held sans the mandatory number of eight experts. The government has appointed only two experts on the board and the meeting agenda too was given out only at the last minute.

The projects cleared by the board include, among others, the Karajkheda project in Bhandara that will irrigate 5,000 hectares (ha) of cultivable land between 22 villages. Of the 36.088 ha forest land, 32.278 ha have already been transferred to the Irrigation Department. The balance 3.81 ha in compartment number 162 was not transferred as the area was declared the Koka WLS in 2013. The state CWLW has recommended the project suggesting four overpasses to keep wildlife connected. Also cleared was the Kanhan (Kochhi barrage) in

Saoner for the purpose of irrigating 3,960 ha of agricultural land and also supplying water for drinking and to the Koradi thermal power plant. The proposed site is within 10 km of the boundary of the Mansingdeo WLS.

The board also approved deletion of the Nanded district area of Painganga WLS that is currently spread over an area of 324.62 sq km in Yavatmal and Nanded districts. Out of the total area notified, 21.19 sq km RF area along with non-forest land of 21 villages belonging to Kinwat taluka in Nanded is situated on the other bank of Painganga river, which is the boundary of these two districts. The area falling within Nanded is thickly populated and the board has cleared it for deletion from the sanctuary. The Nandur-Madhmeshwar WLS in Nashik too is being reduced from 19.63 sq km to 17.58 sq km though the irrigation department has argued that only 9.71 sq km of its land should be included in the sanctuary.

Another irrigation project approved is the Lower Dnyanganga project in Buldhana district. The project is to be implemented on 301 ha private land in Nimkawda, Kalegaon, Rohana, Warna and Diothana villages of Khamgaon. The dam site is nearly 7 km from the boundaries of Dnyanganga WLS. The CWLW recommended this proposal on the condition that the project proponent will provide 2% of the project cost to the Melghat Tiger Foundation, Amravati.

The board is reported to have rejected the simplification of the proposal for hunting wild boar and neelgai damaging crops.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Wildlife board meets sans experts, clears 11 projects', *The Times of India*, 23/06/2015.

### **Zoo, night safari to come up in Nagpur**

A zoo, a night safari, a rehabilitation centre for wild animals with facilities for veterinary



intervention, and a ‘human development trail’ that will explain human evolution are some of the facilities that are being planned at the proposed international zoo at Gorewada in Nagpur. The zoo, which will come up on 1,914 hectares of land, was first proposed in 2005. The project, which will be developed in the public-private partnership mode, was handed over to the FDCM in 2011.

FDCM authorities have informed that the project, which has an estimated cost of Rs 451 crore, will be developed in six years’ time, and that approvals from the Central Zoo Authority have already been received. A memorandum of understanding has been signed with the Maharashtra Animal and Fishery Sciences University, Nagpur, to take care of the wild animals housed there.

According to officials, quality tourist attractions like a butterfly park, African safari, bird park and a bio park will be set up, apart from a rail tour and a wildlife museum. Walking tracks and tribal village trails will also be created to enhance tourist experience.

Source: ‘India’s first night safari coming up at Nagpur’, [www.nagpurtoday.in](http://www.nagpurtoday.in), 04/06/2015.

### **14 more sniffer dogs inducted to fight wildlife crime**



14 sniffer dogs—all German Shepherds—were recently inducted in different forest and police departments in the country for the purpose of handling wildlife crime.

A ‘passing out parade’ for the dogs was recently held in Bhopal. Their induction marks a doubling of India’s strength of wildlife sniffer dogs.

The dogs will now be deployed in seven states that are home to large tiger populations: Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Karnataka. The programme, jointly funded and conducted by WWF-India and TRAFFIC, a wildlife trade-monitoring network, hopes to train even more dogs to drastically decrease wildlife poaching incidents across the country.

The training for the dogs involved a number of grueling sessions where they were trained to detect wildlife products such as tiger skins, ivory tusks and bones of endangered birds. They are also trained to locate animals that have sustained injuries, which helps authorities to get hold of poachers swiftly.

Source: Kunal Sehgal and Maria Thomas. ‘India has trained dozens of German Shepherds to protect its tigers’, [www.qz.com](http://www.qz.com), 22/06/2015.

### **TSR Subramanian report rejected by the Parliamentary Standing Committee**

A parliamentary standing committee (PSC) has rejected the high-level committee (HLC) report that reviewed various acts administered by the MoEFCC. The department-related PSC on Science & Technology chaired by Ashwani Kumar that was reviewing the HLC report has instead recommended that the government should constitute a new committee to review the laws. The report on the rejection was tabled before parliament recently. The committee noted that some of the essential recommendations made by the HLC “would result in an unacceptable dilution of the existing legal and policy architecture established to protect our environment”.

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

The HLC, chaired by former cabinet secretary TSR Subramanian, was entrusted with the task of reviewing and suggesting amendments to environment-related laws in 2014. It was required to review the EPA, 1986; the FCA, 1980; the WLPA, 1972; the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981; and the IFA, 1927 to bring them in line to their intended objectives. It was given three months for the task and the committee submitted its report in November 2014.

When the report of the HLC was taken up by the standing committee for review, it invited memoranda from various stakeholders on the recommendations made. Considering the concerns and recommendations, the standing committee noted that the three-month period given to the HLC for reviewing six environmental acts was “too short” and that “there was no cogent reason for hurrying through with the report without comprehensive, meaningful and wider consultations with all the stakeholders”.

The standing committee said further that if the “government wishes to consider specific areas of environmental policy afresh, it may consider appointing another committee by following established procedures and comprising acclaimed experts in the field who should be given enough time to enter into comprehensive consultations with all stakeholders so that the recommendations are credit worthy and well considered”.

Source: ‘Parliamentary Standing Committee rejects TSR Subramanian report on environmental laws’, *Down to Earth*, 24/07/2015.

### **State appoints four non-official members on SBWL**

The Maharashtra state government has added four non-official members on the state board for wildlife (SBWL), thus completing the quorum of six experts. The four new

non-official members are Dhananjay Bapat, owner of a resort outside the Tadoba Andhari TR, wildlife photographer, Mayur Kamath, wildlife expert, Kiran Shelar, and president of Wildlife Conservation Trust, Anish Andheria.

The SBWL had been dissolved by the BJP government before completion of its three-year tenure, which was to end in August 2016. The new board was limited to just 20 members and had included only two expert members, environmentalist, Bittu Sahgal, and social worker, Prakash Amte.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. ‘Four non-official members appointed on wildlife board’, *The Times of India*, 21/10/2015.

### **Satellite telemetry project to study vultures in Maharashtra**



The Maharashtra FD is initiating a satellite telemetry project to better study the movement and

feeding patterns of vultures in the state.

Eight vultures - four White-rumped vultures and four, Long-billed - will be tagged as part of the project that got central government approval recently. The tagged birds would be from different age groups so as to differentiate between the ranges of the adults and the fledgling birds. The project is being executed in collaboration with the Pune based Ela Foundation.

Source: Mayuri Phadnis. ‘Vulture tags to track trajectory and feeding’, *Pune Mirror*, 25/09/2015.

### **Centre sanctions Rs 10 lakh to deal with elephant depredation in Kolhapur district**

The Central Government has sanctioned Rs 10 lakh to deal with the issue of elephant

depredation in Kolhapur district. The amount will be utilised for providing vehicles to the local staff for continuous monitoring, making provision of batteries and torches and communication devices.

The elephants are said to have crossed over from neighbouring Karnataka and the impact has been most felt in the villages of Here, Kalasgade, Gudawale, Waghotre, Parle, Nagave, Kokare, Umgaon, Mali, Zambre, Bhogoli, Pilani, Kanoor, Kalgondwadi and Buzawade that are located close to the forest areas. Villagers are reported to have said that revenue and forest officials were taking very long to assess the damages suffered by the farmers, besides providing very low compensation.

According to the CCF (Wildlife), Kolhapur division, a detailed technical report has already been submitted to the state government regarding the elephant problem - their route and behavioural patterns, choice of crops frequently raided and variation in response to measures undertaken for keeping them away from the fields.

Source: 'Centre approves 10L for elephant-hit areas', *The Times of India*, 09/12/2015.

### **NGOs seek public hearing over proposed Smart City project of Amravati; fear over impact on proposed PA**

Various NGOs including the Satpuda Foundation, Wildlife and Environment Conservation Society, Youth for Nature Conservation, Deesha Foundation and Nature Protection and Wildlife Conservation Society have urged the Amravati Municipal Corporation to hold an environmental public hearing before moving ahead with the proposed Smart City project.

They have expressed fears over the possibility of increased human-animal conflict if the proposed Smart City comes up on the boundary of the Pohara-Malkhed RF in the Benoda-Jewad area of Amravati

city. They say the environment of the city depends on the Pohara-Malkhed forest and Chhattri and Wadali tanks. A proposal of declaring this forest as a wildlife sanctuary or a conservation reserve is also under consideration.

They have also pointed out that the hilly region of Benoda-Jewad is a watershed for groundwater in east Amravati. If the Smart City came up here, it would adversely affect the natural water storage of the city and groundwater water level too would be affected.

Source: 'Greens fret over Smart City near Amravati forest', *The Times of India*, 08/12/2015.

### **State proposes enhanced punishment for poaching**

The Maharashtra government has proposed to the Centre to enhance punishment for poaching wild animals to a jail sentence of 10 years and a fine of Rs five lakh. The existing punishment under the WLPA is seven years in jail along with a fine of Rs 25,000. The information was provided in the state assembly recently by the state forest minister, Mr Sudhir Mungantiwar. He was responding to a query pertaining to the NTCA's claim of 41 tiger deaths within a span of seven months from January 2015 in the state. It claimed that apart from natural deaths, the tigers were being killed due to their increasing intrusion into human habitations and that they were even administered poison.

The minister said that the government has moved a proposal to amend the WLPA. It has also deployed the 'Special Tiger Protection Force' at Gondia, Nawegaon-Nagzira, Melghat and Tadoba to curb poaching. The government has, additionally, issued a resolution on providing four times the current compensation payable to villagers for lands acquired for wildlife sanctuaries.

## State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra

Listing other measures, the minister said that watch-towers were erected at many places, wireless surveillance systems had been installed and camera traps had been set up at water holes and sensitive places to monitor tiger movement. Vehicles entering forest areas are being thoroughly checked and sniffer dogs are being pressed into service at railway and bus stations, markets and other sensitive places to detect illegal trade of animals' body parts.

In reply to another query on tiger poaching incidents at Umred-Karhandla WLS, the minister added that all efforts were made to increase their prey base in the forests so that the tigers would not intrude into human habitations.

Source: Vaibhav Ganjapure. 'State for tougher punishment to poachers', *The Times of India*, 15/12/2015.

### Eco-tourism board to boost tourism in PAs in state



The Maharashtra government has approved the establishment of an eco-tourism board, which will work to boost tourism in the state's protected areas. The board, which will be on the lines of those in other states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Karnataka, will frame a comprehensive plan for the development of tourism in these areas, ensure conservation and involve local communities in an effort to boost employment. A decision in this regard was taken by the state cabinet recently.

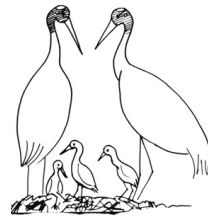
To be called the Maharashtra Eco-tourism Development Board, it will be headquartered at Nagpur. It will be headed by the State Forest Minister with the executive committee to be chaired by the PCCF.

The objectives of the board will include development of tourism infrastructure

like guesthouses and lodges, publicity, conservation of bio-diversity, forests, wildlife and education. It will also involve locals for the management of these areas, creation of homestays, and providing food, vehicles, guides for tourists and build their capacity.

Source: Dhaval Kulkarni. 'New board to boost Maharashtra tourism in protected areas' *DNA*, 12/12/2015.

### Population of Sarus crane rises in Gondia district



The population of the Sarus crane has shown a dramatic revival in the Gondia and Bhandara districts of Maharashtra. From five birds in 2004, the population of the crane is currently reported to be 35 in the Gondia district. The birds are mostly found in paddy fields in and around Paraswada, Zhilmili and Ghattemani villages.

A large flock of 24 birds was spotted here in February 2014 – the biggest since 1970 when there was a report of a flock of 32 cranes in Nawegaon Bandh. The bird is reported to have completely vanished, however, from Gothangaon, near Nawegaon Bandh, where they used to be sighted regularly. The main cause for their dwindling numbers is said to be the large-scale use of pesticides in farming and also habitat destruction.

A month-long tourism festival has been conceptualized and organized by the District Tourism Committee, Gondia, in the name of the bird to showcase the species and the threats it is facing. Starting in the month of December, it focuses on wildlife, adventure, archaeological and heritage and religious tourism circuits in Gondia district.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'From 5 in 2004, Gondia's saras count is 35 now', *The Times of India*, 19/12/2015.

# **SECTION 2**

## **Analysis and Perspective**



## 1) Media Reporting on Protected Areas in Maharashtra: A Thematic Analysis\*

Trupthi Narayan<sup>1</sup> and Pankaj Sekhsaria<sup>2</sup>

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Reporting of wildlife conservation issues in India takes place across national, state and regional levels as well as in several languages. Many conservation news sites on the internet are also dedicated to reporting conservation issues and bringing them into the mainstream discourse. As one of the main sources of wildlife-related information for the public, conservation reporting in the media holds immense power in influencing not just public opinion, but also that of decision makers and interest groups (Barua, 2010). Reporting related to wildlife or conservation issues in mainstream newspapers has to compete for space with several other topics such as politics, sports and financial affairs; hence news stories are filtered, and only those that are considered relevant to the consuming population make it to print. This inevitably results in conscious and unconscious biases in the selection of conservation news for everyday consumption. Studies have shown that issues involving conflict and drama are considered more 'newsworthy' and are therefore more likely to be reported (Cook, 1998; Shoemaker and Reese, 1991).

It has been shown that reporters often approach stories with unconscious biases to reinforce their view—such as interviewing

sources who they know will confirm their ideas as opposed to more open minded research (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991). The media as an actor can also play a substantial role in the amplification or attenuation of perceptions of risk (Bhatia, Athreya, Grenyer, and Macdonald, 2013) and it becomes important, therefore, to understand and analyze themes in media coverage on issues relating to conservation.

Very few systematic analyses of conservation reporting in India have been carried out to understand media portrayal of wildlife issues and their impact. The previous studies have mainly focussed on reporting of human-wildlife conflict/interaction in India: Barua (2010) looked at human-elephant conflict, while Bhatia et al. (2013) at human-leopard conflict and the disaster framing approach. The others include an analysis of media reporting of the Kaziranga National Park in Assam based on news in the *PA Update* for the period 1996-2011 (Siddiqui and Reddi, 2012), and a study that uses media reporting in the state of Karnataka to build a profile of leopard presence and range (V. Athreya et al., 2015).

This chapter is an account and an analysis of media reporting of issues related to wildlife conservation and protected areas (PAs) in the state of Maharashtra, India, as reported in the

\* This is a slightly abridged and edited version of Narayan and Sekhsaria (2019). 'Media Reporting on the Protected Areas of Maharashtra, India: A Thematic Analysis', in *Journal of Threatened Taxa*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (13360–13376)

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English media between 1994 and 2015. It presents, perhaps, the only such longitudinal study of its kind for the state of Maharashtra and one among the very few for any region or theme in India.

The analysis is based on a set of 269 reports that were first carried in the media and then edited for publication in the *Protected Area Update (PA Update)* and which constitute Section 1 of this book.

### **The Protected Area Update<sup>3</sup>**

The *PA Update* was initiated as the *Joint Protected Area Management Update (JPAM Update)* in the year 1994 (“JPAM Update -1,” 1994; Kothari, 2012). The name was changed to the current *Protected Area Update (PA Update)* in 1999 (“PA Update - 21,” 1999) in response to the kind of news that was being received and also based on feedback from readers.

The newsletter itself is a collection of news stories related to PAs appearing in major English language dailies around the country that have been collated and edited before being put together in a pre-determined format. The *PA Update* is a one-of-a-kind anthology of conservation reporting in India, including news reports and information from the pre-internet and pre-online newspaper era. It offers, on that count, an important resource to understand the nature, both of conservation challenges, as also of the relationship between conservation issues and the media. That being said, there are a few caveats regarding the choice of news carried in the newsletter and, by implication, on the analysis and inferences drawn here.

Firstly, the reporting in the *PA Update* is almost entirely secondary—it publishes

only a selection of news that has already appeared in English newspapers, magazines and, increasingly, on online news sites. There is also a critical gate-keeping function performed by the editorial team, particularly by the editor, in the choice of news that goes into the newsletter. There is also a significant amount of editing the stories go through before they are re-published. There is a broad set of unwritten criteria-of-relevance that influences which news is included and then edited. This choice is made by the editor, leading, most certainly, to selection biases. An effort has also been made to draw attention to the existence of this selection bias and its influence at relevant places in the analysis.

It is important, in the general context, to bear in mind that relevance and criteria for selection of news is a hugely subjective process and this has been discussed extensively in the literature in media studies (cf. Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009). This subjectivity is difficult to explicate beyond a point, but some of its clearly identifiable dimensions in this case have been listed below to make this more explicit:

- a) The two main sources for news on Maharashtra in the context of the *PA Update* have been *The Times of India* and *The Indian Express*. This is not surprising because these are the most prominent and widely read English newspapers published from Pune, where the editorial office of the *PA Update* is located. This is visible in the stories in this collection from the very beginning. The other publication that is prominently accessed, particularly for the latter half of the period covered in this chapter is the newspaper *DNA*. This may be explained by the fact that

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3. The print version of the newsletter is currently sent to about 2000 individuals and another 2000 receive it in pdf format via a dedicated electronic mailing list - <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/paupdate>. The newsletter is also hosted on a number of websites (e.g. [www.wii.gov.in](http://www.wii.gov.in) and [www.kalpavriksh.org](http://www.kalpavriksh.org)) and also has a dedicated Facebook page.



a Mumbai edition of the newspaper was started in the year 2005 and there was a Pune edition as well for the period 2008–14. The other newspapers (and their websites) that news has been accessed from include *The Hitavada*, *Hindustan Times*, *Business Line*, *The Pioneer* and *The Hindu*. The numbers, however, are significantly lower as compared to the three newspapers mentioned earlier.

- b) For about the first eight years (1994–2002), news carried in the *PA Update* was mainly sourced from two different types of sources; the first being the Pune print editions of two prominent newspapers, *The Times of India* and *the Indian Express* mentioned above, and the second being the informal network of researchers, NGOs and forest officials who sent news to the *PA Update* directly from the field.
- c) This changed from 2003 onward. The spread of the internet is reflected in the fact that a small but noticeable number of stories in the newsletter are being accessed from the web editions of newspapers like *The Times of India*. There is also a considerable decline in the news accessed directly from the field and from the informal network referred to above.
- d) The year 2007 marks the first set of stories accessed from the *Hindustan Times* and from *DNA*. This may be explained, perhaps, by the fact that both the papers started their Mumbai editions in 2005. This meant a larger coverage of issues in Maharashtra in these newspapers and also easier access to this content in Pune where the editorial office of the *PA Update* is located.
- e) This period also marks a near complete shift in accessing of news from the print versions of the newspapers to, now, their online editions. What is worth noting, however, is that the sources remain virtually the same, with *The Times of India*

being the most prominent followed by *The Indian Express* and the *DNA*.

The editor also makes a choice of news that is considered more relevant and more important for inclusion in the newsletter. Some non-exhaustive, illustrative examples of the same are listed below:

- a) An individual news item on poaching was generally not considered for inclusion unless it marked a new development (poaching in a new area or using a new method) or if it was part of a prominent trend that had larger policy or intervention implications (one more animal killed in the same area over a long period of time).
- b) Based on the experience of regularly compiling and editing the newsletter, individual PAs that had received relatively less coverage in preceding years were picked up on a priority as and when this information was available.
- c) Stories about certain issues like encroachments in the Sanjay Gandhi NP, human-tiger conflict in the Tadoba Andhari TR or denotification in the case of the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary virtually auto-selected themselves because they were developing stories. These were deemed important by the editor to give the reader a full and continued sense of the issues and have, in all probability, also contributed to their prominence in the retrospective analysis that is sought to be done here.

What is important to note here, and indeed to reiterate, is that the *PA Update* does not cover the entire universe of media reportage of PAs, but offers only an important subset. Our primary contention, and indeed the foundational assumption of this analysis, is that the *PA Update* is a good proxy for reporting on PAs that is seen in the media. The subset that makes up the *PA Update* is on that account a good representation of that full universe of media coverage because of the specific nature of this newsletter:

- a) its uninterrupted publication over a substantially long period of more than 20 years,
- b) its regular publication every two months, and
- c) the focussed nature of its news interest—the PAs.

The conclusions that we draw, therefore, are not (can not) be definitive and conclusive. What we seek to present here is more in the nature of trends and patterns and initial insights that can be the base for a larger engagement and understanding of both the nature of the media in general and of conservation-related reporting in particular.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Of the press reports that appeared in the *PA Update* between the years 1994 and 2015, 269 pertained to Maharashtra. These are the news reports that make up the first half of this book. This chapter uses thematic analysis as its methodology for textual interpretation. This allows us to understand the underlying subjects within media content and is also exploratory while being realistic or fact-based (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). This method also lends itself to usage across various kinds of data that may or may not have been collected explicitly for the purpose of analysis. Thematic analysis is a foundational, flexible qualitative analytical method for identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It comprises the identification of patterns, themes or ‘categories’ across an entire data set, which, in this case, was the set of 269 media stories (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Tuckett, 2005).

‘Themes’ as they are described and identified in this study are the smallest units of data representation in the perspective of the researcher: “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is

defined as “a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998).

The data does not inherently ‘contain’ themes—it is the researcher that identifies and teases out themes from the data iteratively; hence, qualitative analyses such as these are subjective and dependent on the individual researcher/s (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Inductive thematic analysis, the method chosen for this paper, is similar to grounded theory in that themes are allowed to arise out of the data by themselves—they are ‘data-driven’—without trying to fit the themes into pre-conceived baskets. This was also better suited to this research paper since the data items were not collected primarily for this project as may have been the case with, say, focussed group discussions or interviews, or a retrospective effort at gathering data along particular themes or with a particular research question in mind.

The identification of themes is of two kinds: semantic or latent, the latter also being referred to as narratology (Boyatzis, 1998). Semantic analysis would be purely text-based, while latent analysis goes one step further in interpreting the data to pick out themes. Interpretation of the data was more useful in the case of this chapter. For example, a story about the discovery of snares in the forest would be classified as poaching, even if the word ‘poaching’ did not appear anywhere in the story. Thematic analysis at the latent level “starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations” (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The theme may be ‘big’ or ‘small’ in terms of size, and may recur often or just appear in one or two instances. Prevalence of a theme is counted as the number of appearances that a theme makes through the data corpus. In this case, a theme could appear in a particular data item, i.e. a news report, only once, while each news report could contain multiple themes.

For this chapter, we first collated all the news stories and classified them according to the PA

they referenced. As a first step, we familiarized ourselves with the data by getting a sense of the way headlines were constructed, the meta-data such as the coverage per PA and sources. We then went over the data multiple times, going back and forth each time, noting the themes that seemed to emerge from the stories.

At the end of the first ‘pass,’ these themes were coded and clusters emerged. Here, we define ‘pass’ as one round of examination of the entire data corpus of 269 stories resulting in a list of themes per data item or news story; multiple passes were made through the data to arrive at the deductions presented. We then went over the data repeatedly until ‘new’ themes stopped emerging and there was consistency in the themes identified, across passes. We then curated the coded themes. We then also summed and tabulated these themes in an attempt to showcase them graphically. Within thematic analysis, the frequency of themes may be used as a “proxy for significance” but with plenty of caution (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). In this study, while the most ‘important’ themes are the ones that occur most frequently, themes are also significant for their absence or rarity. We see a range of patterns emerging that are elaborated upon further.

Our analysis reveals three key points: a) Unequal attention—where certain PAs and issues get more news coverage while others get very little or no media attention at all; b) Unique themes—that certain themes occur frequently only in the case of certain PAs, indicating the local factors that may be most important to that PA and c) emergence of broad key themes as well as actors across the full data set here.

These are discussed in detail in the following sections followed by a case-study style detailed analysis of the two PAs in the state that were most frequently covered in the *PA Update*: the Sanjay Gandhi NP and the Tadoba Andhari TR.

### 3. ARGUMENTS

#### 3.1 Unequal attention

News from 33 PAs<sup>4</sup> in Maharashtra was carried in the *PA Update* between 1994 and 2015. That some PAs get greater media attention while most others are ignored by the press, tourists and policy makers alike, would come as no surprise to those who follow conservation reporting. It is similar in Maharashtra with the Sanjay Gandhi NP in Mumbai accounting for about a quarter of all stories in the state (n=62). A reasonable conjecture is that the proximity of the park to a city of high population density, media outlets and the urban English language news-reading public is primarily responsible for this. The other notable factor is the coverage that is accorded to the tiger reserves in the state.

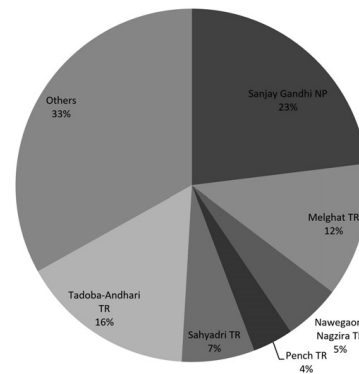


Figure 1.1: *Share of news stories per PA between 1994 and 2015*  
(Total number of stories: 269)

4. The master list of PAs used for this analysis has been accessed from the website of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII, 2017).
5. TRs often comprise one or more PAs. In the case of this article, we have clubbed news items of individual PAs under the TR that these PAs constitute and that partly explains why TRs show a larger number of news reports against their name.

### 3.1.1 Tiger reserves in focus

Apart from the SGNP, it is the state's six tiger reserves<sup>5</sup> that attract maximum media attention. Tadoba-Andhari TR, located in Chandrapur district, is the largest and oldest tiger reserve in Maharashtra and accounts for 16% (n = 43) of all news stories, second only to SGNP. Melghat (n=33), Pench (n=10) and Nawegaon-Nagzira (n=14), which lie along the state's north-eastern boundaries and form an important contiguous tiger habitat in the central Indian landscape, are also reported on more than the others. Bor TR was, until 2014, a wildlife sanctuary and has recently been accorded the status of a tiger reserve. It provides important habitat connectivity between the north-eastern tiger belt and the Tadoba-Andhari TR. The Sahyadri TR (n=18) is Maharashtra's only tiger reserve in the Western Ghats. It was formed by combining the Koyna and Chandoli NPs, so the media stories pertaining to this reserve also combine the older stories related to these two parks (see footnote 5).

These six tiger reserves in Maharashtra account for a significant 45% of all news stories over the last twenty years. It is also significant to note that although several tiger

reserves are composed of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, many of the individual PAs did not attract much media attention until they were accorded the status of tiger reserves. Tigers and tiger reserves attract the bulk of conservation funding and research attention. The charismatic large cat is also the main draw for a large number of local and international tourists, and this appears to allow (or perhaps necessitates?) more media coverage. (Menon, 2016; Patra, 2010; "Where tiger is king!," 2015).

### 3.1.2: Unequal coverage

Some 15 PAs were not reported on at all or were covered very marginally in the *PA Update*. Even 40-year-old parks such as the Gugamal NP<sup>6</sup> in Amaravati district did not find a single mention, and neither did the Malvan Marine Sanctuary.

Other PAs in this under-reported category were the Ambabarwa WLS, Aner Dam WLS, Bhamragarh WLS, Chaprala WLS, Karanjasohol WLS, Katepurna WLS, Mayureswar Supe WLS, Naigaon Mayur WLS, Narnala WLS, Painganga WLS, Phansad WLS, Wan WLS and Yedsi Ramlinghat WLS. These PAs are, in a sense, conspicuous by their absence. While understanding or analyzing

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Melghat TR is one of the first tiger reserves in India and was constituted in 1974. It was enlarged in 2007 by combining the Gugamal NP, Narnala WLS, Ambabarwa WLS, Wan WLS and the Melghat WLS (WII, 2016). (<http://melghattiger.gov.in/documents/MTR.pdf>)

Nawegaon-Nagzira TR was created in 2013 and includes the Nawegaon WLS, Nawegaon NP, Nagzira WLS, New Nagzira WLS and the Koka WLS (WII, 2016). Stories from all these PAs have been clubbed together under the Nawegaon- Nagzira TR.

Pench TR was created in 2007 and includes the Indira Priyadarshini Pench NP and Pench Mowgli Sanctuary.

Sahyadri TR was created in 2012 and spreads over an area of 1165 sq km. The Chandoli WLS, Chandoli NP and Koyna WLS are now included in the Sahyadri TR and all stories from these PAs are included in this section

6. Melghat TR of which Gugamal NP is a part does get considerable media coverage as has been noted already. The point here is that Gugamal as an independent entity has received little if any attention at all.

the reasons for this is beyond the scope of this particular paper, the absence needs to be understood and an explanation of the dynamics involved would be as important as it would be instructive.

### **3.2 PA-centric unique themes**

The thematic analysis shows further that most PAs were associated with themes and issues that were unique to them. While PAs like the Sanjay Gandhi NP and the Tadoba-Andhari TR that get wider coverage do have more multi-faceted reporting, each individual PA is characterized by a few themes that run through most of the stories related to them (see Table 1.1 for prominent themes associated with specific PAs).

#### **3.2.1 Understanding the associations**

Our analysis suggests that specific PA-related issues exist at two broad levels. While it is clear on the one hand that themes with a socio-political dimension such as conflict, displacement and tourism get more traction in the media, individual PAs do have unique issues related to the human dimensions and cultural forces at play in that space.

In the case of the Bhimashankar WLS, for example, the presence of the Shiva temple inside the sanctuary and the resulting pilgrimages and religious tourism appear to be one of the prime management issues here (cf. Mavinkurve, 1999; Shinde, 2009), while in the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary, issues of denotification attracted maximum reportage (Pinjarkar, 2011). In the case of Matheran, the positioning of the hill station as an attractive tourist destination, the resulting developmental pressures and its

conservation status as an ESZ, were the issues most relevant in the reporting (Balaram, 2002; Vyas, 2012). In the case of the Melghat TR, as with all other tiger reserves in the state, the displacement of local people and ensuing discord emerges repeatedly in the media as the tropes that are most significantly associated with them (cf. Negi, 2011; “Resettlement of Melghat evacuees discussed,” 1999).

The Melghat and Nawegaon-Nagzira TRs also reported the highest incidences of poaching of tigers over the past twenty years (cf. Deshpande, 2015; Pinjarkar, 2014). It would be interesting to co-relate these features with actual incidences of poaching in these tiger reserves to see whether media reporting is reflective of the actual proportion of these incidents.

Themes were also seen to have an important temporal dimension, appearing as they did in several consecutive stories about respective PAs before fading away and being replaced by another thematic focus. Possibly, the media follows a case until its resolution before the next issue crops up. This was seen most prominently in the case of the Sanjay Gandhi NP with the reportage moving from issues of land, encroachment and relocation in the first few years to issues of developmental threats, linear intrusions and human-wildlife conflict for the period 2010–15. Significantly, issues of encroachment and re-location were conspicuous by their absence in this period (see Figure 1.5 for the changing focus and theme of reporting in the case of SGNP). As the vast majority of the stories are event- or conflict-based, these trends in media reporting may actually follow the current threats faced by particular PAs.

*State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

<b>PA</b>	<b>No. of stories</b>	<b>Top themes</b>
Sanjay Gandhi NP	62	Encroachment, tourism, human-wildlife conflict
Tadoba-Andhari TR	43	Local communities, displacement, human-wildlife conflict, zoning, funding
Melghat TR	33	Local communities, poaching, research
Sahyadri TR	18	Displacement, local communities, developmental activities
Nawegaon-Nagzira TR	14	Local communities, administration
Bhimashankar WLS	13	Religion, tourism, pollution, awareness
Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary	11	Denotification of land, conservation, awareness
Pench TR	10	Displacement, local communities, animal relocation
Matheran ESZ	7	Land (declaration as ESZ), zoning, tourism, pollution
Tungreshwar WLS	6	Animal relocation, encroachment, institutional non co-operation, religion
Karnala WLS	5	Linear intrusion (widening of NH17), encroachment
Mahabaleshwar ESZ	5	Zoning, administration, tourism
Mansingdeo WLS	5	Land (notification), institutional non co-operation
Radhanagari WLS	4	Mining, animal relocation
Sewri Wetlands	4	Developmental activity (sea link), land

Table 1.1: *List of PAs with 4 or more news reports along with the most recurrent themes in order of frequency.*

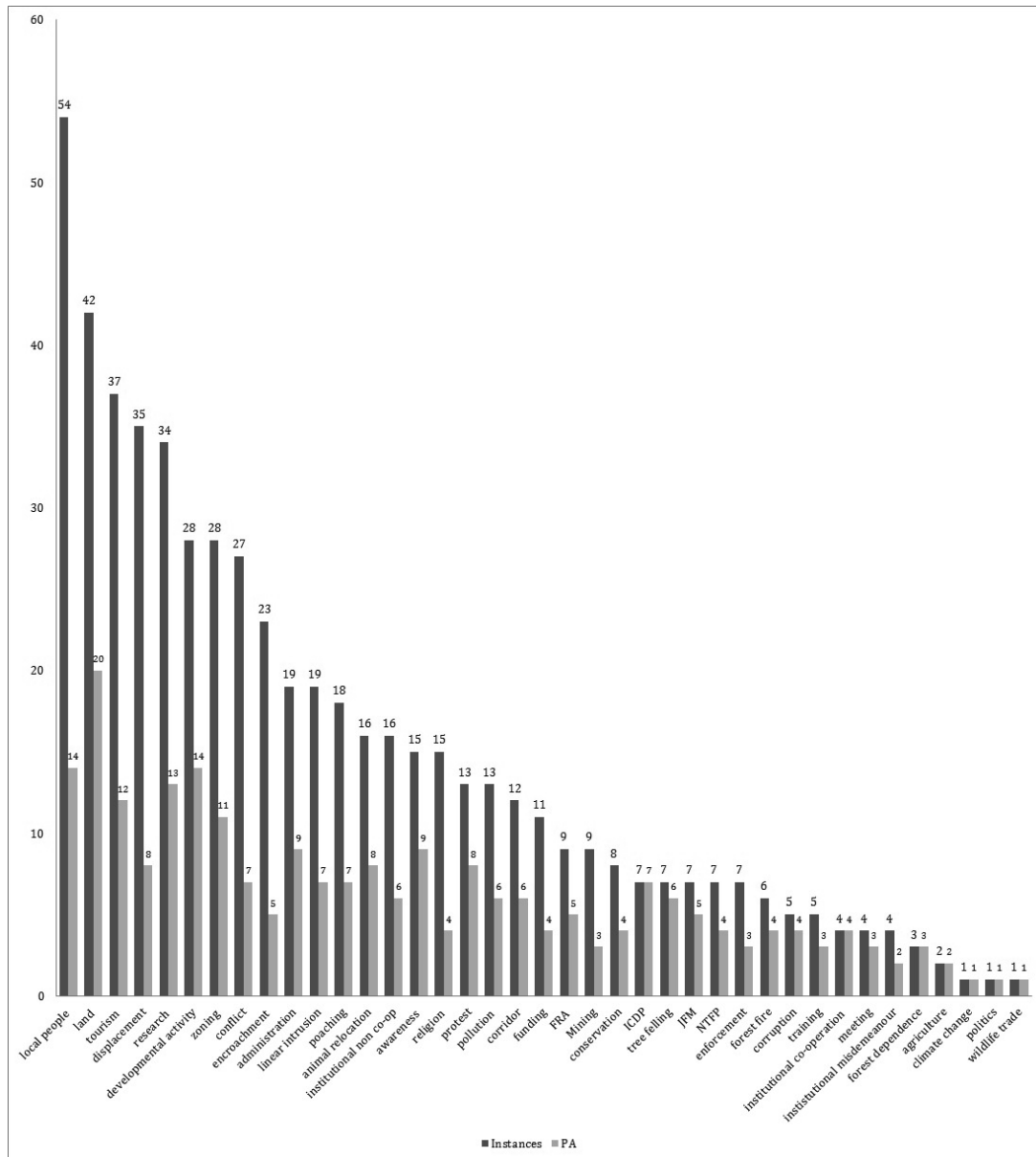


Figure 1.2: Themes in media reporting (PA) and the number of stories in which they appear (instances).

### 3.3 Themes in the reportage

Press coverage of PAs in Maharashtra has touched on a number of themes over the years. Our analysis suggests 39 themes, the most common of which in order of frequency were: local people, land, tourism, displacement, research and developmental activity, zoning, human-wildlife conflict and encroachment. We reiterate that due to the latent nature of this analysis, the identification of themes is

subjective. A ‘theme’ was considered to be the smallest unit of a subject that was touched upon in the news report. Several of the 39 themes ‘overlap’ or are inter-related.

We see, for example, that although most of the stories about local people were related to their displacement, displacement is still a unique theme in itself as it is distinct from the topic of local people, although associated with it in nearly all instances. So, news reports discussing

the displacement of local people would be tagged under both themes: displacement as well as local people. Zoning is closely related to the theme of land, yet we have tried to make a subtle distinction between, for example, stories about declaration of buffer zones or disputes on mining in core or buffer areas of reserves with reports that were more distinctly land related such as notification of new sanctuaries. The attempt has been to remain consistent throughout our data analysis.

The graph (Figure 1.2) shows the number of stories in which a particular theme occurred as well as the number of PAs from which these themes were reported. For example, ‘encroachment’ was a highly concentrated theme, while ‘land’ was distributed across PAs. (Figure 1.3 below shows the details of all the themes emerging as important in the course of this analysis of media reporting of PAs in Maharashtra).

In the section that follows we go into further detail of key themes—‘local people,’ ‘land,’ ‘tourism,’ ‘displacement,’ ‘research,’ ‘developmental projects’ and ‘conflict’—that appeared in our analysis.

### 3.3.1 Local People

The most common theme that emerges in this analysis is related to ‘local people,’ featuring as it does in 20% of the entire reportage. These stories were mainly concerned with the displacement of tribals and villagers from within PAs. The reports speak of traditional forest dwellers and inhabitants of villages inside or bordering parks being relocated and recounts the negotiations, protests and legal consultations that were an inevitable part of this. We see this most obviously in the case of the Sanjay Gandhi NP and in TRs such as Melghat and Tadoba Andhari. The tone of the reportage is heavily biased in favour of local people. Several of these stories also feature political parties, NGOs and the courts, and present their roles in the displacement debate. It is also noteworthy that two-thirds of these stories about local people were related to the tiger reserves.

Other stories relating to ‘local people’ reported incidents of human-wildlife conflict, discussed joint forest management practices and poaching. Here we must mention that ‘encroachment’ as a theme is separate in our

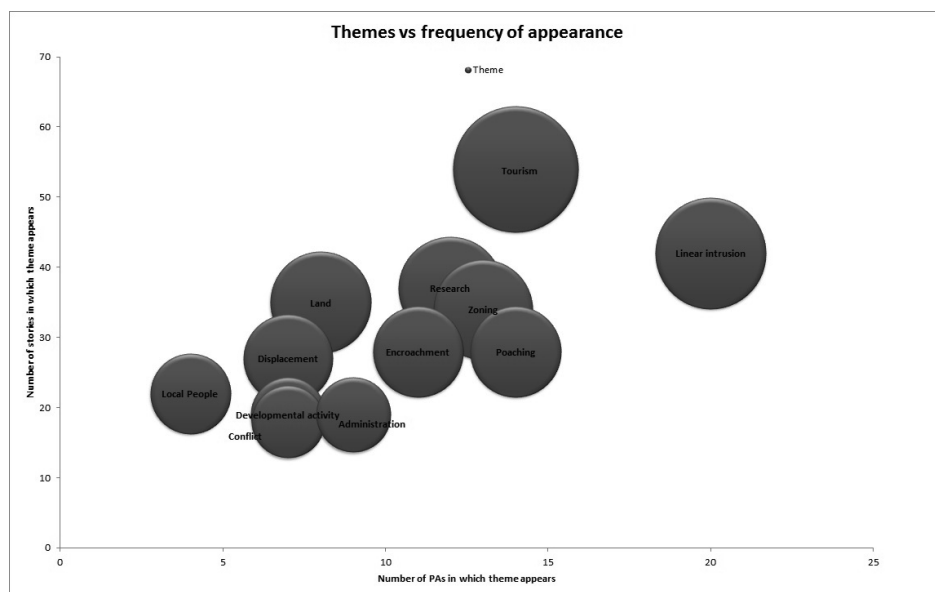


Figure 1.3: Most frequently occurring themes, with the X axis indicating how ‘widespread’ the theme was across PAs, and the Y axis indicating the frequency of appearance of the theme.



analysis. Encroachment was used mostly to describe (as reported in the stories) “slum dwellers” (cf. “Court prods govt. on Borivili park settlers,” 1999; Singh, 2000) ‘squatting’ inside the Sanjay Gandhi NP or other illegal structures that unlawfully utilized forest land.

Some other themes that emerge as closely related to the topic of local people include the FRA, dealing mainly with the interactions between the local people and authorities with regard to settlement of rights and land titles (Pinjarkar, 2013; Upadhyay, 2013) and JFM (Joint Forest Management), and describe meetings and workshops for integrated forest management.

### **3.3.2 Land**

With India’s PA network being a dynamic, evolving scene of negotiations, protests and legal interventions, land emerged as the second most important theme in our analysis. The theme of ‘land’ cropped up in 42 of the 269 stories and was the single most common theme across PAs, featuring in stories related to 20 PAs in the state. Most of the reporting detailed the notification (n=26) and denotification (n=10) of PAs or parts of the PAs. This is mainly due to the denotification of large parts of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) sanctuary (from 8,496 sq km to 1222 sq km) (Pinjarkar, 2011) and the notification of several new PAs, for example in Vidarbha, in lieu of this denotification (“Vidarbha gets three new sanctuaries,” 2012).

Other ‘land’ related stories discussed the encroachment of forestland, ‘go’ and ‘no-go’ areas for developmental activities and the declaration of buffer areas. ‘Zoning’ as a theme overlapped considerably in that the declaration of buffer or eco-sensitive zones or even the boundaries of PAs were crucial to the discourse on land usage. Several of the other themes could be shown to be primarily related to these contentions over space: ‘displacement,’ ‘encroachment,’ ‘zoning,’ ‘human-wildlife conflict,’ ‘linear intrusions’

and ‘developmental activities’ are all themes concerning the various approaches to land use in the country and this can even be seen influencing and being influenced by the other themes.

### **3.3.3 Developmental projects**

A major debate in India has been one that pitches conservation against development and ‘developmental projects’. Such activities proposed or implemented inside PAs include, mostly, dams or power plants, but also airports (Thane creek sanctuary, Karnala WLS), the sea link (Sewri Wetlands), pipelines (SGNP) or irrigation projects. Their impacts and related concerns were reported widely and this was one of the three most wide-spread themes reported from across PAs.

The narrative followed a similar trajectory in all the cases: proposal of the infrastructure/project, the opposition to it from environmentalists and local people and also the legal battles. The resulting institutional confrontation also garnered considerable notice with the courts and National Green Tribunal featuring often. Here, again, the tone was largely biased against the developmental activity, although this may also be a case of bias of the *PA Update* editorial position.

A breakdown of this theme reveals that about half the reports on developmental activities were related to water-related infrastructure including dams and irrigation projects, numbering 13 out of the total 24 reports. The other topics included the sea link off the coast of Mumbai, windmills, airports and pipelines.

We would like to note that the theme of development projects here does not include reports related to ‘mining,’ (n=9), and ‘linear intrusions’ that include roads, highways and electric lines (n=19). It is obvious that if clubbed together these ‘development projects’ would constitute the dominant discourse, and, could be considered as one of the biggest challenges before the PAs in Maharashtra and by extension across the country.

### 3.3.4 Displacement

‘Displacement’ was the fourth most frequently reported theme with 35 reports discussing displacement-related issues. As noted earlier, the theme of displacement is closely related to the theme of land and local people since it is local people that are displaced from PAs. Perhaps the human interest angle of this topic affords greater interest for the media. Another closely related theme is ‘protest,’ with several media reports describing the clash between the local people and authorities over displacement from their settlements. Up to 22 of the 35 stories (63%) with the theme displacement were from the tiger reserves. This raises some important questions that we would like to flag for further research and analysis. Do tiger reserves get wider news coverage thus skewing the statistics just because of their status as tiger reserves? Or is there greater engagement with local people within tiger reserves due to greater scrutiny and better funding? Or is it possible that there is greater pressure on authorities to move local people out because of greater prestige and visibility associated with a tiger reserve?

### 3.3.5 Conflict

Up to 27 news reports from Maharashtra were related to human-wildlife conflict and these came from just seven PAs, making this one of the most concentrated themes<sup>7</sup>. More than 80% (n=22) of these reports came from just two PAs: the Sanjay Gandhi NP and the Tadoba Andhari TR. In the SGNP this was related to presence and/or sighting of leopards in human habitations in and around the park, while in TATR this was related to attacks on humans by tigers.

While there is some analysis and understanding now on the genesis of these conflicts, a full knowledge of the reasons and the patterns are not available. In the case of leopard-related conflict in and around SGNP it has been established, for example, that capture of leopards and their relocation to areas that they are not familiar with results in an increase of conflict incidents. Media advocacy and awareness work by researchers in association with authorities has had a significant impact in SGNP and could be a model to be followed in other parts of the country too (Vidya Athreya and Belsare, 2007; Keddie, 2014).

### 3.3.6 Research

Although research features as one of the more commonly appearing themes in the analysis, it is important to note that most of the reports about research are from just three PAs—Sanjay Gandhi NP, and the Tadoba Andhari and Melghat TRs. These PAs account for nearly 75% of all news stories pertaining to this theme. This is in spite of a clear editorial bias in the *PA Update* in favour of publishing reports about research that feature in the media, particularly those on less charismatic species such as insects and plants. Most of the research-related reports deal with the results of censuses conducted in the PAs.

### 3.3.7 Other themes

Apart from the themes discussed above, we would also like to point to the topic of institutional relationships, particularly with and between governmental actors. The media appeared to be keen on highlighting the perceived inefficiency of the bureaucratic machinery with several stories featuring squabbles amongst the forest, revenue,

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7. It is likely that a negative editorial bias in the matter of human-wildlife conflict reflects a lesser focus on this issue in the *PA Update* than would be seen in the media in general. The negative bias here is related to non-inclusion in the newsletter of stories of individual instances of conflict. The editorial focus has been on reporting stories when they show existing or emerging trends or where incidents and events even if solitary or isolated are significant on account of new information, new kind of development or a new trend.

railways, tribal development and even irrigation departments. Topics related to administration, and including themes such as corruption, training and institutional non co-operation or co-operation and institutional misdemeanours accounted for about a tenth of the news coverage.

Finally, the narrative focused largely on socio-political issues with the issue of scientific matters being conspicuous by its absence. While there was plenty of newsprint dedicated to the opposition to developmental activities, the impacts of these projects were described rather superficially. The importance of corridors, for instance, was stressed in numerous reports without explaining the ecological significance.

The main types of ‘animal-centric’ stories that were reported, apart from poaching, were those concerned with the results of wildlife surveys, followed by those reporting wild animal relocations, whether due to overcrowding of zoos, or due to human-wildlife conflict. (See Figure 1.2 for a full breakdown and details of the themes in reports in the *PA Update*).

### **3.3.8 Most important actors**

An analysis of the key actors involved in the issues reveals the FD and local communities as being the most significant. NGOs were also frequently mentioned. It will be interesting to study whether this is because of the proportionate involvement of the NGOs in conservation issues, editorial bias of the *PA Update* in the choice of stories (that the newsletter itself is an NGO publication), or because NGOs often partner with the media in order to amplify their concerns and actions, thereby getting more publicity in spite of limited resources. We need to emphasize here that we use the term ‘actor’ to indicate that an entity is ‘involved’; it is not an use of the term to show a hierarchy as in the power to cause an action. A situation where a ‘villager kills a leopard’ is treated symmetrically as one where a ‘leopard kills a villager’.

The tiger was undoubtedly the most-featured ‘wildlife actor,’ and was mentioned in about 15% (n=41) of all the news reports. It was followed by the leopard with 23 instances. These two charismatic cats featured in half of all the stories that mentioned animal species validating, one might argue, the discourse on charismatic megafauna. Another prominent issue is that of tiger poaching while the poaching of other wildlife goes largely ignored.

Having presented a broad overview of the reportage and the themes that (don’t) appear we now shift our focus to a detailed analysis of the two most reported PAs in Maharashtra: the Sanjay Gandhi NP and the Tadoba Andhari TR.

## **3.4 Case studies**

### **3.4.1 Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP)**

The Sanjay Gandhi National Park has been an important and indeed, a contested landscape element for the city of Mumbai for a long time. Located in the suburbs of this sprawling metropolis, the forests have been an important water source for the city since the 19th century. It was later expanded by the erstwhile Bombay Municipal Corporation when it came to be known, first, as the Krishnagiri National Park, then as Borivili National Park before finally being christened the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in 1981, expanding to a total area of about 103 square kilometres. The 2000-year-old Kanheri Buddhist caves are also situated within the park (Pande and Pathak, 2005; “Sanjay Gandhi National Park - History,” 2017).

The park has been at the centre of conflicts amongst many actors—the local communities living in or around the park, NGOs, the courts, real estate dealers, leopards venturing outside its boundaries and also, the many tourists who visit the park.

### Changing focus of the coverage

Press coverage of the SGNP over the last couple of decades describes the various issues associated with the park and also how these have evolved over the years. In the mid-1990s, the main narrative as revealed through the news reports was about the displacement of those living within the park boundaries. Other stories narrated cases of encroachment of the park for construction or diversion for other uses. Mumbai has one of the highest real estate prices in the country and land therefore is a highly contentious topic. The first phase of reporting from the SGNP discusses politicians and political parties getting involved along with the real estate mafia. The HC and the SC too have played a major role in these cases, which also came to the notice of the human rights tribunal.

The next phase of reporting (2001-2005) focused on human-wildlife conflict and tourism, presumably once the issue of

rehabilitation of slum dwellers reached a steady state. There were several disagreements on the kinds of tourism and tourist infrastructure that should be built in the park—ranging from information centres, zoo, safari and a new entry gate. Reporting also highlighted the adverse impacts of high tourist numbers particularly with regard to littering. Conflict issues were mostly to do with leopards straying into human habitation or attacking dogs.

The more recent (2011-2015) years of reporting from SGNP have largely been about other kinds of threats to the park in the form of developmental activities mainly as linear intrusions - railway lines, electric lines, highways and even the metro—all staking claim over the land that constitutes the national park.

Another interesting aspect is that of research. Going by the reporting in the *PA Update*, research in the SGNP seemed to have taken

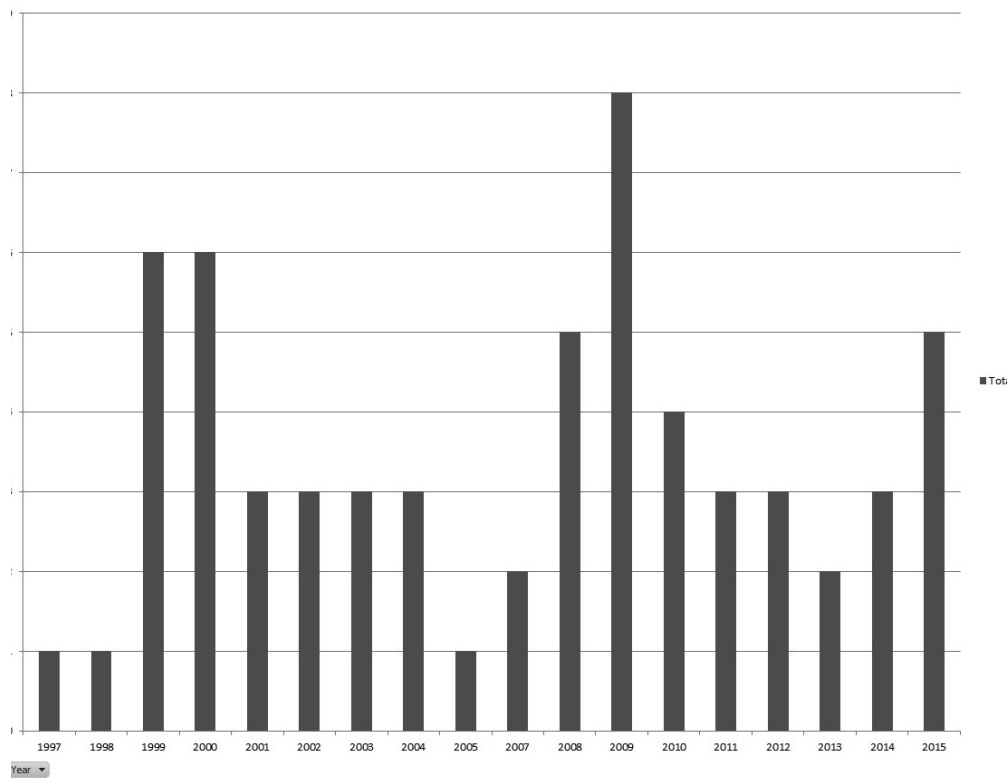


Figure 1.4: SGNP coverage by year

off only in the last few years. Seven of the eight stories that discussed research were published after 2009. Topics of research varied widely from soil testing to bird counts, but the leopard seemed to be the focus of most projects.

It is noteworthy that only one case of poaching was reported from the SGNP over the last twenty years, and this was in the early 90s. This may be on account of an editorial bias of the *PA Update* against reporting individual cases of poaching, but it is also possible that considerable focus on the park results in poaching rates being lower. In any case, the larger analysis seems to indicate that the media in general usually focuses on poaching of large carnivores such as the tiger and it is likely, therefore, that poaching of deer or other smaller animals goes unreported.

### A variety of actors

The SGNP has the most varied set of actors mentioned in its reports. The most ‘active’ actor was the FD, featuring in more than half the stories. The second most commonly mentioned actors were NGOs featuring in 23 of the 62 stories. This was followed by the Mumbai HC, with many of the stories being related to the relocation of “slum dwellers”. The other participants were varied and included, among others, the state government and several individual ministers, the municipal corporation, the public works department, politicians, citizen groups, the urban development department, several central and state level committees, and even the film industry—the last one more so because the film city in Goregaon lies on land abutting the forests of the national park.

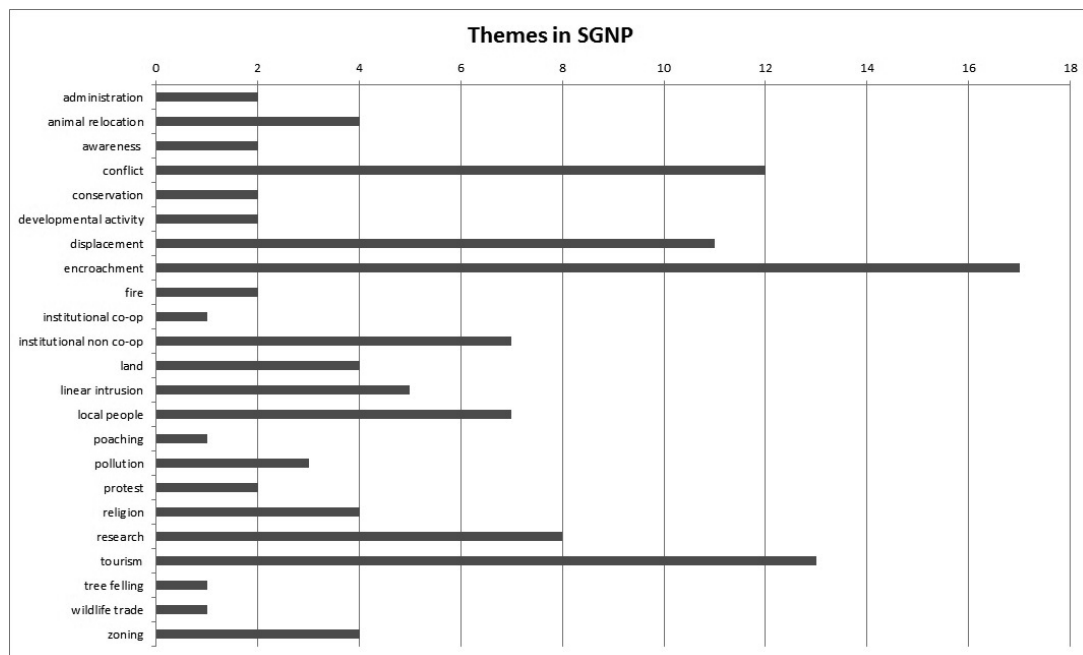


Figure 1.5: Prominent themes in reporting on SGNP

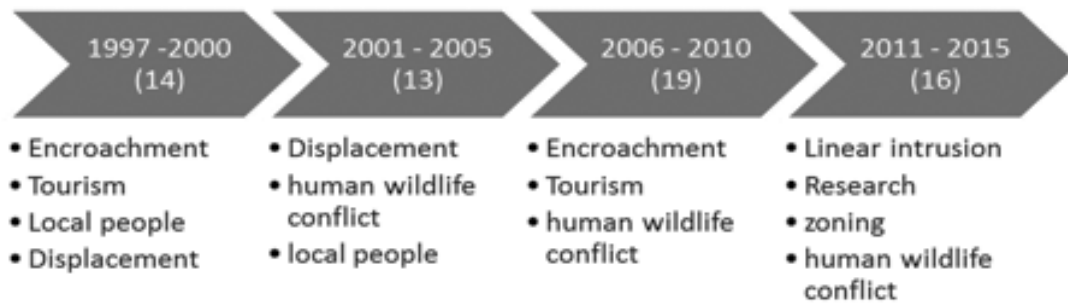


Figure 1.6: Evolution of themes in time in SGNP. Numbers in brackets indicate number of stories and most common themes are listed in order of frequency.

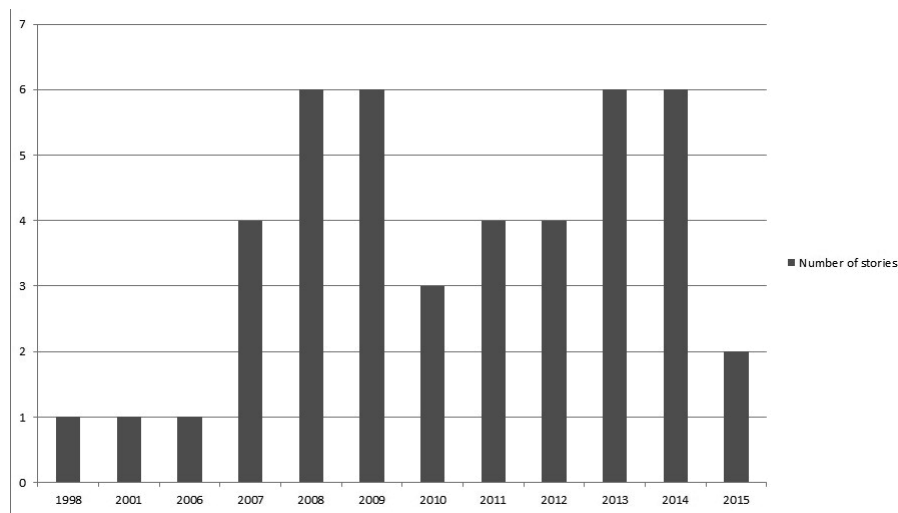


Figure 1.7: TATR coverage by year

### 3.4.2 Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR)

The Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) is one of the largest PAs in Maharashtra, as well as the oldest. Tadoba along with Kanha NP in adjoining Madhya Pradesh were established as the first sanctuaries of the Central Provinces and Berar in 1935. The tiger reserve was notified in 1995 by combining the Tadoba NP and the Andhari WLS. It is located in the Chandrapur district in central India and is a very popular tourist destination. This tiger reserve largely comprises dry deciduous forest and is home to several large mammals that include the tiger, leopard, dhole, muntjac, sloth bear, neelgai and the Rusty spotted cat (Pande and Pathak, 2005).

The Tadoba Andhari TR features most often in the *PA Update* after the SGNP with a total of 44 stories, and this is in spite of the fact that there were very few stories before 2006.

#### Key themes

The overarching narrative about TATR that emerges from an analysis of the reports in the *PA Update* is of the displacement of local communities and that of human-wildlife conflict. The political nature of this issue clearly influenced its newsworthiness. The tone of the reporting appears to be largely neutral, but the political actors outside the government in each story appeared to play up the tiger versus tribal debate, and were painted negatively by the media.

Unlike in the case of Sanjay Gandhi NP, the press reports pertaining to TATR are not as clearly thematic or ‘phased,’ and cover a broader range of topics as seen in the thematic analysis of coverage of the reserve.

Stories of tiger poaching found significant mention, but the media was largely silent on poaching of species other than the big cats. Enforcement measures taken by the forest department also caught the media’s attention, by consequence.

From the year 2008 onward, the issue of coal mining in and around the TATR starts to feature regularly in the news stories. Significantly, the framing of the stories is strongly biased against the mining activities and mining companies. Zoning around the park also gets significant mention and is pitched as an effective solution to preventing mining and other destructive activities in the area surrounding the park.

### Key actors

We also looked at the human actors featuring in the news stories—the FD has the highest number of mentions, and is featured in 31 of the 44 stories. Local communities are next, followed by NGOs and the NTCA. Academia features in only three stories. Unlike in the case of the SGNP, fewer cases pertaining to the TATR are referred to the courts, with the HC just finding one mention and a SC

appointed committee being the only other legal actor mentioned.

From an overview perspective it emerges that certain broad themes such as socio-political issues occupy centre-stage while others, science in particular, are conspicuous by its absence. This is in spite of greater research activity in the tiger reserve and the inordinate attention that large charismatic carnivores attract amongst the scientific community. All of the science-based stories mentioned pertain to radio collaring of large cats, or, the reportage of survey results in the park. There is also a clear underdog bias in the reporting, with the hierarchy resembling something like tribal, tiger, development and finally politics, with politicians getting the tough end of the stick.

### The tiger

The tiger, quite expectedly, is one of the main ‘actors’ in the Tadoba Andhari TR, appearing in nearly half (n=20) of the 44 stories about the reserve. Leopards are next with six mentions. Apart from a cursory mention of the sloth bear, no other animal features in the news reports. On the whole TATR has several more stories related to the general administration of the park including enforcement efforts to control poaching and details about funding. Tiger reserves also have a significantly larger number of stories related to funding.

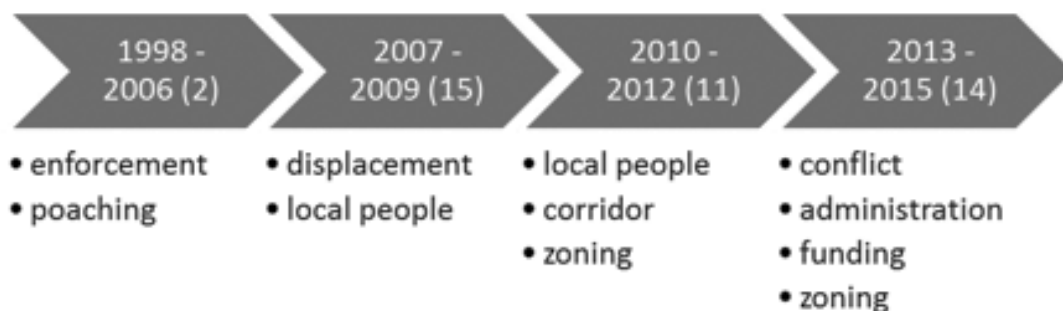


Figure 1.8: *Evolution of themes in time in the reporting on TATR*<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Media content analysis is no doubt a powerful tool that can be utilized to understand the evolution of an issue over time, or, conversely, to guide the discourse over an issue of public interest. There are inherent biases in reporting, whether positive or negative, and taking cognisance of this is essential to understanding the impact of the media. Our study provides interesting insights and raises some important questions about conservation reporting in India. The main findings, as have been discussed, point to an unequal coverage given to PAs in the state, the emergence of broad key themes as well as actors across the full data set, and the also the association of certain themes more prominently with specific PAs.

There are however a number of key issues and questions this study highlights and which remain these are presented here both as conclusions as also pointers and questions for further research and studies:

Does the media represent issues on the ground accurately? What might be the metrics/methodologies of making such an assessment?

What are the different sources of media reporting of conservation issues in India? Are all voices in the debate given a platform?

Why is there such a strong emphasis on socio-political dimensions of conservation while science-based reporting is largely missing?

Is conservation reporting, as with reporting in general, a function of proximity (or distance) from 'power centres' such as Mumbai or Pune?

An interesting question would be related to the coverage in the English media as represented in this analysis as against reporting that is seen in the local, Marathi press. What might one find if this comparison was to be made?

One notable development in the last decade or so is the proliferation of online news sources dedicated to wildlife and the environment as also the wider and easier access of regular news sites. This has its own compulsions and dynamics and one interesting comparison and analysis would be of a pre- and post- internet era.

We reiterate that as the primary, and often, only, source of information about nature and wildlife conservation for the public, the media plays an extremely important role in awareness, understanding and participation of people in conservation. We believe more analyses such as this one will help to understand the larger patterns and trends in what the media reports about wildlife and conservation, of what issues are considered important as also the larger political economy of the media itself and how perceptions such as those of threat, importance, and rarity, which are important tropes in the conservation issues, actually mobilize the media as the media mobilizes them.

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8 Breakdown in 2007–2009: administration, conflict(3), corruption, displacement(5), funding(3), institutional misdemeanour (3), local people(5), mining(3), NTFP, poaching, protest(2), research, tourism (3), training, tree felling, zoning

Breakdown 2010-12: administration(2), conflict, conservation(2), corridor(3), developmental activity (dam),displacement(2), funding, fire, FRA(2), land(diversion), linear intrusion (highway), local people(5), mining(2), NTFP, politics, poaching, protest, zoning(3)



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## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

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## 2) Coverage of Conservation and Wildlife in the Marathi Print Media: A Practitioner's Perspective

**Reshma Jathar<sup>1</sup>**

In the mid-1990s photographs of flamingoes that had begun to populate the mudflats in and around Mumbai city started to appear in Marathi newspapers. Pictures of other fauna and flora found around urban areas then made an appearance in newspapers with increasing frequency. The trend was picked up by smaller newspapers and magazines and such photographs have since become a regular feature in the Marathi print media. In an interesting coincidence, this was the same time that the big Marathi newspapers started to invest in modern color printing technology.

Coverage of wildlife in the Marathi print media can be broadly classified into the following categories: tiger-related issues, attacks by animals on humans and cattle, the poisoning or poaching of animals, and governmental as well as non-governmental initiatives for conservation, especially of large mammals. Water shortage and incidents of forest fires in protected areas are reported in the months of summer. News related to major wildlife crimes, achievements in the conservation sector (such as the discovery of new species), and awards won by people are also published from time to time. Another category that has emerged in the last three–four years is the photo feature; photographs of wild animals clicked by laypersons using phone cameras!

### Classification of the news

This classification is based on impressions formed from observing how wildlife and environment has been reported in the Marathi

print media for over a decade or so. Newspapers popular in urban areas, their regional supplements, district-level newspapers, and prominent weekly publications were observed prior to writing these observations. The news was categorized as mentioned above and these categories were further verified in discussions with journalists, researchers, activists, and readers.

It was observed that local newspapers or local supplements of big newspapers that are published in the vicinity of protected areas frequently report the happenings from their respective protected areas. These pieces are usually about completion of routine tasks by the FD, tourist numbers, and compensation given in cases of damage by wild animals to livestock or property. District-level, small newspapers seem to be rather prompt in publishing such incidents.

There were days, for instance, when two or more news items related to wildlife and/or the environment were published in big as well as small newspapers. For instance, a big newspaper published news on illegal hunting of a wild boar, death of a gaur in a road accident, and pollution in an urban lake, all on the same day. On another day, a small newspaper published news items related to the death of a tiger, rescue of a leopard, and rescue of a crocodile. However, all these were small, single-column reports and the publications did not follow up or analyze the issues further.

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This article was written with the help of a number of people: journalists – Sada Dumbre, Vinayak Patrudkar, Parag Patil, Suchita Deshpande; wildlife experts/ecologists/researchers – Dr. V. B. Sawarkar, Parth Bapat, Dr. Aparna Watve, Dr. Vidya Athreya; and a Maharashtra state government official, Ravi Gite.

### **Coverage limited to charismatic species and tourism**

The observations suggest that issues related to tigers, leopards, and, occasionally, elephants get prominent attention.

As indicated above, wildlife coverage on a large scale started appearing in the Marathi print media with modern colour printing technology and glazed newsprint. This was also the time when the Maharashtrian middle-class reader had started to search for new, unconventional locations for tourism and magazines seem to have turned to nature and wildlife to cater to their needs. Plainly, the coverage was from the tourism point of view and remained limited to charismatic species and exotic wildlife tourism locales. This trend continues even today and articles on wildlife tourism and photographs of urban wildlife continue to get published. In fact, this theme seems to be a favourite among weekend and local area supplements because of the huge scope it provides for publishing attractive, colourful photographs.

Journalists, wildlife researchers and a section of readers I spoke to, all agreed that the environment/wildlife coverage in Marathi print media has increased in the last decade. However, most also agree that scientific reasoning, analysis, and good-quality reporting is often missing. When it comes to the complexity of wildlife issues, coverage remains limited to sensational incidents. Let us try and understand the reasons why environmental issues hardly ever get discussed, debated, or analysed.

### **Not a special beat**

The Marathi print media does not consider wildlife or even environment as a special beat. None of the Marathi newspapers and magazines have a correspondent dedicated to cover environmental issues. Often, a reporter or a sub-editor with personal interest in the environmental sector tries to write about environmental as well as wildlife issues apart

from their regular beat. This is dependent entirely on her/his personal initiative and, with daily deadlines to meet, merely reporting a significant happening sometimes becomes a Herculean task! One cannot expect any in-depth reportage under these circumstances.

When an environment- or wildlife-related press conference is announced, the event is usually assigned to a trainee or junior reporter whose work involves covering everything from college campus news to marketing events of the publication. Most of the times, the reporter is neither interested nor updated about the issue. As a result, the coverage turns out to be a 'single column' item, much of it 'copy-pasted' from the press-release. The situation is similar even for magazines. There are occasions when wildlife experts are invited to write a column, but these rare and have become even rarer. As one of the measures of cost-cutting, publications insist on generating content in-house which limits the possibilities of expert content being published.

This brings us to the popular notion that perhaps the Marathi print media lacks resources to hire a full-time environment/wildlife reporter. It was true until recently that Marathi publications had limited staff and priority was given to politics, local governance, and crime. Now, most publications, especially newspapers, have at least three-four political reporters and several others to cover beats like municipal affairs, crime, health, education, sports, and entertainment. None of these resources are, however, used to make wildlife coverage an integral part of the paper.

### **Need for a deeper understanding**

Wildlife researchers point out that the questions asked by journalists indicate that they have not understood the issue, its significance, magnitude, or historical context. Clearly, very few journalists do any homework before approaching experts and even fewer get the technical parts of their writing cross-checked by the right sources.

Importantly, these journalists seldom question the expertise of persons they quote. The criteria applied while approaching experts seem to be easy accessibility, media-friendliness, and, often, the tendency to make sweeping, sensational, bold, statements. As a result, quotes from the same set of people appear again and again in different publications. This allows for limited perspectives. Being a nature enthusiast or a wildlife photographer doesn't necessarily mean that one's opinions are the result of expert knowledge. The media's affinity to self-proclaimed or sometimes 'media created' experts has seriously affected the accuracy of the content.

Another common mistake journalists make is to assume that when a person has expertise in one aspect of an issue s/he has overall expertise in all other aspects. For instance, while reporting whether nuclear discharge could affect marine life, instead of approaching a marine biologist or an ecologist or an environmental scientist, journalists may end up quoting a nuclear scientist!

Of course, there are journalists who make an effort to understand the issue. They find the right persons and ask them the right questions, but sometimes the resource persons cannot provide them with accurate information due to political pressure or bureaucratic obstacles. A veteran journalist pointed out that nowadays a lot of information from different sources from all over the world is available on the internet. But reporters do not correctly use technology and references chosen are often inadequate or irrelevant. Moreover, two hours of browsing cannot be considered equivalent to in-depth research, a sentiment most wildlife experts agree upon.

Lastly, it must be stressed that most of the above-mentioned limitations of the Marathi print media in covering wildlife issues stem from two main factors: first, that coverage of wildlife is a legacy of its tourism value

and, second, Marathi editors' inability to understand and frame environmental issues (See Box 1).

## **Way forward**

It is time for the Marathi print media to change its perspective of wildlife reporting. Environmental and wildlife issues must get more serious treatment and the focus should shift towards informing readers about pressing issues rather than simply encouraging them to take up wildlife tourism and photography. Different initiatives are required at different levels if this is to be achieved:

- a) An editor can initialize the process and then act as a catalyst to keep it on the right track. The process of getting an important story implies not just asking questions but also studying the subject, at least to the extent where s/he will be able to ask the right questions to the right people.
- b) More articles written by wildlife/environment experts, academicians, or by journalists with help from those experts. Issues such as wildlife conservation strategies, species recovery plans for future needs, and international practices need to be discussed.
- c) One way of achieving this, at a low cost, could be through collaborations with English publications dedicated to environment and/or wildlife issues, as well as NGOs working in the field of conservation. Well-researched English or Hindi articles can then be translated and published in Marathi regularly.
- d) Publishing stories of new discoveries and wildlife research, especially about flora and small fauna, would help generate awareness about 'non-charismatic' yet important species. Developments and changes in laws and policies regarding wildlife and environment also need to be conveyed properly to the reader.
- e) Development and wildlife issues must be discussed and debated from time to time. On

the one hand people must understand the significance of wildlife as a legacy that needs to be passed on and, on the other, they should understand how human welfare depends on this.

f) Another important factor that needs to be addressed is wildlife outside protected areas, an aspect that is overlooked not only in Marathi but also in English media. We must realize that human-animal conflicts are man-made issues and every one of us is directly or indirectly responsible for it. People living in the vicinity of areas that are rich in wildlife are in a unique position; they inhabit the zones that are on the boundaries of expanding urbanization and barely surviving wilderness. Their aspirations, just like the aspirations of all of us, are shaped and fuelled by the market-economy. However, unlike the rest of us, they are made to curb their dreams as their location demands that they be the guardians of the remaining biodiversity. Media can provide a larger platform to their case and help them get compensated for their sacrifice.

g) Another important role media can play here is in dissemination of scientific knowledge regarding wildlife and conservation. People living close to protected areas must be kept informed about the importance of wildlife conservation. They should also get to know how they can help avoid conflict situations. Here, Marathi, or rather the regional newspapers can play an important role. Supportive media coverage can bridge the gap between the scientific community and common citizens.

h) Career, health, and science and technology supplements can be used for publishing relevant content from the wildlife sector. Students pursuing life sciences, biology, wildlife and environment related courses can be encouraged to write on specific topics in youth or college campus supplements.

i) The niche of readers' letters remains largely unexploited. It can be used as a platform for pointing out errors in wildlife reporting and raising questions. If readers put up larger questions then journalists would be encouraged to find answers to them. Marathi print media could then be creating awareness among the masses, helping them understand wildlife issues and in turn aiding wildlife protection and conservation.

### **Box 1**

An editor's understanding of the subject – environment/wildlife – is an important factor in making space and resources available for its coverage. Unfortunately,

Environment is looked upon as an elitist subject. The editor of a renowned Marathi daily once emphatically stated that environmentalists are all bogus and that “they all go to buy brown bread driving in their luxury cars and ask others to protect the environment!”

Regarding the successful instances of human and leopard coexistence, a resident editor, again from a renowned Marathi newspaper, had asked if there are no leopard attacks or killings then why we should publish it?

### 3) Dividing Lines: Tribal Rights and Tiger Reserves<sup>1</sup>

**Shiba Desor<sup>2</sup>**

“We are given a relocation plan for 18 villages and we have to implement it. At the same time, no relocation is supposed to take place without consent. It is tricky. So what do you do? You divide the village and get the agreeing half to move. The reluctant ones will then follow. Simultaneously, break the social network of the remaining ones with neighbouring villages. No village can survive too long as a stand-alone.”

This was how a senior forest official described the process of declaring and managing a tiger reserve in Maharashtra in 2013.

Four decades after Project Tiger was initiated, the rights of people living inside the newly created tiger reserves has remained a persistent issue. Although there have been varying estimates, the Tiger Task Force (2005) records the number of people relocated from tiger reserves as 46,341 (or 2904 families).

At present over 45,000 families residing in 750-odd villages inside core areas or critical tiger habitats (hereafter CTHs) of tiger reserves across India have been identified for relocation (Bindra 2012). They await this fate with a mixture of fear, trepidation and, sometimes, even a bit of hope—hope that after relocation their daily lives will be free of the restrictions and threats they face living inside an area that came to be designated as protected.

But how are these decisions regarding relocation made? What are the various dimensions of these processes through which people are evicted from their villages in the name of tiger conservation? Do the persons whose lives are going to be changed forever have a say in it? This article attempts to study the extent to which the making of a tiger reserve is a participatory process, following the most recent legal provisions. Through a study of processes of notification for the Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) and the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), it highlights the on-ground implications of this process on the rights of the people living inside these areas.

#### **Tiger conservation policy and its implementation in India: A brief overview**

After the initiation of Project Tiger in 1973, forests known for tiger populations started getting marked as tiger reserves. Such tiger reserves were considered as having two parts: a core and a buffer area, which would have different levels of ‘protection’ from ‘human disturbance’<sup>3</sup>. Often the core would be comprised of a national park and the buffer would be composed of a number of

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1 This article is based on research carried out in 2013 with support from ActionAid India. The situation on the ground may certainly have changed since then, but the underlying issues and themes continue to be relevant.

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The author would like to thank Meenal Tatpati, Ashish Kothari, Neema Pathak Broome and Rucha Ghate for their comments. The study would not have been possible without the support of Khoj-Melghat (especially Purnima Upadhyay) and Paryavaran Mitra (Madhav Jivtode and Shankar Bharde). The processes of Future of Conservation Network and the Community Forest Rights-Learning and Advocacy have also informed this study.

wildlife sanctuaries and some non-forest area, including many villages. Relocation (especially in the core) has always been emphasised in tiger reserves (Lasgorceix and Kothari 2009, Rangarajan and Shahabuddin 2006), with the idea that keeping such areas free of human presence will aid in tiger conservation.

Initially, the term ‘tiger reserve’ was more of an operational category, while national parks and sanctuaries had legal recognition under the Wild Life (Protection) Act (henceforth WLPA) of 1972. With the 2006 amendment to the WLPA, tiger reserves became a legal category (under the WLPA) and a new term ‘critical tiger habitat’ (CTH)<sup>4</sup> was added to the discourse.

It is around the same time that the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act 2006 (henceforth FRA) was also passed. FRA provides that forest dwellers have certain use, access and ownership rights which cannot be modified without there being a prior process of recognition. FRA recognizes and vests pre-existing rights; it does not condone new encroachments. This becomes an important provision when trying to understand the legal spaces for people’s rights inside a tiger reserve. Additionally, while FRA does not make specific provisions related to tiger reserves, it does have a provision for critical wildlife habitats (CWH), a category similar to CTH. What differentiates CWH from CTH is an additional clause that provides that CWHs once created cannot be subsequently diverted for other purposes by the government. Until now no CWHs have been declared in India to the best of the author’s knowledge.

### **Rushed demarcations**

On 17 November 2007, the National Tiger Conservation Authority asked<sup>5</sup> all states to set up expert committees to “finalise and delineate core or critical tiger habitats of tiger reserves ... within 10 days of the receipt of this letter”. All relevant states complied by sending in proposals for core or critical tiger habitats. As a result, of the total 49 CTHs notified till date, 31 were already notified by the end of 2007 with several of them notified on 31 December 2007 (Pathak Broome et al. 2014). The CTHs of Melghat and Tadoba-Andhari tiger reserve were also notified at this time.

It is not a coincidence that this is just one day before the FRA rules were notified, on 1 January 2008. The bizarrely twisted logic behind this was that if a CTH is made before FRA comes to force, provisions of the FRA will not be applicable to these CTHs. In a newspaper article (Thapar 2012), tiger expert and NBWL member Valmik Thapar who was involved with the above notifications of core or critical tiger habitats admitted that “Declaration of cores was done in a rush in order to insulate our tiger areas against the Forest Rights Act (FRA), which came into being before the end of 2007.” A new core had been created overnight with little basis in science. In Ranthambore, for instance, the Kailadevi WLS became part of the core critical habitat encompassing 595 sq km with one tiger, 44 villages, 25,000 people, and 40,000 livestock.

As has been established through many legal clarifications since then, this logic was completely flawed because the FRA is indeed applicable in all areas including the CTH.

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3 These two words are kept in quotes because there are different points of view about what works best as an approach for conservation. These terms in quotes reflect one particular view where any human use of a landscape is viewed as necessarily detrimental for tiger conservation in areas labeled as cores.

4 Both the terms ‘CTH’ and ‘core’ are used interchangeably in the Act. This can create confusion because in terms of area, the critical tiger habitats of most tiger reserves are much larger than what used to fall under the cores before the legal notifications.

5 Vide its circular No. 1501/11/2007-PT (Part) to all relevant states



Besides, the process for declaring a tiger reserve under WLPA also specifies taking special care not to affect rights of forest dwellers living in the area. It is clear that the rushed process of declaring those CTHs was in violation of the requirements of both the WLPA and the FRA. On account of this, there is a body of opinion that considers all existing CTHs as illegal since the detailed process of recognition of rights under FRA didn't take place in any of those areas before their declaration as CTHs (Bijoy 2011).

There is thus quite a difference between the prescribed process and on-ground realities. These misinterpretations and violations have had serious implications on the ground, compounding socio-cultural issues, as well as making a mockery of the legal provisions.

### **The making of a tiger reserve**

Focusing mainly on two tiger reserves—Melghat and Tadoba-Andhari—in Maharashtra, this study attempts to understand the processes by which these tiger reserves have been declared and managed, and the implications of these on the rights of the people living there.

#### **Denying people's rights in an 'inviolable' area**

For both Melghat and Tadoba-Andhari, the CTH notification increased the 'inviolable

area' by four to five times compared with what was considered the core area before the notification. People living in these areas were subsequently told by the wildlife administration that they have 'no rights'. For instance, on 5 June 2013, the community forest rights (CFR) claim from Madizadap village in Melghat was rejected by the sub-divisional level committee (SDLC). As their reason for rejection they cited a letter<sup>6</sup> from the Assistant Conservator of Forests dated 16/12/2011 claiming that the area falls under what was earlier Melghat Sanctuary for which their rights were already extinguished in 1994. The contradiction was an obvious one, because if indeed they had no legal rights since 1994, how were the villagers able to produce grazing passes from 2007 along with their FRA claim?

A similar tale is told by Shankar Bardhe of Paryavaran Mitra, who lives in the village of Wadala-Tukum. Petitions and circulars spanning two decades chronicle the village's continuous protest against inclusion of certain grazing and other commons inside the protected area boundary from the time of settlement of rights of the Andhari WLS till the present time of inclusion in the TATR. In March 2013, their claim for CFRs was rejected by the SDLC reasoning that the claimed area falls under the TATR and "any human activity in the area is liable to irreversibly affect wildlife, exacerbate man-animal conflict,

### **About the two tiger reserves**

Melghat (MTR)	The Melghat forests are situated in Satpuda hills in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. The southern tropical dry deciduous type of forests host a rich diversity of wildlife and is home to a diversity of tribal and agro-pastoral communities. Melghat TR was one of the first tiger reserves, declared way back in 1974.
Tadoba-Andhari (TATR)	The Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (named after a local deity 'taru') lies in the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra and has southern tropical dry deciduous teak forests; 116.5 sq km of forest was declared as the Tadoba NP in 1955. The Tadoba-Andhari TR was created in 1994.

6 Letter dated June 5, 2013 by SDLC, Dharni, received by Gram Sabha on November 15, 2013

and interfere with the main objective of the Tiger Reserve, i.e. to protect and conserve the tiger and its habitat.” Since getting to know about the rejection, the gram sabha has been repeatedly appealing to the district level committee (DLC) to inspect the causes of rejection and pass the claim, albeit with no positive response.

In the words of Kumari Bhagwati Sawalkar, staying in Raipur village situated in the CTH of Melghat, “There were more livelihoods within the village before the TR was declared. We are considering relocation but there are others who are more dependent on the forests and would like to stay back. Government schemes for welfare like Gharkul Yojana have stopped being implemented here because they say relocation is ongoing. This is a problem for all, but especially for the ones who were intending to stay back.”

Notifying an area as inviolate without a consultative and consensual process has itself had implications for the lives and livelihoods of the people living in such an area. It is clear then that the provision about creation of inviolate areas ‘without affecting the rights’ is being blatantly violated.

#### **Relocation – voluntary or induced?**

As per WLPA, relocation from a tiger reserve needs to follow the step-by-step process described below:

1. Completing the process of recognition, determination and acquisition of rights,
2. Establishing by state government through gram sabha consent and in consultation with an independent ecological and social scientist that co-existence is not possible or that their presence is causing irreversible damage,
3. Taking informed consent of concerned gram sabha and affected families,
4. Preparing a resettlement or alternatives package fulfilling the needs of affected people, and

5. Providing facilities and land allocation at the alternative site.

Undoubtedly, the present process of relocation violates these requirements. There is no prior recognition of rights under FRA before relocation of the villages. At best, a certificate from the collector is being attached saying that settlement of rights process required under FRA is complete. This is not the same as a village initiating and completing the process of constituting the FRC, filing and verifying claims, getting titles and engaging in post-recognition process of management and governance. The certificates merely obscure the situation of how the existing rights are taken cognizance of during relocation. In Melghat TR, some relocated villages like Vairat had indeed filed claims under the FRA before relocation, but no titles were prepared or distributed to the village. And it is not clear how, if at all, any of their existing rights were accounted for during relocation.

The on-ground process also neglects village-level consent, instead focusing upon obtaining consent from individual families. This uses the old ‘divide and rule’ formula of playing upon the heterogeneity in a village, as described by the senior forest official in the opening quote of this article. According to a resident of Boratakheda in Melghat, speaking about the inclination toward relocation in his own village, “People who have government service rather than forest dependent livelihoods want to go; 75% don’t want to go but a few of the literate ones who are more vocal speak out and say that the village will move.” Yet another person, Manohar Raghuji Khadke (who has been relocated from MTR to Narsala), reasoned that his move to relocate was based on restrictions on access and use of forest produce, and lack of basic facilities of health and education in the CTH.

Relocation from tiger reserves thus needs to be understood as induced rather than voluntary. The protected area officials use a set of strategies that give people a feeling that their

days of peace in their village are numbered, pressurising them to move. These strategies include disruption of social networks, penalising access of road, discontinuing issuance of ration cards or threats that if the package is not taken soon they will eventually be evicted without any compensation. It should also be remembered that many of these villages would have had sustained pressure of external restrictions on their use of forest resources for several decades since many of the existing tiger reserves were at earlier times national parks and before that reserved forests.

The socio-psychological stress of an imposed illegality can also push persons into agreeing to relocate with the hope of a life of lesser restrictions being the prime motivation. Yet, to be able to move toward a more democratic model of conservation and governance it becomes important that such decisions are based on a knowledge of the various available options and, more importantly, knowledge of the implications of their decisions, as completely as possible. This is already a part of the legal requirements for relocation but never followed, thereby making the entire process of relocation from tiger reserves, whether induced or voluntary, illegal.

#### **Post-relocation realities**

A resident of Borathakheda in MTR articulates, “When we move out we will lose our identity and social network. If there is an accident and I am lying unconscious on the road in a new village, nobody will pick me up and bring me back home like they do here.”

In 2009, 19 families that had been relocated from village Botezari in TATR moved back to their home village and staged demonstrations regarding the poor rehabilitation conditions (Aghor 2009). Some of the protesting families were reportedly arrested for this<sup>7</sup>. The process

of being uprooted and finding life in a new space can be fraught with conflicts and complexities. An important concern related to this is the lack of a proper follow up after relocation has taken place to ensure that the promised facilities are provided for.

In many cases the very different physical environment of relocation site leads to an abrupt shift in livelihood patterns. Ganesh Vitthal Khadke, relocated from MTR, feels that the environment of Ghatladki is different from the one they were used to in Churni. “Ideally,” he said, “we would have liked the same atmosphere but still had to move because there were too many restrictions in the tiger reserve.” For people of Churni village relocated from Melghat, the grazing rights could no longer be exercised after moving to the relocation sites of Narsala and Ghatladki, forcing the residents to start buying fodder and to even sell most of their livestock. This despite the fact that livestock forms an important component of life and culture of most of these resident communities, especially the pastoral Gawlis.

In many cases of relocation, there has also been a consequent ambiguity over rights in the relocation sites causing conflicts with the existing villages. This happened in the case of Ghatladki where relocation led to inter-village conflict over customary access and allotted land. There was also an issue here of allocation of land unfit for cultivation to a number of people who had been ‘minors’ when the first list was formed, but were above 18 years of age by the time the relocation actually took place. Similarly, in Tadoba, the relocation site for Jamni village overlaps with nistar land of another village, Sonegaon, leading to conflicts about building of houses by the relocated villagers.

Conflicts can be caused sometimes within a village itself because of inconsistencies in

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7 Reported on 23-24 June 2010 in an FoC consultation in Delhi

the process of relocation. This happened in Navalgaon (Melghat) where part of the relocation had been carried out when the relocation package was one lakh rupees and part when the package had been enhanced to ten lakh rupees per family.

For some relocation has been a double-edged sword. According to Manohar Raghuji Khadke and Saumitra Devi of Narsala (Vairat), *aamdani* (income) has doubled but *kebarcha* (expense) has also doubled. Still, they felt, there were some positive things about relocation: better access to development facilities like a school and roads, no fear of wild animals, and no water scarcity and therefore, better irrigation.

#### **Whither co-existence?**

Ramesh Basoom is a resident of village Raipur located in the core of the Melghat TR. He says, “It cannot be said for sure that the forests will be protected through relocation. They may just further degrade. And this is our *janam bhoomi* (birthplace). Water of the plains will be hard for us to adjust to.”

There are many who like Ramesh question the necessity of relocation for conservation. Even as per WLPA 2006, one of the pre-conditions for relocation is that “the State Government after obtaining the consent of the Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers inhabiting the area, and in consultation with an independent social and ecological scientist familiar with the area, has come to a conclusion that other reasonable options of co-existence are not available.”

Has a comprehensive assessment been done to exhaust options of co-existence before resorting to relocation? On-ground, it appears to hardly be the case, with management officials of TRs giving this legal requirement little thought and instead working on a presumption that co-existence is not an option.

While restrictions and relocation plans abound, claims for forest rights filed under FRA in TRs

are usually kept pending or summarily rejected. In the CTH of Melghat, 13 of the 20 villages have filed CFR claims but none have received titles thus far. The CFR claim for one such village, Madizadap, was rejected by the SDLC on account of its location inside the CTH of a tiger reserve. An appeal has been filed in the DLC and at the time of writing this piece, the decision had still not been made. In TATR, a small village population (the total number of which is not clear at the moment) continues to reside inside the CTH, while 79 villages are located inside the buffer. Six villages (all of which seem to be in the buffer, but some of these have community forest resource areas that fall in the core) have filed for claims under the FRA. The process began with a CFR claim being filed for Wadala in January 2013. Subsequently, claims under the FRA were filed by villages of Ghosri, Sitaram Peth, Sonegaon, Kondegaon and Khutwanda. All these villages have been awaiting a response and hoping that their rights will be recognised.

Far from encouraging local communities to formulate their own plans, management of TRs continues to have the patronising approach of considering resident communities as ‘targets’ or beneficiaries on which externally designed programmes and plans need to be imposed. This despite a large amount of lip service that is paid to the concepts of participation, inclusion and co-existence in our laws and policies. India is also party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, whose Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) explicitly requires countries to move toward participatory conservation with recognition of indigenous/local community rights. The PoWPA, framed in 2004, committed India to move toward full participation of adivasis and other local communities in the management of wildlife conservation, and in receiving benefits from such conservation, by 2008.

FoC or Future of Conservation, a network of groups and researchers working on conservation issues, has also insisted on

the need for fleshing out details of how co-existence can be achieved or approached through its various submissions and critiques of conservation policy. One of their suggestions involves a clarification that the term 'inviolable' does not mean only 'no-use' or 'human-free', but also includes 'compatible uses' that do not violate conservation objectives. This would help in the conservation of a larger area of wildlife habitat, given that in the Indian context, no-use areas would necessarily be few and mostly isolated fragments. To go beyond lip-service to democratised governance of protected areas, involvement of local people in the process of identification, declaration and management of tiger reserves is a must.

### **Concluding remarks**

Revisiting the words of the senior official that this article began with, it seems clear that the minds of the powers-that-be are already made up regarding relocation. Consequently, questions that are legally mandated—about the necessity of relocation, about evidence of irreversible damage and about studies to conclude that co-existence is not possible—are not given the attention that is due. Rather than a contextual and democratic approach, the process has become more about tricking the system to complete formalities toward the pre-decided outcome of relocation. There appears to be a wilful negligence of procedures and non-application of mind. Overall, it can be said that nowhere during the relocation processes is it being ensured that correct and complete information is provided to the villagers so that they can take an informed decision.

So why is the FD flouting all the laws? There could be many reasons. The simplest

explanation seems to be that they are following this approach because they know of no other. An overwhelming majority of the official conservation fraternity in India still believes that force and violence can be used for conservation and that people cannot co-exist with wildlife. The training and orientation as well as the general attitude that officials see in colleagues around them would re-inforce their beliefs in such an exclusionary approach toward conservation. In effect, this leads to huge areas with village populations getting demarcated as CTHs overnight without even a process of consultation. Such processes also create antipathy, which reveals itself in the form of local opposition whenever a TR is notified<sup>8</sup>.

Planning and management of such areas could benefit hugely from building upon the wealth of local knowledge systems and involving local communities as stakeholders with voice and agency right from the onset of planning. This will require significant letting-go of power and control by the existing authorities. Inclusionary approaches of conservation are already a part of our laws and policies, but to realise them on ground, closer attention needs to be paid to the issue by the state and continued pressure is needed by different stakeholders—local communities, researchers, policy-makers and social activists—as well as redefinition of certain terms such as inviolable and further elucidation (through independent detailed studies) on co-existence in forested landscapes. It could be a painfully tedious and complex process but seems to be the only way forward if we do intend to attempt to reconcile social and ecological justice in our official conservation approach.

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8 The cases of Sathyamangalam in Tamil Nadu, Kawal in Andhra Pradesh (now Telangana), and BRT in Karnataka are illustrative examples of this.

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

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#### **4) Rocky Plateaus: Little Understood Treasures of the Western Ghats**

**Aparna Watve<sup>1</sup>**

The Western Ghats of India are well known as a global hotspot—rich in endemic biodiversity and seriously threatened by human pressures. While the wet evergreen forests of the southern Western Ghats (in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala) are rich in endemic trees, the forests of the northern parts (in Maharashtra) are drier and comparatively poorer in endemic trees. But this area has many endemic herbs and shrubs that are found in abundance in non-forest habitats such as scrublands, plateaus and cliffs. Previously, all the vegetation in the non-forest habitats was thought to be secondary, formed after disturbance by humans, and hence believed to be mostly common, disturbance-tolerant species. An abundance of endemic, highly habitat-specialist species in such an area was thought to be an anomaly.

This was the context when, in 1997, I enrolled myself for a doctoral program at the University of Pune. My research was then focused on understanding the abiotic and biotic factors that influence distribution of plant communities in a landscape, the main question being about the factors leading to spread of endemic herb communities in non-forest areas. I searched through research papers from various parts of world, which reported sites with plant communities rich in endemic herb and shrubs. This is how I stumbled upon papers that discussed rock outcrop habitats in Africa that had unique herbaceous communities. A communication I sent in 2001 to the author of these papers, Dr. Stefan Porembski, of the University of Rostock, Germany, received an immediate encouraging response along with many more papers on herbaceous communities

from Africa, South America and Australia. Scientists had shown that characteristic herbaceous communities develop under harsh environmental conditions on granitic rocky areas and show many adaptations and narrow endemism.

But outcrops in the northern Western Ghats are not granitic; the area consists of large plateaus made of iron-rich rocks, technically known as ferricretes. Not much was known about their ecology. Descriptions of new and endemic species of plants and animals were scattered throughout the literature but comprehensive studies on the habitat had never been undertaken. This opened a completely new line of research for us. Dr. Porembski visited many times in the years that followed, explaining intricacies of rock outcrop ecology and always encouraging us to continue working on this lesser-known habitat.

In the initial phases my research interest was purely ecological, but later it became clear that there were many serious conservation issues about rocky plateau habitats that needed to be addressed if the habitats were to have any future in a fast-changing landscape. The research expanded slowly, from being purely ecological initially to include socio-ecological, economic, policy and legal issues concerning rocky outcrops, to eventually become action research that is aimed towards meeting conservation ends. This article presents current knowledge on the habitat that has been gathered by a varied group of professional and amateur researchers working on conservation of the rocky plateaus of the northern Western Ghats.

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## About the habitat

The rocky plateaus seen in the NW Ghats are flat areas, generally formed on mountain tops or on coastal plains and are composed of basalt or lateritic rock. The lateritic plateaus are present on the hill ranges from Satara district of Maharashtra in the north to Belgaum district in Karnataka in the south, while plateaus of basalt are seen on hilltops in the Pune and Nashik districts of Maharashtra.

Vast plateaus of laterite can also be found in the coastal plains from Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra right down to northern Kerala. They are often called tablelands due to flat tops and steep, almost vertical sides. The tablelands of Panchgani and Kas plateau in Maharashtra, famous as tourists spots, are good examples of these habitats. They have all been formed by natural processes of weathering and most of the area, approximately 55% and more, is bare exposed rock with a very thin biological crust or soil cover. It is this thin layer of soil that supports a rich diversity of algae, lichens and ephemeral herbaceous species. Perennial shrubs and trees are few, mostly confined to areas of soil-filled depressions or deep crevices in the rocks.

Vast stretches of exposed rocks easily distinguish the rocky plateaus from surrounding weathered areas. During the dry season these plateaus are hotter and drier than the surrounding landscapes, forming miniature deserts. However, during the heavy monsoon that these areas experience, the rock prevents the water from being drained and the plateaus turn into ephemeral wetlands. The plants and animals here are adapted to climatic extremes and many species are narrowly endemic to only one or few plateau sites. Adaptations shown by species on the plateaus range from those for extreme dryness, to aquatic conditions and also for nutrient deficiency of the soil.

Many geologists interested in the development of the Indian landscape and in the availability of rich mineral resources have mapped

the rocky plateaus in great detail and the origin, chemistry and geomorphology of these plateaus has been studied since the early twentieth century. However, only their mineral worth was estimated and they were consequently categorized as “wasteland” under a utilitarian land classification as they remained dry for most part of the year and appeared lifeless and barren.

## Ecological studies

The first biological description of a rocky plateau—the tableland at Panchgani—was published in 1909 by Rev. E. Blatter in the *Journal of Bombay Natural History Society*. Since then botanists such as Fr. Santapau, Dr. B.G. Kulkarni of the Botanical Survey of India, Dr. S.R. Yadav of Shivaji University, Kolhapur, Dr. M.K. Janarthanam of Goa University and zoologists Dr. Varad Giri of the BNHS, Dr. S. Padhye of the University of Pune and Dr. H. Ghate of Modern College, Pune, have documented new and endemic species on the rocky plateaus.

Up to 188 endemic plant species have been recorded so far on the various rocky plateaus in Maharashtra (Watve, 2013). As many as half of these are restricted to rocky plateau habitats and around 50 are threatened. *Aponogeton satarensis*, for instance, is a small aquatic plant seen only in the monsoon puddles on lateritic plateaus in Satara district. It is now highly threatened as its habitats are being converted to windfarms and tourism spots and are also being invaded by weeds. *Dipcadi concanensis*, similarly, is a beautiful, large-flowered lily that grows only along the coastal plateaus between Ratnagiri and Goa. But new roads, industries and other developmental projects in the region are a major threat to this species. Plants with interesting biological adaptations such as desiccation tolerance are seen on these plateaus. They also have an abundance of carnivorous plants including many species of bladderworts (*Utricularia* spp.) and sundews (*Drosera* spp.), which supplement



their nutrition by feeding on tiny insects. Mass blooming of plants on the plateau is an important source of food for pollinators and other insects.

The habitat also has endemic species of geckos, frogs, caecilians, fishes and freshwater invertebrates. *Hemidactylus satarensis*, a gecko, was discovered on the Chalkewadi plateau of Satara district as recently as 2008 (Giri and Bauer, 2008). It is often seen hiding under big boulders on the plateaus. The same plateau is also the only home for a new freshwater shrimp, *Streptocephalus sahyadriensis*, described in 2014 (Rogers and Padhye, 2014).

Three types of freshwater shrimps—clam shrimps, tadpole shrimps and fairy shrimps—have been found inhabiting the freshwater rock pools that form on the plateaus in the monsoon. They have a short life of about 2–3 months and, as the pools start drying at the end of the monsoon, they lay eggs and die. Their fertilized eggs remain in the dried soil and can stand high summer temperatures. When the soil is rehydrated, the eggs hatch and shrimps are born. Lateritic plateaus in Amboli, Maharashtra, have a very characteristic toad named *Xanthophryne tigrinus* (Biju et al., 2009), which lays eggs in tiny holes on the lateritic rocks. Adjacent plateaus of the Koyna WLS support another restricted endemic toad viz. *Bufo koynensis*. The information gained from rocky plateau studies provides a strong argument for conserving the habitat on a priority basis.

### Local knowledge

Local communities inhabiting this landscape identify these plateaus as a distinct landscape element, known as *Sada* or *Katal* in Marathi. Old shrines, memorial places and rock carvings found on plateaus indicate that the human use of the habitat dates back to ancient times. The locals are also deeply aware of the unique plants and animals that are found here and some of the ephemeral wildflowers growing exclusively on the plateaus are used by them in

festivals during the monsoon. These plateaus are also of paramount importance to the local villagers as they act as water towers, absorbing and then slowly releasing rainwater from the sides in the form of perennial springs (Buono and Thomas, 2013).

The research done on the plateaus so far has only been exploratory in nature, mainly documenting species, their adaptations and composition of communities. There is great potential and a need for detailed studies of ecosystem processes such as nutrient cycling, plant phenology, plant–animal interactions and speciation. Anthropogenic disturbance is also common on plateaus and it is necessary to study the impact of this disturbance and to identify ways of mitigating it and restoring the biodiversity.

### Disturbance on plateaus

There are a number of challenges these plateaus face—prominent among them are increasing tourism, large-scale mining and quarrying and, more recently, the setting up of windfarms. There are also major land conversions for mega power projects, housing and other infrastructure developments, and also orchards as seen in case of coastal plateaus. There are additional threats and challenges related to overgrazing, burning and trampling which need to be looked into carefully to ensure conservation.

### The tourism challenge

In 2012, the Kas plateau in Satara district was declared a World Heritage Site considering its biological and ecological value. Toward the end of the monsoon the plateau experiences mass blooming in a riot of pink, yellow and blue. This attracts hordes of tourists, amateur photographers, naturalists and casual visitors. Managing tourism has, therefore, become a big challenge for forest department (FD) officials in-charge of the plateau. In the absence of any scientific studies about the impact on the vegetation, the FD has taken a simplistic

measure of fencing off the plateau and allowing tourists to access different sectors of the plateau on a rotational basis.

This is similar to the typical tourism movement plan in large protected areas, where tourists move in vehicles along defined routes. However, on a plateau where the herbaceous vegetation and associated fauna is highly sensitive to heavy trampling, this does not offer enough protection. The fence, though effective in barring vehicles, does not stop the visitors. Tourists move haphazardly, creating new paths by excessive trampling, picking wildflowers, disturbing rock pools and nesting places, and littering the whole place with dry and wet solid waste.

Negative impacts were seen almost immediately. Parts of the most precious biological crust on rocks, which initiates the nutrient flow, got eroded and may take several years to grow back. Invasive species were also seen taking hold in disturbed areas. The fence also restricted access of local grazers who have been part of the ecosystem for several years. This led to excess growth of taller herbs and reduced mass blooming of species.

With the mediation of ecologists, however, the locally formed Kas Joint Forest Management Committee became more aware of the issues threatening the vegetation and undertook remedial measures to protect the plateau. Grazing was allowed with some restriction on time and many sectors were completely closed off to tourists. Vehicle parking was restricted and tourists' movement, especially on the weekends, was streamlined with teams of well-trained local guards and forest staff. Tourist sensitization was undertaken on a war footing and this has had a slow but steady impact in reducing the scale of the tourism impact.

This experience has also helped management actions on other plateaus. Plans for tourism

promotion on Idarganj plateau within the Sahyadri TR were shelved considering potential impacts. Anjaneri in Nashik, a plateau frequented by pilgrims, was declared a Conservation Reserve in 2015 and local researchers are creating a management plan to limit the impacts of tourism on biodiversity and to involve local communities in protection activities.

The Panchgani tableland, visited by almost three lakh holiday-makers in a year, is a Conservation Zone as declared in the development plans of the Mahabaleshwar Panchgani Ecosensitive Zone. The development plan defines Conservation Zones as those areas that are worthy of preservation and/ or conservation for their ecological/ environmental value and importance and/ or natural beauty. The Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) filed cases in the Mumbai HC to stop destructive activities such as driving, horse cart riding, digging and artificial landscaping on the Panchgani tableland. The HC has, in orders passed over the last 10 years, banned many activities detrimental to the ecology and biodiversity of the Panchgani tableland.

### **Quarrying and Mining**

The bigger threat stems from quarrying, mining and windfarms. Quarrying for laterite for construction of houses has disturbed large areas in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg district.

Additionally, many plateaus in Kolhapur district have been mined for bauxite since the early seventies. Hindalco Industries Ltd., (previously Indian Aluminium Company) was a major corporate holding bauxite mining leases on plateau sites in the region; it had obtained a lease for bauxite mining in Idarganj plateau, in Kolhapur district in 1968.<sup>2</sup> This was renewed in 1998, following which the BEAG filed a writ petition (No. 959 dated 13.2.98)

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2 *Down to Earth*, 1996 <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/coverage/sanctuary-in-peril-25230>.

in the Mumbai HC challenging the bauxite mining activities<sup>3</sup>, as the site was within the forest area (today the Radhangari WLS), and necessary clearances were not obtained. Biologists from the BNHS also argued for protecting the plateau for its ecological and ecosystem service values and on account of its protected area status. Finally, in 1998, the HC Court ruled to declare the mining lease illegal (Vagholikar and Moghe, 2003).

Although this ruling protected the Idarganji plateau, the judgement did not lead to similar protection against mining on plateaus such as Kasarsada, Nangartas and Waki located outside protected areas. It did not stop Hindalco and other mining companies from obtaining mining leases and conducting exploratory studies for mining on other undisturbed plateaus such as Dhangarwada, Mogalgad, Ringewadi and Burambal. In 2010, 49 leases were granted for iron mining in Sindhudurg<sup>4</sup>, all in the corridor between Radhangari WLS and Koyna WLS and the Anshi-Dandeli TR in Karnataka.

Scientists and NGOs continued to raise objections against mining and these debates helped raised awareness about the harmful effects of mining. Request for forestland diversion for mining on Durgamanwad plateau (another lease of Hindalco) was rejected as the plateau was located within 10 km of the boundary of the Radhangari WLS. Leases on other rocky plateaus in the region such as Mogalgad and Dhangarwada are also being challenged. The process of obtaining leases, especially where diversion of forestland was required for mining, has become difficult and time consuming, but not impossible. In 2009 the Kalane village gramsabha refused permission for iron ore mining in the village

area. Other villages in the Konkan region and in Goa continue to oppose mining and indiscriminate quarrying on the laterite plateaus.

## **Windfarms**

Since 2001, the rocky plateaus, especially those on top of the Western Ghats, have faced another threat. This time, unexpectedly, from development in 'green' energy. Several of the high-level plateaus, located 900m above sea level, have been identified as ideal sites for development of windfarms, which has led to a number of such high-density projects. Construction of windmills within forest areas in and around the Koyna WLS was challenged in the Mumbai HC and eviction notices were given by the FD in 2011<sup>5</sup>.

However, the windfarms developed on private or forestlands on many other plateaus in Satara and Sangli district continue to operate. The conservation community has been undecided on the issue of windfarms and their effect on plateau ecology and biodiversity, mainly due to the lack of scientific studies. Some studies have shown an increase in bird collisions and a reduction in the raptor population of plateaus particularly in areas with windfarms. Pande et al. (2013) and Karandikar et al. (2015) have shown that changes in land and infrastructure development associated with windfarms leads to much disturbance in the plateau habitat. Construction and maintenance activities disturb soil and rock pools and introduce chemical pollutants into the fragile ecosystem. Movement of people and vehicles also leads to slow degradation of the habitat. Windfarms are often preceded by large-scale land-sale and land-use changes and also privatization, all of which have a detrimental impact of the ecology of these plateaus.

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3 *PA Update* 1999, Press release by D. Goenka, BEAG.

4 Viju B. 'Mining blow to Western Ghats', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com) 15/10/2010.

5 Mustafa Plumber, 'Windmills in Koyna forest told to evict', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 06/06/2011.

## **Seriously unprotected**

A few of the lateritic plateaus are present within protected areas such as the Sahyadri TR, but they have not been studied much and not much is known of their biodiversity. Only a small fraction, less than 5% of basalt plateaus, are within RFs. Conservation planning often focuses on conserving a part or representative set of a habitat or contiguous areas. But rocky plateaus function like terrestrial habitat islands, which means that each is potentially unique where biodiversity is concerned, just as in the case of oceanic islands. Each, therefore, needs to be conserved, however small in size.

The plateaus of the Konkan-Malabar region are most seriously threatened and none of these are included in any protected area. Not even a single representative coastal plateau is truly protected. These plateaus are under severe pressure due to growing infrastructure and land conversion to industrial areas and plantations.

Other developments like a nuclear power plant (Jaitapur plateau), thermal power plants (plateaus in Devgad, Vijaygad), and allied developments on plateaus in Ratnagiri and their impact on ecology was studied by the BNHS. The report and any subsequent ecological conservation or management decisions are not yet publicly available. New airports to be developed at Chipi in Sidhudurg district and in Mopa (Goa) have also been proposed on rocky plateaus. A list of plateaus in Maharashtra, their location and current threats can be found in Watve (2013).

## **The way ahead**

Considering various threats and the value of these rocky plateau ecosystems, urgent action has to be taken for their conservation. It is necessary to remove plateaus from the 'wasteland' category, and to publicly acknowledge their biological and ecological value. Environment Impact Assessments need to include thorough assessments of non-woody vegetation, habitat sensitivity and ecosystem services. Including plateaus as conservation zones within the regional development plan has given legal protection to plateaus in Satara district. This could be an effective strategy for other plateaus as well, as it allows multiple human uses of the plateaus as long as biodiversity is not harmed. More action research is needed to mitigate the effects of previous disturbances and to restore the ecological values of the disturbed plateau sites.

A national policy, emphasizing protection and awareness creation for the fragile, ecologically and culturally important areas and of their endemic and threatened biodiversity is required for the diversity of rocky outcrops found in India. Rocky plateaus are but one example of the rich habitat. Such a policy can truly protect the fragile and ecologically highly sensitive habitats and contribute toward conservation of the bio-geo-cultural heritage of India.

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District	Rocky plateau areas	Main Threats	Steps for protection
<b>Basalt Mesa High level (above 800m ASL)</b>			
Nashik	Anjaneri, Tryambakeshwar, Brahmagiri, Other forts	Land-use change, exploitative tourism	Anjaneri Conservation Reserve declared
Ahmednagar	Harishchandragad, Malshej	Land-use change, exploitative tourism	Kalsubai-Harishchandragad WLS, local restrictions on tourism considered
Pune	Ghatghar, Naneghat, Ambe Hatvij, Durgawadi, Warsubai	Land-use change, exploitative tourism	Currently none
Pune	Ahupe, Kondhwal	Exploitative tourism, poor management of non-forest habitat	Included in Bhimashankar WLS
Pune	Kune, Lonavala, Ambavane to Mulshi areas	Land-use change, exploitative tourism	Currently none
<b>Basalt Mesa Low level (below 200mASL)</b>			
Thane	Igatpuri and other areas	Land-use change, exploitative tourism	Currently none
Mumbai	Kanheri	Exploitative tourism, poor management of non-forest habitat	Included in Sanjay Gandhi NP
<b>Lateritic plateaus (SADA) High level (above 800m ASL)</b>			
Raigad	Matheran	Exploitative tourism, poor management of non-forest habitat	Included in Matheran eco-sensitive zone
Satara	Mahabaleshwar-Panchgani plateaus (Wilson point, Arthur seat, Ganpati, Khingar, Dandeghar, Ambral, Rajapuri etc.)	Exploitative tourism, poor management of non-forest habitat	Included in Mahabaleshwar Panchgani eco-sensitive zone

*State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

Satara	Kas cluster	Land-use change, exploitative tourism	Conservation Zone under Satara Regional Plan (MRTP ACT)
Satara	Chalkewadi cluster (including Boposhi etc.)	Land-use change, exploitative tourism, quarrying, windfarms	
Satara	Sada Waghapur cluster (including Mhavshi etc.)	Land-use change, exploitative tourism, quarrying, windfarms	
Satara	Valmik Pathar	Land-use change, exploitative tourism, quarrying, windfarms	Currently none
Satara	Koyna plateaus (including Zadoli etc.)	None	Included with Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary and Sahyadri Tiger Reserve)
Sangli	Chandoli plateaus (including Gothane, Zolambi, Rundiv, Patharpunj etc.)	None	Included in Chandoli National Park
Kolhapur	Amba Ghat plateaus (Amba, Manoli, Dhangarwada etc.)	Bauxite mining, increasing tourism	Sahyadri TR corridor, Mining permissions refused by Forest Dept.
Kolhapur	Masai cluster (Panhala, Masai, Mahalunge, Ringewadi, Girgao etc.)	Bauxite mining, increasing tourism, urbanization, poor habitat management	Mining permissions pending for forest areas, private mining continues
Kolhapur	Durgmanawad, Udgir	Bauxite mining	Mining permissions pending for forest areas, private mining continues
Kolhapur	Radhanagari plateaus (Idarganj, Phejiwade etc.)	None	Included in Radhanagari WLS
Kolhapur	Dajipur plateaus (Manbet, Sawrai etc.)	None	Included in Radhanagari WLS
Kolhapur	Burki	Small amount of tourism	Currently none
Kolhapur	Borbet	Small amount of tourism	Currently none
Kolhapur	Amboli	Land-use change, exploitative tourism	Being controlled through local Biodiversity Management Committee

*State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

Kolhapur	Kasarsada, Mogalgad	Bauxite mining proposed	Mining permissions pending for forest areas
<b>Low Level (SADA) (below 200mASL)</b>			
Ratnagiri	Sangameshwar-Devrukh area	Land use change, quarrying	Local efforts only
Ratnagiri	Ratnagiri (South Sagave-Jaitapur-Nanar-Ambolagad-Vetye-Rajapur etc.)	Land use change, power plant, Oil refinery	Local protests against megaprojects (Biodiversity Law help being considered)
Ratnagiri	Ratnagiri (central and north, Pawas-Dorle-Hatkhamba-Ukshi-Aare-vaare)	Land use change, quarrying	Community efforts of conservation , need urgent protection measures and policy and legal support
Ratnagiri	Ratnagiri (North Dapoli-Abloli-Male-Olgaon-Umbarle and other areas)	Land use change, quarrying	Currently none
Sindhudurg	Devgad-Kudal area (including Devgad, Savantwadi, Nerurpar, Kudal, Aare, Achirne, Talebazar etc. Very large plateau areas in the entire district)	Land use change, quarrying, mining	Local efforts only, need urgent protection measures and policy and legal support

## 5) Community Conserved Areas in Maharashtra

**Neema Pathak Broome with Sneha Gutgutia, Shruti Mokashi, Kavya Chowdhry, Sarosh Ali and Rupesh Patil<sup>1</sup>**

It is now globally recognised that indigenous peoples (IP) and local communities (LC) have governed, used and conserved their territories for millennia. Such territories and areas are recognised to be amongst the richest and most intact ecosystems, on land and sea<sup>2</sup>. Internationally, the diverse institutions and practices of IPs and LCs contributing to conservation are referred to by the umbrella term ICCAs, which refers to Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas<sup>3</sup>. IUCN describes ICCAs as “natural and modified ecosystems, including significant biodiversity, ecological services and cultural values, voluntarily conserved by indigenous and local communities through customary laws or other effective means”<sup>4</sup>. These ICCAs include, among others, self-declared and strictly protected wildlife conservation areas, collective management of livelihood and economic activities, affirmation of spiritual

and cultural values, customary law, and other aspects of sustainable socio-ecological systems and intricate systems of resource management of nomadic and pastoralist communities.

Consequently, IP and LC territories and areas often overlap with government designated and managed protected areas<sup>5</sup> with the latter alienating IPs and LCs and rarely taking into account local systems of governance, management and conservation. Research is now also indicating that local monitoring and control over resources, certainly in some cases, leads to better conservation of biodiversity<sup>6</sup>. The Global Environment Outlook 5 report<sup>7</sup> also states that in the last two decades, while the global protected area (PA) numbers and coverage has gone up, biodiversity has declined at population, species, ecosystem and genetic levels. It recognizes lack of inclusive

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- 2 Sobrevila, C. (2008), as cited in Kothari, A., with Corrigan, C., Jonas, H., Neumann, A., and Shrumm, H. (Eds). (2012). *Recognising and supporting territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities: Global overview and national case studies*. Technical Series No. 64. Montreal, Canada: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, ICCA Consortium, Kalpavriksh, and Natural Justice.
- 3 Source: <http://www.iccaconsortium.org/>
- 4 Dudley, N. (2008). *Guidelines for applying protected area management categories*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.
- 5 Stevens, S., Pathak Broome, N. and Jaeger, T. with Aylwin, J., Azhdari, G., Bibaka, D., Borrini-Feyerabend, G., Colchester, M., Dudley, N., Eghenter, C., Eleazar, F., Farvar, M. T., Frascaroli, F., Govan, H., Hugu, S., Jonas, H., Kothari, A., Reyes, G., Singh, A. and Vaziri, L. (2016). *Recognising and respecting ICCAs overlapped by protected areas*. ICCA Consortium.
- 6 Sheil, D., Boissière, M., and Beaudoin, G. (2015). Unseen sentinels: Local monitoring and control in conservation's blind spots. *Ecology and Society*, 20 (2): 39.
- 7 UNEP. (2012). *Global environment outlook GEO 5*. Nairobi, Kenya: UNEP.



conservation governance as one of the major reasons for this and recommends greater recognition of ICCAs to address this decline. Similarly, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–20, framed by Parties to the CBD at the 10th Conference of Parties in 2010 places significant importance on recognition of ICCAs in reversing biodiversity loss across the planet.

### **Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) in India**

India has a rich history and tradition of conservation linked to the lifestyles and worldviews of the local tribal and non-tribal communities. Conservation processes at these sites are intrinsically connected to local socio-cultural, economic, ecological and political realities. Sacred sites and species, considerably reduced now, were once believed to be widespread across India. Estimates suggest there could still be 100,000 to 150,000 such sites remaining, ranging from a small group of trees to extensive landscapes<sup>8</sup>. Such areas are referred to as Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) in the Indian context.

An attempt was made in 2009 to document some CCAs in India<sup>9</sup>. This documentation included about 140 CCAs but pointed toward this phenomenon being more widespread, with the presence perhaps of hundreds more such initiatives covering a variety of ecosystems, including forests, marine and coastal areas, wetlands, individual species and

sacred landscapes. Subsequently, more detailed documentation was taken up in Nagaland<sup>10</sup>, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha<sup>11</sup>, indicating that CCAs are set up and managed for a range of objectives and have different ecological and social contributions.

### **CCAs in Maharashtra**

Maharashtra is biologically, geographically and culturally very diverse. Its bio-geographical regions are linked and have co-evolved with distinctive local cultures built around intricate traditional knowledge systems, nature-centric worldviews and lifestyles. Much of the forests included in the national parks and sanctuaries of the state are also traditionally home to such tribal and non-tribal communities. Over time, however, some traditional systems have broken down for various reasons, but many do remain. State conservation programmes have not taken into account the astounding cultural diversity that exists in the state and its role and significance for conservation<sup>12</sup>. Indifference of the state toward sustainable livelihood options such as pastoralism is leading to erosion of such ways of being. Both the biological diversity and associated cultural diversity is under grave threat due to Maharashtra's escalating development profile based on rapid economic growth<sup>13</sup>. This has led to displacement of local communities, destabilization of cultures and destruction of large stretches of forests, grasslands, rivers, freshwater inland wetlands, and coastal and marine areas.

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- 8 Malhotra, K. C., Gokhale, Y., Chatterjee, S., and Srivastava, S. (2007). *Sacred Groves in India*. Aryan Books International, New Delhi, and Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, India.
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  - 11 UNDP. (2012). *Community Conserved Areas in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh: A Directory*. New Delhi, India: UNDP.
  - 12 Pande, P., and Pathak, N. (2005). *National Parks and Sanctuaries in Maharashtra: Individual profile and management status* (Vol. 2). Bombay Natural History Society.
  - 13 Maharashtra State Biodiversity Board. (n.d.). *Diversity in ecosystems of Maharashtra*. Retrieved from <http://maharashtrabiodiversityboard.gov.in/maharashtra-at-a-glance/important-ecosystems/>

In this context it is important to understand CCAs in Maharashtra. In the absence of any serious documentation of CCAs in the state, anecdotal accounts indicate a rich tradition of conservation of ecosystems and habitat by the local communities. These include active protection and conservation by setting aside stretches of forests and water bodies, sustainable management of forests and other ecosystems, or collective struggles against strong commercial forces causing destruction of habitat and ecosystems. This article attempts to highlight some such examples with the hope that detailed documentation will be taken up before such sites are lost.

### **Fish sanctuaries in Maharashtra<sup>14</sup>**

Not much is known about the fish sanctuaries in the state, which protect many indigenous and endangered species of fish. The term “sanctuary” here is not to be mistaken for a legally designated sanctuary. These sanctuaries, referred to by different names in different areas, have no legal designation or recognition, but are traditional practices of people living around rivers to protect patches of rivers and fish from exploitation.

Tekpowale *kund* (tank) is located in Mangaon village near Pune, upstream of the Panshet reservoir, on a mountain stream called Kadkuna Nadi. Tekpowale villagers zealously protect the mahaseer fish in it as they consider it sacred. The source of the stream is also considered sacred (*devasthali*). Strict regulations are in place for protection of the *devasthali*, the *kund* and the fish. The *kund* is not used for any other purpose but as a source of drinking water, women are not allowed at the *kund*, and fishing is prohibited. The villagers consider the *kund* to be the source of their life from time immemorial and discourage outside

visitors to the *kund*. They are also reluctant to share information about the *kund* and stories of misfortune befalling those who ignore the regulations are plenty.

Walen *kund* on River Kali in the Mahad region of the Konkan is about 100 yards long and is flanked by a rocky gorge on top of which is located the temple of Goddess Vardayini. The *kund* houses many indigenous and endangered species of fish like *shindas*, *kolas* and the Deccan mahaseer. As per legend, the depth of the pool is unfathomable and the generous offerings made to the temple were taken to a grand temple under water by the priest. Strict rules and regulations were followed. Construction of a major highway passing by the *kund* has now made it easily accessible, bringing about socio-cultural changes and eroding many regulatory customs. The only one that remains today is the prohibition on fishing.

These sanctuaries offer a glimpse of the traditional ways of protecting rivers and their inhabitants. Many such sites have, perhaps, been lost forever because of various dams built over the state's rivers while others continue to face immediate danger from roads, dams, and pollution. An immediate need is documentation and recognition without external impositions and interference in local sentiments, norms and systems.

### **Sacred groves in and around Bhimashankar WLS<sup>15</sup>**

Sacred groves are stretches of forest traditionally protected by local communities for their religious or cultural significance. These sacred groves can range in size from a cluster of trees to hundreds of hectares and are common in most parts of India<sup>16</sup>.

14 Ali, S. (2016, March 13). *Fish sanctuaries in Western Ghats of Maharashtra*. Retrieved from <https://sandrp.wordpress.com/2016/03/31/fish-sanctuaries-in-western-ghats-of-maharashtra/>

15 Mokashi, S. (2016). Field notes collected during on-site research in Bhimashankar, Maharashtra.

16 Malhotra, K. C., et al. (2007). *Sacred Groves in India*. (see note 8).

The sacred groves in the western part of Maharashtra are called *Devrai* or *Devrahati* whereas in eastern Maharashtra, the Madiya tribe calls them *Devgudi*. Nearly 2820 sacred groves have been documented in the state<sup>17</sup>.

Bhimashankar WLS is located in the northern Western Ghats in Pune and Thane districts. This 131 sq km sanctuary was officially notified in 1985<sup>18</sup> and includes about 14 sacred groves<sup>19</sup>, including a large grove surrounding a Shiva temple, which is one of the twelve *Jyotirlingams* in India. This grove is the origin of River Bhima, an important river of the Krishna Valley. The Mahadev-Koli tribe and a smaller population of Katkaris and Dhangars inhabit the sanctuary and its surrounding region. Villages located in and around the sanctuary often have one or more sacred groves dedicated to the local deity, called *ban* or *devacha ban* (God's forest). Most of these groves are between one and six hectares in area. The most common deity is *Vandev* (forest god), also known as *Bhairavnath*, *Bhairoba* or *Kalbbhairavnath*. These groves are either managed collectively, by a clan or a family in the village.

Many taboos and restrictions surround these groves. These include prohibition on tree cutting and fuel wood collection, and often on livestock grazing as well. Fuel wood may be collected from the grove during festivals or ceremonies in the grove itself. Entry of women in temples and groves is prohibited in most cases. Religious ceremonies, offerings and other cultural festivals take place in these groves. In most sacred groves, the annual *Jatra* or *Saptab* is conducted during the month of March–April (*Chaitra*). Rituals

related to agricultural cycles such as during paddy transplantation and harvesting are also performed as a symbol of gratitude to nature and deities. Despite their small size these groves support important local biodiversity and are often sources for local water bodies.

Over the years, there have been numerous changes in the groves in this area. Rudimentary temples in most groves have given way to concrete constructions. Some of the groves have reduced in size while in others only the concrete temple stands. People attribute these changes to the erosion of the belief system. Older people believe in the tradition of the grove more than the younger generation. There is an urgent need to document and recognize these groves while retaining community control over them and initiating dialogues with the community members on social, cultural and ecological value of these groves. Providing incentives could be one way to encourage continuation of this ancient tradition.

### Community conservation in forest ecosystems and security of tenure

Described below are efforts of Mendha, Baripada, Nayakheda and Pachgaon villages, representing many similar villages in the state.

Mendha and Baripada are iconic examples of CCAs, quoted globally for their efforts at local development and biodiversity conservation. For long, both these villages conserved forests used by them but owned by the government. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 or the Forest Rights Act

17 C.P.R. Environment Education Centre, Chennai. Retrieved from [http://www.cpreecenvvis.nic.in/Database/Maharashtra\\_887.aspx](http://www.cpreecenvvis.nic.in/Database/Maharashtra_887.aspx) on 8.8.2016

18 Pande, P. and Pathak, N. (2005). *National Parks and Sanctuaries in Maharashtra: Individual profile and management status* (Vol. 2). Bombay Natural History Society.

19 Ibid

(FRA) provided them an opportunity to gain legal security to their access and governance rights over these forests. Panchgaon and Nayakheda in Amravati and Chandrapur districts, respectively, started conservation efforts after their legal rights over surrounding forests were recognised under the FRA. Thus, community empowerment and biodiversity conservation here are a direct outcome of legal recognition of collective rights.

### **Case study of Mendha Lekha, Gadchiroli<sup>20, 21</sup>**

Mendha-Lekha, located in Gadchiroli district, is home to 400 people, all belonging to the Gond tribe. On 15 August 2011, Mendha's legal rights and responsibilities to use, manage and conserve the 1,800 ha of forests falling within its customary boundary were recognized as community forest resource (CFR) under the FRA.

However, the struggle of the village towards self-determination and protection of its forests had already started in the late 1970s while resisting a hydroelectric project in the region. The project was cancelled in 1985 but the resistance transformed into a strong movement toward self-rule based on tribal cultural identity and control over traditional lands and resources. Subsequent internal discussions led to decisions toward self-empowerment and self-determination leading to social, cultural and environmental changes.

The hallmark of Mendha's success lies in its local institutions and the principles with which they function. The gram sabha, represented by

all adult women and men, is the main decision-making body in the village. Decisions taken by consensus and in a transparent manner are implemented through oral yet strong social rules.

All government and non-government activities in the village can only be carried out after permission from the gram sabha, which is itself supported by a number of other village institutions. Amongst the most significant actions taken by the village in recent times has been declaring all village land (community or privately owned) as village owned under the Gramdaan Act of Maharashtra. The intention is to prevent land alienation under distress. A comprehensive forest management strategy was developed including need-based extraction and sale of forest produce such as bamboo, establishment of no-go zones for wildlife protection and drafting a village biodiversity register.

Village development and forest management activities are linked to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) so that all villagers have employment throughout the year, ensuring zero distress out-migration. Through these institutions and systems the village has been able to ensure effective village and forest governance leading to security of livelihoods, financial security, food security, secured access to natural resources, and cultural and ecological security.

### **Baripada, Dhule<sup>22, 23</sup>**

Baripada village, located in Sakri Block of Dhule district, is inhabited by 100 households

20 Pathak, N. and Gour-Broome, V. (2001). *Tribal self-rule and natural resource management: Community based conservation at Mendha-Lekha, Maharashtra, India*. Kalpavriksh, Pune, and India and International Institute for Environment and Development, London.

21 Ajit S. and Pathak Broome, N. (2016). Field notes collected during on-site research in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra.

22 Chowdhary, K. (2016). Field notes collected during on-site research in Dhule, Maharashtra.

23 Shukla, S. (2009). Baripada village, Dhule. In Pathak, N. (Ed.). *Community Conserved Areas in India: A Directory* (pp. 389-391). Pune, India: Kalpavriksh.

of the Kokna tribe. Spread over 300 ha, the village is surrounded by 482 ha of forest. Protected by the people for last 25 years, the forest supports rich and diverse vegetation and wildlife.

By 1990 the forest around Baripada had degraded due to illegal felling and exploitation of forest resources by people of Baripada and the surrounding villages. Extraction and sale of timber was the only livelihood option available in this poverty-ridden area. With forests turning barren the ground water started depleting. Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, one third of the wells in the village had dried up and people had to sometimes walk up to four kilometres to get drinking water. The meagre livelihood options included subsistence agriculture, manual labour and extraction and sale of forest produce. Livelihoods related distress out-migration was common.

Under the guidance and leadership of Chairtram Pawar (who came back to the village from Pune to become the sarpanch after completing his education), the villagers realized that their well-being was directly dependent on the well-being of the forest. They formulated rules to protect the forest and improve the social condition of the village. This included a ban on commercial firewood extraction, vehicles entering the forest, unregulated grazing, and brewing and consumption of all kinds of alcohol. Local forest guards were appointed, education for all children was made compulsory, and fines were imposed for breaking the rules. Through *shramdaan* (voluntary labour) and previous knowledge of water conservation, the villagers built small check dams to hold rainwater and prevent soil erosion.

Since 1991, Baripada has undergone a huge transformation. The village, which was once

water-deficient, now meets all its annual needs and benefits many villages downstream. People cultivate a diversity of crops throughout the year. Wildlife populations have revived and this is now being monitored by students from local colleges. Baridapa's legal rights over their forests under the FRA were recognised in 2016.

### **Nayakheda village in Amravati<sup>24</sup>**

Located in Paratwada Block of Amravati district, Nayakheda village, like other forest areas in this area was well forested till a few decades ago. According to the local people, unregulated extraction over a period of time led to 'the forest going bald'. In 2008, Nayakheda and neighbouring villages filed for CFR rights under the FRA.

The mobilization toward filing these claims led the youth in the village to initiate a number of social and ecological processes, including forest protection and plantation through voluntary labour. Finally, after receiving legal titles over their CFR in 2012, all gram sabhas organized meetings to discuss the management of the forest and formulated a set of rules and regulations. These included setting aside of areas for soil and water conservation and wildlife protection, protection from fire, controlling unregulated and/or illegal use.

Negotiations with the state government led to the government passing a resolution to make such villages a priority for implementation of all government schemes and programmes in this area. Consequently, implementation of government schemes, especially MNREGA, has led to the creation of livelihood opportunities within these villages, significantly reducing out migration. Conservation efforts have led to regulated extraction of resources and livestock grazing, leading to increased forest covered and wildlife sightings.

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24 Mutha, S. (2014). Field notes collected during on-site research in Amravati, Maharashtra. And Pathak Broome, N., Kothari, A., and Desor, S. (2014). Field notes collected during a field trip to Payvihir in Amravati, Maharashtra. Unpublished Data, Kalpavriksh, Pune

## **Pachgaon, Chandrapur<sup>25</sup>**

Pachgaon is a small village located in the Gondpipri taluka of Chandrapur district. 72% of the population here belongs to the Gond tribal community. Livelihood mainly depends on subsistence farming and sale of bamboo and other forest produce. According to the villagers, prior to receiving a legal title over their CFR in 2012, it was difficult for a majority of people in the village to support their livelihoods. In the absence of any usufruct rights over forests, constant harassment by the forest department and distress out migration was common.

Since 2012, the *gram sabha* has been taking all village and forest related decisions. The villagers follow over 115 rules and regulations relating to forest protection and patrolling. These are related, among others, to fines for violations, bamboo harvesting and management, no go zones to ensure wildlife protection, gram sabha functioning, and extraction of forest resources for personal consumption.

Harvesting and sale of bamboo is currently the major source of income for the villagers. Both men and women are engaged in bamboo harvesting under the guidance and supervision of the gram sabha. Harvested bamboo is stored, graded and auctioned. Revenue thus earned is deposited in the gram sabha account and used for payment of wages and forest management activities. Profits are distributed to all villagers once a month. Ten percent of all wages are retained by the gram sabha to be given in the four months when no bamboo can be harvested. Of the total area of 2486.90 acres, 85 acres is strictly protected and managed as a critical zone for wild, including tigers, which are regularly sighted here.

## **Threats and challenges to CCAs**

### **Lack of recognition and policy support**

CCAs in Maharashtra continue to face a number of threats, internal and external, as is the case elsewhere in the country too. Amongst the various reasons for this is the fact that there is little documentation and no recognition of their social and ecological value.

### **Threats from the dominant economic model and industrialisation**

Even before CCAs are identified, documented and recognized, they are disappearing or are threatened by mining, hydro-electricity and irrigation projects, urban expansion, industrialisation, special economic zones, industrial corridors, highways and roads, and other development projects.

Wider market forces and modern lifestyles are changing aspirations and rendering traditional value systems ineffective amongst the youth. The modern system of education does not inculcate respect for local values and rubbishes the knowledge systems that formed the basis for traditional conservation.

### **Lack of recognition and supportive policy environment for CCAs**

The FRA, which was enacted in 2006, is the first forest related legislation in India which accepts the injustice done to forest-dependent communities when forest land and resource rights were denied to them. It announces that such communities already have such rights and these only need to be recognised and vested, and lays out a process by which to do so.

Benefits of such legal recognition are evident from the examples of villages mentioned above. However, the implementation of the

25 Gutgutia S., Chowdhary, K, and Patil, R. (2016). Field notes collected during on-site research in Chandrapur, Maharashtra.

26 Tatpati, M. (Ed). (2015). *Citizens' report 2015: Community forest rights under the Forest Rights Act*. Pune, Bhubaneswar and New Delhi: Kalpavriksh and Vasundhara in collaboration with Oxfam India as part of Community Forest Rights Learning and Advocacy Process.

Act itself has been tardy in most parts of the state and its immense potential for developing inclusive conservation strategies remains untapped<sup>26</sup>. This is particularly true in case of PAs where local communities continue to face relocation under the assumption that they cannot be partners in conservation<sup>27</sup>.

On the other hand, other ecosystem types, like marine and coastal ecosystems, have no law such as the FRA. A number of legal provisions exist which could lend support to CCAs in such cases, but most of these have serious limitations. For instance, in 2003, a category of community reserves was added to the WLPA, which could have helped provide much-needed legal backing to CCAs. It has unfortunately, remained restrictive<sup>28</sup>, as among others, it prescribes institutional structures which would entail greater control by actors outside the conserving communities. The Biological Diversity Act could provide support through Biodiversity Heritage Sites but no such sites have been declared in Maharashtra yet.

### **The way ahead**

Worldwide experience has indicated that chances of long-term conservation and livelihood benefits are higher where communities have legal rights of ownership or where they have gained *de facto* control. Proper implementation of the FRA in India and assertion of rights by local communities

under its provisions, along with other supportive laws such as Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, Biological Diversity Act and MNREGA, shows the above to be true. It also shows that such laws create opportunities for conservation for the local people where they did not previously exist. These rights-based legislations have given voice and power to the local communities who otherwise felt defenceless in the face of mining, hydro-electricity and irrigation projects, urban expansion, and industrialisation<sup>29</sup>. Hundreds of villages across Maharashtra have already claimed CFR rights and thousands more could claim the same in the future. Effective implementation of these legislations and appropriate support from government and non-government actors could lead to local communities conserving a large part of the state's forests while ensuring their own well-being. Similar laws need to be enacted for ecosystems other than forests.

In addition to the legal support mentioned above, support is often sought by the communities for the following<sup>30</sup>:

- Documentation highlighting the role of CCAs in ensuring cultural and ecological security.
- Recognition and consideration of CCAs during the environment and forest clearance processes for development projects.

- 
- 27 Desor, S. (2014). *Making of a Tiger Reserve - A study of the process of notification of Tiger Reserves, in accordance with WLPA 2006*. Unpublished. Kalpavriksh and Action Aid, India. (Also see Dividing lines-tribal rights and tiger reserves by Shiba Desor (Pg ???- ???; this compilation))
- 28 Pathak, N. and Bhushan, S. (2004). Community reserve and conservation reserve: More reserve and less community. In: *The Hindu Survey of Environment 2004*.
- 29 Tatpati, M. (Ed). (2013). *Assertion of rights over community forest resource*. Unpublished report. Kalpavriksh and Greenpeace, Pune.
- 30 Adapted from Pathak Broome, N. and Dash, T. (2012). Recognition and support of ICCAs in India. In Kothari, A., with Corrigan, C., Jonas, H., Neumann, A., and Shrumm, H. (Eds). (2012). *Recognising and supporting territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities: Global overview and national case studies*. Technical Series No. 64. Montreal, Canada: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, ICCA Consortium, Kalpavriksh, and Natural Justice.

### *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

- Supporting, where desired, local processes for formulation of management plans, strategies and monitoring systems (in line with traditional knowledge and practices).
- Assistance in obtaining and adapting locally appropriate and sustainable technologies and practices for enhancing livelihoods, and where appropriate, linkages with consumers and sensitive markets in order to generate financial resources, including through community-based tourism.
- Capacity building in basic accounting, marketing, management and leadership skills
- Assistance in tackling wildlife related damage to crops, livestock, and property, through traditional and new methods of resolving conflicts.
- Facilitating community exchange programmes for people-to-people knowledge sharing, generation and transfer.
- Incorporation of community-based approaches into relevant conservation schemes, action plans, policies and programmes, including acknowledgement of and mechanisms to include provisions of FRA and PESA within these.

All supportive actions extended to the communities should be with their free prior informed consent (FPIC) and in case of documentation, monitoring, etc., should be done by them or with their involvement. Supportive processes should be with the intention of strengthening local processes and institutions to become more robust, rather than imposing systems and institutions which render local processes and knowledge powerless.



## **SECTION 3**

*State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*



Vol. XXV, No. 4

August 2019 (No. 140)

## LIST OF CONTENTS

### EDITORIAL

The *PA Update* in other languages? 3

### NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

#### Andhra Pradesh

Not enough central funds for elephant conservation: AP officials 3

#### Assam

'Special Rhino Protection Force' deployed in Kaziranga NP 4  
Unique IDs based on characteristic body features used for elephant census in Kaziranga NP  
Project under MGNREGA for Golden langur conservation in Kakoijana RF  
Simleng River Impenetrable in Dima Hasao district to be Assam's sixth NP

#### Bihar

Gangetic dolphins found in Bihar's Mahananda river 5

#### Gujarat

Rusty-spotted cat reported in Jalore WLS for the first time 5  
Two leopards electrocuted in two days near Gir WLS  
Resort owner held for organising lion shows near Gir

#### Himachal Pradesh

Photographic evidence of Musk deer in Kalatop Khajjiar WLS 6

Snow leopard population rises in the state

#### Karnataka

Proposed Mekadetu project to submerge nearly 32 sq km of Cauvery WLS 7

Study in Nagarhole NP finds NDVI not reliable for estimating food availability for elephants

Kappatagudda CR declared a sanctuary

Sharavathi Valley WLS extended, renamed to ensure conservation of Lion-tailed macaque  
Proposal for wildlife forensic lab in Karnataka  
Task force recommends Article 371(J)-like special status for 11 Western Ghats districts

#### Maharashtra

Dam project will impact 719 ha of forest in Tansa WLS 9  
1600 acres forest cut in Sawantwadi-Dodamarg wildlife corridor since 2014  
Special drives to search snares around Tipeswar WLS

BJP legislator's firm's illegal hill-cutting work in SGNP's ESZ

MoU signed for Aarey zoo in vicinity of SGNP  
HC seeks land records of SGNP to check whether Aarey falls within the PA

'Warriors of SGNP' for protection of the PA  
BMC to buy 100 acres near Tadoba Andhari TR to compensate for loss in SGNP

CAG raps Maharashtra govt on lapses in management of TRs

#### Madhya Pradesh

Tigers sighted in Kheoni WLS for first time 13

#### Tamil Nadu

Tamil Yeoman declared state butterfly  
Fined for collecting plants from Kalakkad Mundanthurai TR 13

#### Telangana

In-principle approval for drilling for uranium exploration in Amrabad TR 13

#### Uttar Pradesh

Census records substantial increase in wildlife populations in Dudhwa TR  
NGT seeks final notification for Hastinapur WLS within six months 14

<b>Uttarakhand</b>	<b>14</b>	596 new species of flora and fauna discovered in India in 2018
Fossils of Asian elephant's ancestral species found in Corbett TR		218 leopard deaths in first four months of 2019
Study on inter- and intra-species fighting in Corbett TR reveals interesting information		NF Railway gets innovation award for innovation to keep elephants away from railway tracks
Tourism revenue of Corbett TR meant for local people being diverted: Director		Tourists cause stress to tigers: CCMB study
NTCA objects; SC stays the construction of Chillarkhal-Laldhang road between Rajaji and Corbett TRs		
Corbett TR will not entertain requests with references from VIPs		
Geophones for monitoring elephant movement near railway tracks in Uttarakhand		
<b>West Bengal</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>SOUTH ASIA</b>
Rhino numbers increase but with lopsided gender ratio in Jaldapara and Gorumara NPs		<b>Bangladesh/India</b>
Siren warning system in Gorumara NP to warn of elephants		Wolf killed in Bangladesh could have been from the Indian side of the Sundarbans
Radio collar helps prevent elephant raids in Jalpaiguri		
<b>NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE</b>
No more roads through wildlife sanctuaries and national parks: MoRTH		<b>Andhra Pradesh</b>
		Proposals for world heritage and Ramsar site tag for Coringa mangroves
		<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>
		MoEFCC seeks proposal to declare Dhanauri as Ramsar site, Sarus sanctuary
		<b>FROM THE ARCHIVES</b>
		<b>PERSPECTIVE</b>
		<b>Dolphins, Turtles &amp; Relationships: The challenges of sustaining a marine wildlife stranding network</b>

**Protected Area Update**  
 Vol. XXV, No. 4, August 2019 (No. 140)  
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**Publication of the PA Update has been supported by**  
**Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust**  
**C/o Foundation for Ecological Security <http://fes.org.in/>**  
**Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies and**  
**Donations from a number of individual supporters**

## EDITORIAL

### The *PA Update* in other languages?

One of the concerns and even an occasional discussion in the past has been about the fact that the *PA Update* is only available in English when it would be rather useful in other languages as well. That a lot of our conservation communication and outreach material in English has been a serious issue and there is a huge gap to be filled there. While a number of initiatives in different languages have come up in the recent past, it is clear that much more needs to be done. It is a huge bottleneck in reaching out more widely and ensuring more positive conservation outcomes.

An odd attempt or two notwithstanding, the *PA Update* is no exception. Many years ago, we did, in fact, make a brief effort in collaboration with the Paratwada based NGO, Khoj, to work on a Marathi version. A couple of issues were produced even, but we never managed to take it any further. The challenges were related to both, human and financial resources.

Now, many years later, we are hoping that a first big change will happen as the idea of a Marathi version of the newsletter takes shape once again. The intention is to create a Marathi *PA Update* in a format and style based on the English original, but with a primary focus of news from Maharashtra. The effort will be to source news and information from the Marathi media and compliment it with translated stories of relevance from other parts of the country. A team is already in place for this and efforts are currently on to raise the necessary financial resources. If readers have any suggestions and ideas of how we can take this forward and also raise the necessary resources we will be very happy to hear from you.

Perhaps there are other teams, organisations and/or individuals who think other language versions can also be tried. We would be happy to hear from you as well. We can play

catalyst, we can be the sounding board, we can discuss ideas and we can also think of other creative ways to go beyond just a newsletter. It would indeed be an exciting day when we have multiple language versions of the *PA Update*, each tailored for specific geographies and issues even as we contribute towards a common goal.

We hope, in the mean time, that the Marathi version takes off soon and will be needing all your good wishes and support.

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### Not enough central funds for elephant conservation: AP officials

Andhra Pradesh forest officials have said that insufficient support from the Centre is not allowing for conservation measures for elephants in the state, including in the Rayala Elephant Reserve, the only reserve in the state, which borders Tamil Nadu.

The state is estimated to have 90 elephants, 40 of which are in the Rayala Elephant Reserve. The elephants have moved into Andhra from Odisha on the one side and from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu on the other. There has been a demand for creating an 'elephant reserve' in the northern part of the state as it plays host to a population that has migrated from Odisha.

The Centre has allocated less than Rs. 20 lakhs per annum to Andhra for the last few years under Project Elephant when the requirement is for at least Rs. three crore. In the recent budget, in fact, only Rs 1.87 lakh were allotted to the state under Project Elephant.

Source: 'Meagre funds from Centre stunt tusker reserves in AP',  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),  
08/07/19.

## ASSAM

### 'Special Rhino Protection Force' deployed in Kaziranga NP

A 82 member strong 'Special Rhino Protection Force' with the sole objective of protecting the rhino was recently deployed in the Kaziranga National Park (NP). The force, comprising of 74 men and eight women, underwent 43 weeks of training and participated in a passing-out parade at the 9th Assam Police Battalion (APBN), Berhampur, Nagaon on June 28. It will be divided into eight teams, which will be deployed respectively in Agratoli, Burapahar, Bokakhat, Kohora, Bagori, Panpur, Biswanath and Gomeri.

The force has been designed on lines of the Assam Forest Protection Force (AFPF) (formed in 1986 for the 'better protection and security of the forests, forest produce and wildlife of Assam'), and has been created in collaboration between the central and state governments, following an initiative of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA). While primary focus would be protection of the rhino, the NTCA can ask for the services of the force to be used in tiger conservation in any other part of the state as well.

The force has been created keeping in mind the rampant poaching of rhinos seen in the Kaziranga over the years. While 2013 and 2014 saw 27 poaching incidents each year (the highest in the last decade), the figure decreased to 17 in 2015 and 18 in 2016. The last two years have seen a total of 6 cases each year, with three being reported in the first half of 2019.

The maximum age of the constables comprising the force would be 40 years.

Source: Tora Agarwala. 'In Kaziranga, now a special force to protect the one-horned rhino', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 03/07/19.

### Unique IDs based on characteristic body features used for elephant census in Kaziranga NP

Researchers from the Wildlife Conservation Society India and Assam Forest Department have used systematically documented photographic identities of individual elephants to estimate elephant populations in the Kaziranga National Park (NP).

Based on their characteristic body features such as shape of the ear lobes, tusk orientation and tail length among others, each elephant was assigned a unique ID. This ID was then attached to all subsequent recaptures of the same elephant. The elephants were divided into adult males and herd-adults (comprising adult females and sub-adults) based on social structure. The researchers photographed 890 elephant sightings, out of which 720 sightings yielded usable photographs for individual identification. Of them, the number of unique elephants comprised 210 adult females, 23 sub-adult females, 88 adult males and 28 sub-adult males. Of the 88 adult males, 48 were tuskers and while 40 did not have tusks.

The study estimated that a total of 908 animals including 228 adult males and 610 juvenile and young comprise the population of elephants found both within the national park and the adjoining habitats.

The research team included Varun R Goswami, Mahendra K Yadava, Divya Vasudev, Parvathi K Prasad, Pragyan Sharma and Devcharan Jathanna. The findings have been published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

Source: Monika Kundu Srivastava. 'Photographic identities may help in elephant census: Study', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 19/06/19.

### Project under MGNREGA for Golden langur conservation in Kakoijana RF

Bongaigaon district authorities have launched a Rs. 27.24 lakh project under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to plant guava, mango,

blackberry and other fruit trees for the Golden langurs *Trachypithecus geei* in the 17 sq. km Kakoijana Reserve Forest (RF). The saplings will be taken care of jointly by the Assam Forest Department and the local communities.

Community-based conservation initiatives involving 34 villages had helped the Golden langur population in Kakoijana rise to 500 by the year 2015. But scarce food saw some of them set up colonies in nearby forest patches such as in Malegarh, Nigamghola and Bhumeswar. Also, several Golden langurs have died due to electrocution and in road accidents while looking for food beyond the RF.

The state electricity distribution unit has in response been working on the Bongaigaon administration's proposal to insulate overhead wires around Kakoijana while the highway authorities have put up signs for speed regulation at vulnerable points.

Wildlife activists have pointed out that Kakoijana was once contiguous with the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), about 40 km away and straddling adjoining Dhubri and Kokrajhar districts. They have also noted that the joint forest management approach for Kakoijana is not a long-term solution and that Kakoijana needs to be declared a WLS (*PA Updates* 29, 26, 25 and 20).

There are estimated to be about 600 Golden langurs scattered across western Assam and the foothills of Bhutan.

(Also see *PA Updates* 50 & 44)

Source: Rahul Karmakar. 'Golden langur to get fruits of MGNREGA', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 09/06/19.

#### **Simleng River Impenetrable in Dima Hasao district to be Assam's sixth NP**

The Simleng River Impenetrable National Park (NP) in Dima Hasao district is proposed to be Assam's sixth NP. The other five are Kaziranga, Manas, Nameri, Dibru-Saikhowa and Orang.

The new NP will cover an area of approximately 100 sq. km and form a large contiguous conservation belt along with the adjacent Borail Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in

Cachar district and the Nampuh (Narpuh) WLS in neighbouring Meghalaya.

Source: 'Assam's 6th national park to be set in Dima Hasao', [www.guwahatiplus.com](http://www.guwahatiplus.com), 03/06/19.

### **BIHAR**

#### **Gangetic dolphins found in Bihar's Mahananda river**

A survey conducted in March-April 2019 by a team of scientists from the Vikramshila Biodiversity Research and Education Centre (VBREC) of Tilka Manjhi Bhagalpur University, has reported the first sighting of the Gangetic river dolphin in the Mahananda river, a tributary of the Ganga in Bihar's Kishanganj district. The survey recorded a total of 14 animals - seven adults and seven calves.

The presence of the dolphins in the Mahananda in neighbouring Araria district during monsoon floods, had been reported long ago by environmental activist Sudan Sahay but it had never been verified.

Sunil Choudhary, director VBREC, has said that the survey was not conducted in the ideal season and has proposed that a fresh survey be conducted in the Mahananda from October 15 to February. He noted there was inadequate water in the river during the recent survey and it was difficult to even use a boat for navigation to examine the dolphins. He noted that their population in this river and its tributaries could be much higher.

Source: Mohd Imran Khan. 'Gangetic dolphins found in Bihar's Mahananda river', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 03/07/19.

### **GUJARAT**

#### **Rusty-spotted cat reported in Jessore WLS for the first time**

A Rusty-spotted cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* has been sighted in the Jessore Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) for the first time. This is the

second time in the last decade the cat has been sighted in the state; the earlier instance being in the Kutch region in 2013.

One of the camera traps installed in the sanctuary by the forest department captured an image of an adult cat recently. The management plan for the sanctuary will now include management for the Rusty-spotted cat, said a forest official.

Source: 'Rusty-spotted cat sighted in Jessore', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 09/06/19.

### **Two leopards electrocuted in two days near Gir WLS**

Two leopards died after being electrocuted in two separate incidents in two days near Gir Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The incidents occurred in the first week of June. In both the cases, officials said, the leopards were trapped and electrocuted by electric transformers while chasing prey.

A four-year-old female leopard was found dead with its corpse stuck to an electric transformer at a farm in Talala village in Talala forest range while in an earlier incident, an eight-year-old female leopard was found dead with its carcass also stuck to an electric transformer in a farm in Vangdhra village in Tulsishyam forest range.

Such incidents of leopards dying of electrocution are a regular occurrence in Gir and safety measures regarding electric transformers have not yet been taken to avert these accidental deaths.

Source: Vijaysinh Parmar. 'Two leopards die after being electrocuted by transformers near Gir Wildlife Sanctuary', [www.news18.com](http://www.news18.com), 07/06/19.

### **Resort owner held for organising lion shows near Gir**

Mahendrasinh Solanki, owner of a resort in Bhalchhel village of Sasan Gir of Mendarada taluka was arrested recently for allegedly

organizing illegal lion shows. His premises were also sealed.

Forest department officials said Solanki had been advertising the shows on social media platforms; he had uploaded video clips on Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. The shows were also being advertised for Rs 999 on his website. He had also offered to facilitate tourists to walk side-by-side with the lions.

Source: 'Resort owner held for organising illegal lion shows', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 07/07/19.

## **HIMACHAL PRADESH**

### **Photographic evidence of Musk deer in Kalatop Khajjiar WLS**

The first photographic evidence of the presence of the Musk deer in Kalatop Khajjiar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) was obtained recently by a local businessmen and wildlife enthusiast. He clicked a photograph of the deer somewhere on the road between Lakkar Mandi and Kalatop.

Forest officials had recorded droppings and footprints of the deer earlier this year but photographic proof was not available.

The exact number of the deer in the sanctuary will only be known after the 2020 census. Notably, during the 2018 census the wildlife department had recorded photographic evidence of Musk deer in the Kugti WLS as well.

Source: 'Musk deer caught on camera in Kalatop Khajjiar Wildlife Sanctuary', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 22/06/19.

### **Snow leopard population rises in the state**

The Himachal Pradesh Forest Department wildlife wing has, in a recent exercise, recorded 49 Snow leopards in upper Kinnaur, Pin Valley, Tabo, Tharot-Miyar, Bhaga, Chandra and the upper Spiti landscape. Areas that still need to be



counted include Chamba, Kinnaur and the Great Himalayan National Park.

The estimation project is being carried out by the wildlife wing in association with the Mysore based Nature Conservation Foundation. More than 30 cameras have been installed at various locations on the left bank of Spiti river to be able to arrive at a rough estimate of the Snow leopard population here.

Studies in 2016, though not very scientific, had put the number of Snow leopards in the state at 67, which was far higher than the earlier figure of less than 20. With the launch of a Snow leopard conservation project in the state now, the number is said to have shot up and forest officials estimate that their present number could be as high as 100.

Source: Pratibha Chauhan. 'Snow leopard population goes up in state', [www.tribuneindia.com](http://www.tribuneindia.com), 16/06/19.

## KARNATAKA

### **Proposed Mekadetu project to submerge nearly 32 sq km of Cauvery WLS**

Of the 52.52 sq. km needed for the proposed Mekadetu Balancing Reservoir project, 31.81 sq. km will be in the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). Another 18.69 sq. km is adjacent forestland while the remaining 2.01 sq. km is revenue or private land.

The Rs. 9,000-crore project will utilise an additional 4.75 tmcft of drinking water to provide for the Bengaluru Metropolitan Region, will store floodwaters to prevent it from "escaping to the sea" and to generate 400 MW of energy. The project is estimated to provide nearly one crore people in Bengaluru with 135 litres of water per day.

The project has been vehemently opposed by Tamil Nadu over fears that the project will result in lower release of water to the state. Environmentalists have also expressed opposition fearing large-scale, irreversible damage to the eco-system of the sanctuary.

Maps made available with the pre-feasibility document show that a linear path

along the existing forest along the river will be submerged, cutting off many wildlife and elephant migratory routes. The project will also see the displacement of the Iruliga tribals and other residents of five villages: Madavala, Kongedoddi, Sangama, Bommasandra, and Muthathi.

The report estimates that 250 buildings and houses will be submerged. The popular Bheemeshwari Fishing Camp and Galibore Fishing Camp, apart from tourist spots in Muthathi will also go under water.

Source: Mohit Rao. 'Mekadetu project to take land away from Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 02/07/19.

### **Study in Nagarhole NP finds NDVI not reliable for estimating food availability for elephants**

A field study has shown that the normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) that remotely estimates density of vegetation does not yield a reliable estimate of food abundance for elephants in tropical forests. It shows, in fact, that the NDVI has a negative correlation with graminoids – preferentially consumed by elephants in tropical forests. Because of the poor correlation, NDVI cannot be reliably used as a measure of forage abundance in a multi-storey forest with a low proportional abundance of food species.

The study was conducted in the Nagarhole National Park (NP) by a team of researchers from the Evolutionary and Organismal Biology Unit of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bengaluru and was led by TNC Vidya. It was published recently in the journal *Biotropica*.

NDVI has been used in the past to estimate the amount of food abundance available to herbivorous animals. It has also been used in attempts to track the presence of elephants using the vegetation they consume. This study claims that the method can be misleading.

Other experts are reported to have said that the results are not surprising and that this pattern was shown in other settings as well.

Source: Shubashree Desikan. 'Remotely sensed indices unreliable in informing elephant forage', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 22/06/19.

#### **Kappatagudda CR declared a sanctuary**

The Karnataka government has notified the Kappatagudda forest as a wildlife sanctuary (WLS) superseding the earlier notification of Kappatagudda as a conservation reserve (CR) (*PA Update* Vol. XXIII, No. 1). The sanctuary will comprise an area of 244.15 sq. km spread across the three taluks of Gadak, Mundargi and Shirahatti in Gadag district.

Kappatagudda had been declared a CR in 2017 partly as a result of the 'Save Kappatagudda' movement led by the late Siddalinga Swami of Tontadarya Mutt (popularly known as the Green Seer) and supported by 15 religious mutts here. A number of other people including farmers, forest officials, students and environmentalists were also involved in the movement to secure these forests that have been under threat from the mining industry as the region is rich in gold and iron deposits.

Source: Meera Bhardwaj. 'Kappatagudda forest is now a wildlife sanctuary', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 18/05/19.

#### **Sharavathi Valley WLS extended, renamed to ensure conservation of Lion-tailed macaque**

The Karnataka government has passed an order extending the boundaries of the Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) to ensure conservation of the Lion-tailed macaque (LTM). The decision was taken at the 11th meeting of the State Board for Wildlife, held on January 9, earlier this year. The official order for the same was passed on June 7. The sanctuary has also been renamed the Sharavathi Valley LTM Sanctuary.

The original sanctuary was spread over an area of 43,123 hectares. Now the Aghanashini LTM Conservation Reserve in Uttara Kannada district, spread over 29,893 hectares, and around 20,000 hectares of reserve forest in Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada districts have been brought under the purview of the new sanctuary. With this, Sharavathi Valley LTM Sanctuary will have a total area of 93,016 hectares.

The rights, including ownership, utilisation and possession, enjoyed by locals on the non-forest land will remain unaffected by the new order. Even the encroached area ordered for regularisation by the government in 1997 and falling within the limits of the notified area is to be excluded from the purview of the sanctuary.

Source: PM Veerendra. 'Sharavathi sanctuary boundary extended to protect lion-tailed macaque', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 09/06/19.

#### **Proposal for wildlife forensic lab in Karnataka**

The Karnataka Forest Department has mooted setting up its own wildlife forensic sciences laboratory in the state to make its legal battle stronger. This follows the setting up recently of such a lab in Chennai. The matter was also discussed in a recent meeting of officials from the two states.

Matters that a lab such as this would help resolve would include identifying if seized meat is of cattle or of wild animals and also in cases pertaining to carcasses of wild animals.

The FD is said to be worried, however, of the cost of setting up such a lab, the seriousness among political circles, expertise training to staffers and getting a dedicated team of experts for the lab, among others.

Source: Bosky Khanna. 'Karnataka to have its own wildlife forensic lab', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 03/07/19.

#### **Task force recommends Article 371(J)-like special status for 11 Western Ghats districts**

The Western Ghats Task Force, in a report recently submitted to the Karnataka

government, has recommended that eleven districts that harbour forests of the Western Ghats should get special status on the lines of Article 371(J) for Hyderabad-Karnataka. The districts range from Chamarajanagar along the eastern edge of the state to Dakshina Kannada and upwards till Belagavi and also Dharwad.

The report, which recommends 33 points of action for the conservation of the Western Ghats, has suggested that the state government pursue the matter with the Centre as the special status would also guarantee reservations in education and employment for those residing close to forests here.

The recommendations made include one for the prohibition of all new projects in the Western Ghats such as road, railway, power, and river-diversion projects. It notes that there should be no more projects after the Yettinahole River Diversion is completed and the diversion of Sharavathi waters to Bengaluru should also not be allowed.

The report recommends further the regulation of heavy earthmovers and machinery through permits and mandatory installation of GPS, revision of the sand mining policy to exclude areas in the Western Ghats, conservation of sacred groves, development of an eco-tourism policy, and establishment of elephant corridors, among others.

The proposal needs to be first accepted by the state chief minister and cabinet before it can be forwarded to the Centre for its approval.

Source: 'Task force recommends Article 371(J)-like special status for 11 Western Ghats districts', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 03/07/19.

## **MAHARASHTRA**

### **Dam project will impact 719 ha of forest in Tansa WLS**

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has submitted an updated proposal to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) for a project involving three new dams - Gargai, Pinjal and Damanganga to augment water supply to the city of Mumbai.

The project will need the diversion of 719 hectares of forest of the Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in addition to 135 ha of non-forest land. The BMC will also need to arrange for the resettlement and rehabilitation of 280 tribal families from seven villages - Ogada, Fanasgaon, Pachghar, Tilmal, Amale, Khodade - in the proposed project area

In a note justifying the location for the project the BMC has noted that, "Although a considerable length of the Gargai river passes through reserved forests and Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary, the submergence of forests and/or sanctuary has not been considered as a long-term adverse impact in concluding the location of the dam. In fact, a dam enriches the surrounding flora and fauna, due to the reservoir formed (...) upstream. It is seen as a long-term positive impact that the dam may have on its surrounding region."

The note has also proposed to develop pastures to help increase the herbivore population, which in turn will benefit the wild cats and other carnivores in the sanctuary. It has further proposed to reserve 0.5 per cent of the project's water capacity for wildlife.

Conservationists have expressed concern over the impact that the project will have on the sanctuary in addition to the forests and wildlife of Shahapur, Khardi, Vaitarna and eastern Wada that will come under the catchment area of the project.

Mumbai currently gets 3,800 MLD of water daily from seven dams and if this project is approved, it will provide an additional 2,891 MLD water to Mumbai by 2050.

Source: Ranjeet Jadhav. 'New dam in Tansa will kill 719-hectare forest', [www.mid-day.com](http://www.mid-day.com), 08/07/19.

### **1600 acres forest cut in Sawantwadi-Dodamarg wildlife corridor since 2014**

An estimated 1600 acres of dense forest has been cut in the Sawantwadi-Dodamarg wildlife corridor in the last four years. This destruction at 103 locations across 48 villages within the proposed Western Ghats eco sensitive area

(ESA), has been mapped by the NGO Vanashakti using Google Maps.

The deforestation has happened after the 2013 Bombay High Court order banning tree felling in the 30 km corridor that connects Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Maharashtra to Bhimagad WLS in neighboring Karnataka. The felling is more in private lands, but trees in government forests are also being felled. Where felling on private land is concerned, forest officials say they are unable to take action because the matter comes under the district collector's jurisdiction.

Forest officials have said that they will be able to ensure there's no tree felling in 25 villages once the ESA is notified. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXIV, No. 5; Vol. XX, No. 5 and Vol. XIX, No. 6).

Source: '1,600 acres of forest cut in key south Konkan wildlife corridor', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 05/06/19.

#### **Special drives to search for snares around Tipeswar WLS**

The forest department (FD) has started a special operation wherein local villagers, NGOs and volunteers are being involved in the search for snares around the Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). The FD had advertised the special drive in Marathi newspapers appealing to wildlife lovers and representatives from NGOs to take part in the de-snaring and search operations starting from June 6. Forest officials have divided the villages as 'sensitive' and 'very sensitive' and has prioritized villages where drives will be carried out. The best team and best volunteer will be given awards on Independence Day.

A minimum of two drives will be carried out per week.

In drives already conducted in four villages - Tembhi, Sunna, Bahathar and Sushri - 12-14 snares including nylon ropes, wires and clutch wires were seized. In Tembhi village, a group even managed to recover a snare, which was connected to an electric line.

The drives are being carried out in response to increased incidence of wild animals being found here trapped in snares. This year alone two tigers were found stuck in snares in Tipeswar, one of which eventually died.

Source: Ranjeet Jadhav. 'Volunteers to comb forests for snares to prevent deaths of animals', [www.mid-day.com](http://www.mid-day.com), 07/06/19.  
Virat A Singh. 'Forest officials, volunteers initiate de-snaring operation near Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 07/06/19.

#### **BJP legislator's firm's illegal hill-cutting work in SGNP's ESZ**

The Sanjay Gandhi National Park's (SGNP) eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) committee has deemed the hill-cutting work near Versave village by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislator and former mayor of Mira-Bhayander, Narendra Mehta's firm, as illegal. Violations under the Environment Protection Act, 1986 carried out by Mehta's firm, Seven Eleven Construction Pvt. Ltd., will be brought to the notice of the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board for action to be initiated.

A range forest officer (RFO) found that a 300m x 7.3m hilly area had been destroyed through blasting and cutting to make way for a road within the ESZ of the national park. Two water bodies at the site were being reclaimed through dumping of stones and debris generated by cutting of the hill, the RFO mentioned in his visit report. According to Jitendra Ramgaonkar, member secretary of the ESZ committee and deputy conservator of forest, Thane, none of the concerned departments had received any proposal for the construction work.

Mehta said that he plans to develop the area as a residential zone with recreational facilities and confirmed that he had not submitted a formal proposal to any state agency.

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'BJP MLA's firm to face action for hill cutting in SGNP's ESZ', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 07/06/19.

### **MoU signed for Aarey zoo in vicinity of SGNP**

The Maharashtra government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for setting up a zoo on a 120 acres plot in the Aarey Milk Colony. The zoo would cost Rs. 500 crore.

Locals and activists have opposed the proposal. Close to 500 members from the local tribal community, along with members of Save Aarey and Aarey Conservation Group held a protest rally in Aarey Milk Colony on June 9.

The land where the zoo is coming up is close to Gavdevi-pada and Khambyacha-pada, which according to locals, is frequented by leopards and other wild animals. Tribals have claimed that the main agenda of the government is to displace tribals from Aarey and sell the land as it has high real estate value. Tribals from six hamlets have been farming on close to 70 acres of the 120 acres plot proposed for the zoo.

They have also claimed that the proposal was finalised without any consultation with them.

Source: Ranjeet Jadhav. 'Proposed Aarey Zoo in leopard corridor, say locals', [www.mid-day.com](http://www.mid-day.com), 10/06/19.

### **HC seeks land records of SGNP to check whether Aarey falls within the PA**

The Bombay High Court has, in a recent order, asked the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) to submit original land revenue records showing the entire expanse of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). The court has sought the records to ascertain if Aarey Colony is a part of the NP.

The court's order came in response to an application filed by the NGO, Vanashakti, in which it has claimed that an area of 20.76 sq. km here is an integral part of SGNP. It stated that Aarey, categorised as an unclassed forest, was transferred to the state FD in 1969. The claim is based on a government document dated July 22, 1980, which it had accessed through an

application made under the right to information act. While the respondents claimed that the petition was related only to the 20.76 sq. km of area, the HC has asked for all survey numbers and details of land of SGNP.

The details are expected to be presented to the court during the next hearing, which is scheduled for the first week of August.

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'Is Aarey part of SGNP? HC seeks docus for entire Mumbai park', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 22/06/19.

### **'Warriors of SGNP' for protection of the PA**

Forest department authorities along with a group of researchers have started an initiative named 'Warriors of SGNP' to protect the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) from poaching, forest fires and trespassing.

In the first phase of the project, which started in February this year, the park's periphery has been divided into 10 zones. Each zone will have volunteers from housing colonies and padas/hamlets, who will provide information to be acted upon by the concerned assistant conservator of forest (ACF) and range forest officer (RFO). 20 buildings in and around SGNP have already been identified and a WhatsApp group for the purpose has been created.

The project team plans to conduct camera trapping at the entry and exit points. This will help get information about leopards and other wild animals that roam in the area. An anti-poaching team comprising the ACF, RFO and ground staff would be formed in the coming months, and it would conduct surprise visits to the park and keep a tab on trespassers.

The project is a brainchild of honorary wildlife warden of Mumbai and member of the State Board for Wildlife, Mayur Kamath and his team.

Source: Ranjeet Jadhav. 'New plan to conserve Sanjay Gandhi National Park and protect it from poaching', [www.mid-day.com](http://www.mid-day.com), 18/06/19.

**BMC to buy 100 acres near Tadoba Andhari TR to compensate for loss in SGNP**

The Bruhanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has agreed to compensate the forest department (FD) for allowing it to construct an underground tunnel through Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) for the Goregaon-Mulund Link Road (*PA Updates* Vol. XXV, No. 1; Vol. XXIV, Nos. 3 & 2) by purchasing more than 100 acres of land adjoining the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) and hand it over to the FD for afforestation.

The BMC had initially refused compensation to the FD claiming that the project would not disturb the surface area of SGNP. The FD insisted, however, citing provisions of the Forest Conservation Act that the user agency was bound to procure equal amount of non-forest land and also pay for its afforestation in addition to the cost of the forest land itself. Maharashtra had also issued guidelines in 2014-15, stating that it is better if compensatory land is given near sanctuaries and national parks.

The BMC plans to build a 4.7km twin tunnel (three lanes per tunnel) connecting Goregaon and Mulund, which according to the FD will need 19.8 hectares (49 acres) beneath SGNP. It demanded land double that area and suggested a private land parcel near TATR for the purpose. The BMC has got all permissions for the tunnel, except the forest department's clearance, which is pending due to the compensation clause.

A land parcel in Palasgaon village, adjoining TATR near the Kolara gate, is now reported to have been identified for purchase by the BMC.

Two months ago, an explosives company took 88 hectares forest near Nagpur but compensated with land in Chiplun in Ratnagiri district (*PA Update* Vol. XXV, No. 3).

Source: Vijay Singh and Vijay Pinjarkar. 'BMC to buy 100 acres near Tadoba reserve', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 01/07/19.

**CAG raps Maharashtra govt on lapses in management of TRs**

The Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG) of India has rapped the state government for severe lapses in management of tiger reserves (TRs) across the state. In its recently released report CAG observed that apex level interventions for enabling policy decisions and implementation of major initiatives with regard to protection and conservation of tigers were ineffective. Tiger Conservation Plans, which play a crucial role in the formulation of management strategy for 10 years, were non-existent in two TRs while in remaining four TRs the plans were delayed for 2.5 to 7 years.

CAG, in its report, which was tabled in the state legislature on the concluding day of the monsoon session, expressed displeasure over lack of compartment histories maintained in any of the TRs as they are important for providing inputs to the Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP).

Further, CAG found that the state revenue and forest department did not disclose the resolve to secure inviolate spaces available for tiger habitats and these were being curtailed due to encroachment by human settlements and tourist facilities. These were further fragmented and crisscrossed by highways and railway lines. As a result, tigers have died due to electrocution and road accidents.

The report also noted that the support infrastructure, which is critical for the protection of tiger habitats, was inadequate. Unregulated tourism, particularly in Tadoba Andhari TR was a major cause of concern. Moreover, CAG observed that monitoring and internal control mechanism was also weak.

CAG has called for a focused strategy to ensure safe corridors and adequate eco-sensitive zones, timeliness and due diligence in preparation and implementation of the TCP. Apart from this, CAG suggested that TRs may be brought under unified control to facilitate a focused approach in tiger conservation and adequate infrastructure needs to be provided to field staff.

Source: Sanjay Jog. 'Maharashtra: CAG raps govt on lapses in management of tiger reserves', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 03/07/19.

## MADHYA PRADESH

### Tigers sighted in Kheoni WLS for first time

Five tigers have been spotted for the first time in the Kheoni Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). A tiger, two tigresses and two cubs were photographed when drinking water recently by the night-vision cameras set up in the sanctuary.

Forest officials said that vigil has been tightened across the sanctuary following this sighting.

Source: 'Tigers Spotted for First Time in Madhya Pradesh's Kheoni Wildlife Sanctuary', [www.new18.com](http://www.new18.com), 24/06/19.

## TAMIL NADU

### Tamil Yeoman declared state butterfly of Tamil Nadu

Tamil Yeoman *Cirrochroa thais*, a butterfly species endemic to the Western Ghats, has been declared as the state butterfly of Tamil Nadu. The tawny-coloured butterfly with a dark brown outer ring is also known as Tamil Maravan, which means warrior.

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department (FD) had formed a technical team to prepare a proposal to suggest a butterfly species, which could be declared the state butterfly a few months ago. The team comprised representatives from the FD as well as butterfly experts and enthusiasts from across the state. After shortlisting two species - Tamil Yeoman and Tamil Lacewing - a few weeks ago, it finally decided on the former.

Tamil Nadu has become the fifth state in the country to announce its state butterfly. Maharashtra was the first to declare Blue Mormon as its state butterfly, followed by Uttarakhand (Common peacock), Karnataka (Southern bird wings) and Kerala (Malabar banded peacock).

The state had declared its various other icons earlier; state animal - Nilgiri tahr; state bird - Emerald dove; state tree - palm tree; state flower - Gloriosa; and state fruit - jackfruit.

Source: 'Winged wonder: Tamil Yeoman declared state butterfly of Tamil Nadu', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 01/07/19.

### Fined for collecting plants from Kalakkad Mundanthurai TR

Four individuals from Kanavur, Asirvathapuram and Agasthiyapuram were recently slapped a fine of Rs. 15,000 each for illegally entering and collecting herbs from the Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (TR).

The four were found with the Urinji plant in the Kadayam range, Ambasamudram division of the reserve.

Source: '4 fined for collecting herbal plants from tiger reserve', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 06/07/19.

## TELANGANA

### In-principle approval for drilling for uranium exploration in Amrabad TR

The Central Government has given an in-principle approval for drilling for uranium exploration in the Amrabad Tiger Reserve (TR). The Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD), Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), had submitted a proposal to carry out survey and drilling of boreholes in four blocks of the reserve, three of which are located in its core. The Centre gave the clearance in a May 22 meeting, with a Forest Advisory Committee of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change noting that, "... considering the fact that the proposal is of critical importance from national perspective, it is recommended for in-principle approval, subject to submission of all required document/information in due format. After receipt of the same, the complete proposal may

be placed before the Competent Authority for approval.”

The DAE is seeking permission for survey and exploration of uranium over 83 sq km, though the exact locations of the drilling are not known.

Forest officials including the state principal chief conservator forests (PCCF) have expressed concern over the proposal. In a report submitted ahead of the May 22 meeting, the field director of the reserve had noted his concerns regarding the impact of the drilling on the flora and fauna here. He had questioned the claims of the exploration agency that no trees would be cut when there was no road or path leading to the blocks to be surveyed. The report has also outlined a number of negative impacts that will take place if the proposed drilling is allowed to go ahead.

Source: Sreenivas Janyala. 'Centre nod to drilling, Telangana forest officer says won't let anyone in', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 08/07/19.

## **UTTAR PRADESH**

### **Census records substantial increase in wildlife populations in Dudhwa TR**

A recently conducted census has reported a significant increase in wildlife populations in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (TR). The census that was conducted in three phases on May 9, 16 and 25, counted a total of 99,480 animals across 32 species and sub-species of fauna. This is significantly higher than the 86,560 wild animals that were counted in the 2016 census.

The population of elephants in the reserve is reported to have increased from around 125 in 2016 to 225 in 2019. Officials said that a few elephants migrating from Nepal have also contributed to the 80% increase in the number of elephants in the reserve. 179 Fishing cats were found in 2019 against 164 in 2016, while the Swamp deer rose from 2,226 to 2,538. Though there were no blackbuck here in 2016, two were found in this count. The number of chital has gone up to 21,199 from 18,733 in

2016 and the fox number has also increased from 65 in 2016 to 236 now.

The count of rhinos also showed a marginal increase – from 42 three years ago to 46 in 2019.

Source: 'Dudhwa shows jumbo surge, count goes up by 80% in three years', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 02/06/19.

### **NGT seeks final notification for Hastinapur WLS within six months**

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed Uttar Pradesh and the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to issue the final notification for the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) within six months. The area is commonly referred to as a sanctuary but has not been legally notified yet even though the primary notification covering an area of 2037 sq km had been issued in 1986.

The NGT orders came in response to a petition that had cited a report of the Wildlife Institute of India, which says that endangered species such as the Swamp deer and Hog deer were at risk due to dense human presence in the region here.

The NGT also asked the forest department to explain the reason behind the delay of over 30 years.

Source: 'Issue notification for Hastinapur wildlife sanctuary in 6 months: NGT to MoEF, UP government', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 01/06/19.

## **UTTARAKHAND**

### **Fossils of Asian elephant's ancestral species found in Corbett TR**

An expert on Himalayan fossils from Kumaon University has confirmed that the fossils found in the Bijrani range of Corbett Tiger Reserve (TR) likely belong to an elephant species *Elephas hysudricus*, the ancestor of the existing



Asian elephant species *E. maximus* and could be 0.2 to two million years old.

After MPS Bisht, director, Uttarakhand Space and Application Centre, had found the fossils of an elephant-like creature in Bijrani range during his visit in May this year, the TR administration approached palaeontologist Ashok Sahni who advised them to contact Prof. BS Kotlia from Kumaon University.

Prof. Kotlia has confirmed that the fossils likely belong to *E. hysudricus* that lived in the Indo-African continent during the Plio-Pleistocene time period and is now extinct. He noted further that based on his research in Ramnagar Siwalik, only the Upper Siwalik sediments are exposed from Kosi Barrage to Garjia temple in Ramnagar and these date from two million to 0.2 million before the present.

Prof. Kotlia has sought permission for carrying out further excavation in the Bijrani range, stressing there is the possibility of finding more fossils of elephants and mammalian species like the horse and deer. The TR administration has sent a proposal to the principal chief conservator of forest and the chief wildlife warden that a fossil museum could be set up in the under-construction building outside Dhangadi gate, where fossils from across the state could be exhibited.

Similar fossils have also been discovered from other parts of India - Karewas in Kashmir, Siwalik in the Jammu hills, Nadah, Chandigarh and the Pinjor hillocks.

Source: Neeraj Santoshi. 'Elephant fossil found in Corbett believed to be 2 million years old', *Hindustan Times*, 24/06/19.

#### **Study on inter- and intra-species fighting in Corbett TR reveals interesting information**

A study on wildlife deaths in Corbett Tiger Reserve (TR) has found that 21 elephants, nine tigers and six leopards have died due to infighting in the last five years.

Of the 21 elephants, 13 were calves that were killed by tigers. Park officials said that tigers have been seen eating elephant meat including of those that died while fighting each

other. The study also found that in three cases, two tigers killed the calves together.

Of the nine tiger deaths, seven were due to infighting, while one each was due to injuries caused by a wild boar and by porcupine's quills. Of the six leopard deaths, four were due to attacks by other carnivores. In two cases there was evidence of killing by tigers, while in the other two, the particular species that killed the leopard could not be established.

Source: Neeraj Santoshi. 'Infighting in Corbett Reserve led to death of 21 elephants, 9 tigers in last five years', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 06/06/19.

#### **Tourism revenue of Corbett TR meant for local people being diverted: Director**

In a letter to the state's principal chief conservator of forest on June 15, Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve (TR), Sanjeev Chaturvedi, has noted that tourism revenue earned by the TR was not being spent for the welfare of the local population.

Citing the Wildlife Protection Act, the letter states that tourism revenue of Rs 37.09 crore that was earned by the reserve in the past four years should have been spent on the local inhabitants; the money, instead, has been diverted to the treasury. The letter also notes that for a few years, 20% of the earning was being spent on the welfare of the poor people, but this has now been stopped.

Chaturvedi noted further that guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) were being violated regarding collection of cess from the local hotel industry. As per an NTCA order, Rs. 500 to Rs. 3,000 per room per month was to be charged from each hotel located in the vicinity of CTR. However, officials have made no effort to follow the guidelines on cess collection, he claimed.

Source: 'Poor around Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve devoid of welfare', [www.thehansindia.com](http://www.thehansindia.com), 22/06/19.

**NTCA objects; SC stays the construction of Chillarkhal-Laldhang road between Rajaji and Corbett TRs**

The Supreme Court (SC) has stayed the construction of the Chillarkhal-Laldhang road passing through the corridor between the Rajaji and Corbett Tiger Reserves (TRs). The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had already raised its own objection to the project earlier.

The NTCA observed that the road was being built without the mandatory no-objection certificates, and the activity was in violation of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (WLPA), and the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (FCA). The NTCA's letter to the chief secretary of the state stated that the construction of the road did not have the mandatory clearances from the Government of India and the standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL). Further, it demanded corrective measures in pursuance of both, the WLPA and the FCA.

A vacation bench of justices Deepak Gupta and Surya Kant, while citing the same reasons, issued notice to the Uttarakhand government and sought its reply within three weeks.

The order was passed after perusing a report filed by the apex court appointed Central Empowered Committee, which said that the road traverses a corridor between Rajaji and Corbett TRs and it falls within the buffer area of Rajaji TR. The road is being constructed without statutory approval of the NBWL and in violation of the WLPA and the FCA, it said.

The bench said that it is apparent that the advice of NTCA had not been taken.

Source: 'NTCA objects to construction of road in Rajaji buffer zone', [www.business-standard.com](http://www.business-standard.com), 20/06/19.

'SC stays construction of road through Rajaji tiger reserve', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 21/06/19.

'SC stays construction of road via Rajaji, Corbett', [www.tribuneindia.com](http://www.tribuneindia.com), 21/06/19.

**Corbett TR will not entertain requests with references from VIPs**

Corbett Tiger Reserve (TR) authorities have decided that references from VIPs requesting stay and safari facilities either for themselves or for their relatives and friends will not be entertained any more. Instead, these requests would be reported to their higher authorities.

The move comes as the TR administration has been receiving a large number of communications, through explicit use/display of official position/state symbols, for arranging safari, stay and other private arrangements of various highly placed authorities, which is otherwise a purely personal activity and has nothing to do with discharge of any official duties of the authorities concerned. On many occasions, even cases of friends/other known ones have been referred to the authorities and sometimes the matter has been pursued in a coercive manner as well.

Source: 'No more 'VIP stay' at Corbett Tiger Reserve', [www.business-standard.com](http://www.business-standard.com), 18/06/19.

**Geophones for monitoring elephant movement near railway tracks in Uttarakhand**

Geophones – ground motion transducers that convert ground movement into voltage – are being laid along railway tracks frequented by elephants in Uttarakhand in an effort to reduce elephant deaths in train accidents.

Geophones trigger an alert when there is some movement. The frequency data is then sent to a central server, which is monitored by the patrolling teams. To ensure that the alert sent by the geophone is of an elephant and not another animal, the system uses images from infra-red cameras installed along railway tracks. A Wi-Fi system is also being developed so that the data is simultaneously transmitted from central servers to train drivers and the patrolling staff.

Researchers from the Wildlife Institute of India used movements of elephants at Rajaji

National Park to gauge the effectiveness of the device. The pilot project aimed at minimizing elephant deaths along railway tracks, is being conducted between Kansro and Motichur railway stations. Notably, 26 incidents of elephant deaths have been reported in the past three decades on this stretch.

Meanwhile, scientists have maintained that the device doesn't do away with the need of physical patrolling of the tracks.

Source: 'To minimise deaths, geophones along railway tracks to tap elephant movement', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 16/06/19.

## **WEST BENGAL**

### **Rhino numbers increase but with lopsided gender ratio in Jaldapara and Gorumara NPs**

Results from a recent estimation suggest that rhino numbers have increased in West Bengal, albeit with a lopsided gender ratio. Of the 237 rhinos counted in the Jaldapara National Park (NP), 98 are males and 94 females. The number of unsexed animals — calves and sub-adults — stands at 45. At Gorumara NP there are 25 males, 17 females and 10 unsexed rhinos. The 2015 count had reported 204 rhinos in Jaldapara and 49 in Gorumara.

Ujjal Ghosh, the chief conservator of forests (wildlife, north) and the nodal officer of the census expressed concern over the sex ratio, which in the case of the rhino should be one male for every two females. In Jaldapara, in contrast, the present ratio is almost 1:1, while in Gorumara it is worse with nearly two males for every female.

The authorities are mulling a few steps to arrest the declining gender ratio; it includes sending some of the males to a shelter for rhinos coming up in Cooch Behar.

Source: Debraj Mitra. 'More rhinos, skewed ratio in north Bengal', [www.telegraphindia.com](http://www.telegraphindia.com), 19/06/19.

### **Siren warning system in Gorumara NP to warn of elephants**

In an initiative to minimise human-animal conflict in North Bengal, the forest department has installed a sensor-based early warning system to help keep elephants away from settlements near the Gorumara National Park (NP). The sirens are supposed to blare when elephants come within 150 to 200 metres of the settlements, alerting the forest guards who can then take action to prevent the elephants from entering the habitations.

The system was installed recently on a pilot basis at eight places in Kalipur eco village and Bheluardanga areas of the NP after being tested at several settlements over the preceding fortnight. The system will be set up at 40 places in the park and the numbers will be increased if found effective.

If successful the system might also be set up along other vulnerable sections to prevent accidents involving elephants.

Source: 'Sirens to keep wild elephants off human habitations', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 07/07/19.

### **Radio collar helps prevent elephant raids in Jalpaiguri**

Radio-collaring for research purposes helped forest officials prevent an elephant herd from raiding a tea estate in Jalpaiguri on two occasions in the month of July. Two elephants from different herds had been tagged on April 29 and May 2 as part of a joint project of the Asian Nature Conservation Foundation and the Bengal Forest Department to understand the movement patterns and mitigate their raids on human settlements.

A herd of over 25 elephants with Meenakshi, an adult female that was collared in the Gorumara National Park in May, was tracked by researchers to be moving to a tea garden on two occasions. The information allowed for forest staff to reach the spot in time and drive away the herd.

The animal collared in the first herd is named Shanta. She had been collared near Siliguri's Bengal Safari Park, adjoining the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary in April. The herd was reported to be deep inside the sanctuary and was off grid for because of the absence of network connectivity.

The region has a serious problem of human-elephant conflict with a number of humans and elephants being killed every year in different types of incidents.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXV, No. 3; Vol. XXIII, No. 6; Vol. XXII, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol. XXI, No. 5; Vol XX, No. 4)

Source: Debraj Mitra. 'Radio collar stops elephant raids in Jalpaiguri', [www.telegraph.com](http://www.telegraph.com). 05/07/19.

#### NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

##### **No more roads through wildlife sanctuaries and national parks: MoRTH**

The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has asked states as well as the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) to avoid any road alignment through wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, unless absolutely unavoidable.

A circular to this effect was issued recently to NHAI, National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd., Border Roads Organisation and the states. It directed the state governments and other agencies entrusted with the development of roads to abide by the manual prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India in the matter.

Source: 'Centre says no to highways through wildlife sanctuaries', [www.starofmysore.com](http://www.starofmysore.com), 16/06/19.

##### **596 new species of flora and fauna discovered in India in 2018**

Details made public by the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and the Zoological Survey of India

(ZSI) in Plant Discoveries 2018 and Animal Discoveries 2018 respectively show that 596 new species of flora and fauna were discovered in India in the year 2018. The fauna species discovered were 372 (311 invertebrates and 61 vertebrates) while the plant species were 224.

About half the new faunal discoveries were reported from the Western Ghats while 31% of the new plant species described were from the Himalayas. Of the 61 species of vertebrates 30 were reptiles, 21 fishes, nine amphibians, and one was a mammalian sub-species. Kerala recorded the highest number of discoveries with 59 species. West Bengal recorded 38 and Tamil Nadu recorded 26 species.

With these new discoveries, the updated list of animal species in India has risen to 1,01,681, which is about 6.49% of all the species in the world. The number of plant species in the country has been updated to 49,441, which is 11.5% of all flora in the world.

Source: Shiv Sahay Singh. 'Reason to cheer: 596 new plant and animal species discovered in India last year', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 06/06/19.

##### **218 leopard deaths in first four months of 2019**

At least 218 leopards have died in the country in the first four months of 2019 — a significant increase compared to the 500 leopard deaths reported for the year 2018. A majority of these incidents were registered in Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka.

According to the data released by the Wildlife Protection Society of India, rail and road accidents account for a majority (16-35 per cent) of all leopard deaths. Independent data agency IndiaSpend has pointed out that deaths by rail/road accidents have risen steadily — from 41 in 2014 to 51 in 2015, 51 in 2016, 63 in 2017 and 80 in 2018. The 2nd most significant cause of leopard deaths is electrocution.

Source: Anurag K. 'Indian leopards more endangered than ever', [www.deccanchronicle.com](http://www.deccanchronicle.com), 10/06/19.

### **NF Railway gets innovation award for innovation to keep elephants away from railway tracks**

The Northeast Frontier Railways (NFR) has won the Indian Railways' 'Best Innovation Award' for 2018-19, for its initiative to drive away elephants from tracks using devices that play an amplified, buzzing noise similar to the sound made by honeybees.

The NFR had launched the project in September 2017 on an experimental basis and finalised it in May that year. The railway body claims that the bee sound system and other preventive measures saved the lives of at least 1,014 elephants between 2014 and 2019 (till June) in its area, which includes parts of North Bengal and all the Northeastern states. Currently, 46 such devices are installed across NFR's region.

The NFR claims that no elephants were hit by trains in 2018-19, near railway tracks or near level crossing gates, compared to five such deaths in 2017-18.

There are as many as 29 earmarked corridors in NFR's region where trains slow down to designated speeds. But, elephants often step onto a railway track in an area which is not in a corridor, leading to accidents. After several experimental methods deployed by NFR officials, along with those from the Assam Forest Department, authorities found during testing at the Phulbari Tea Estate under Rangiya Division, that wild elephants started moving away, once the honeybee sound was generated. A device was then designed to generate the amplified sound of a honeybee that is audible from a distance of about 700-800 metres. The first instrument was installed at a level crossing gate between Azara and Kamakhya station under Rangiya Division. Finding the results very encouraging, the instrument was installed in many level crossing gates in zones located in the vicinity of forest areas.

According to data provided by the Assam government earlier this year, 761 people were killed by elephants in Assam since 2010, while 249 elephants lost their lives due to non-natural reasons in the same period. Of the 249

elephants killed since 2010, 20 died due to poisoning, 54 in train accidents, 91 due to electrocution, 38 due to 'accidental' reasons, 30 due to poisoning and 15 due to other injuries.

Source: Abhishek Saha. 'Northeast Frontier Railways gets innovation award for 'Honeybee' system'.  
www.indianexpress.com, 12/07/19.

### **Tourists cause stress to tigers: CCMB study**

A study conducted by the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB)'s Laboratory for Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES) in the Bandhavgarh and Kanha Tiger Reserves (TRs) in Madhya Pradesh has found evidence of tourism-induced stress in tigers here.

Published in *Conservation Physiology*, the study examined the relationship between anthropogenic disturbance (pollution due to human activity) and physiological stress levels among two tiger populations. Researchers assessed concentrations of fecal glucocorticoid metabolite (fGCM) – a marker of stress in individual tigers. Chronically elevated glucocorticoid levels can negatively impact growth, reproductive success, immunity and cause muscular atrophy.

The study team collected a total of 341 fecal samples from both the reserves during tourism and non-tourism periods and data on various anthropogenic disturbances, including tourism activities such as the number of vehicles and visitors. It found significantly higher fGCM concentrations in tigers at both the reserves during tourism period compared to the non-tourism period.

A significant correlation was also found between fGCM concentrations and the number of vehicles/disturbance level in these TRs. The study suggests that "unsustainable wildlife tourism causes distinct physiological stress in tigers in protected areas".

Previous studies from the same research group had shown that newly-introduced tigers in Sariska TR, Rajasthan, had failed to reproduce effectively, presumably due to high levels of

stress caused by high anthropogenic disturbance.

The study recommends a strict regulation of vehicular traffic, the number of tourist vehicles, shifting of artificial waterholes away from tourist roads and reducing other anthropogenic disturbances, including relocation of villages from the core area of TRs.

Source: 'Tourists can cause stress to tigers, says CCMB study', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 15/07/19.

## SOUTH ASIA

### BANGLADESH/INDIA

#### Wolf killed in Bangladesh could have been from the Indian side of the Sundarbans

An Indian grey wolf was killed in the first week of June by farmers in Taltali town near the Sundarbans in Bangladesh after it preyed on the livestock. Since the carnivore was believed to have been wiped out from the region eight decades ago, the individual, it has been suggested, could have been the one that was photographed in April 2017 in the Indian part of the Sundarbans.

Zoologists have collected DNA samples from the killed animal to confirm its identity.

Source: Rahul Karmakar. 'Grey wolf from India killed in Bangladesh', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 18/06/19.

#### Google-group for the *PA Update*

Readers who would like to regularly receive the electronic version of the *PA Update* can do so by to this mailing list by visiting:

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/paupdate>

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#### PA Update for PA and forest staff

##### Seeking your help and support

One section of readers who have found the *Protected Area Update* most relevant and useful is frontline forest staff and PA managers. The reason is that the newsletter has a simple and straight-forward format and also, importantly, that a print copy version reaches remote areas where online connectivity is still a far-away dream. We get this feedback intermittently but regularly and would like to increase the reach and the spread of the *PA Update*, particularly to people in and around forests and those working there.

We are launching an effort in that direction with a request to readers to help us by contributing towards this as gift subscriptions. The more subscriptions we are able to raise, the more widely we can reach out the *PA Update*. The annual subscription for the PA update is Rs. 150:

- 1) You can gift a subscription to a particular individual/officer/PA and send us the details of the individual/s who want the *PA Update* to be sent to. We will do the rest.
- 2) You can also give us a broad suggestion of whom you want the *PA Update* sent to - could be ground staff of a particular PA, could be PA managers of a particular state or could be region based. We will work with you to then identify the specific recipients.
- 3) At a third level you can indicate to us how many subscriptions you would like to support and we will identify relevant gaps and put those people on the mailing list.

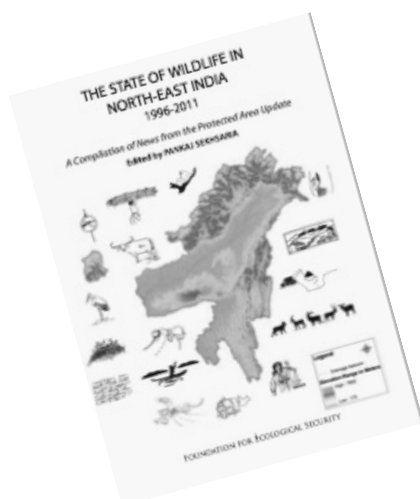
There are multiple possibilities and we would look forward to other concrete suggestions and ideas that you may have.

Pls write to [psekhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com) or to the editorial address of the *PA Update*, C/o Kalpavriksh.

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**Perspective & Opinion:** The Print Media's Kaziranga obsession – An analysis (Mehak Siddiqui & C Rajesh Reddi); A case study of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in western Assam (Sonali Ghosh: Snow leopards in the land of the rising sun (Yash Veer Bhatnagar); Karbi Anglong: A little known wilderness of Assam (Anwaruddin Choudhury); Elephants and other memories of the Garo Hills (Nimesh Ved); Dams in the North East (Neeraj Vagholikar) and Community conservation of wildlife (Neema Pathak)

**Annexures**

**COMING SOON....**

WILDLIFE AND PROTECTED AREAS IN MAHARASHTRA

News and information from the Protected Area Update (1995-2015)

Published by

Rainfed Books, Kalpavriksh and the Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust

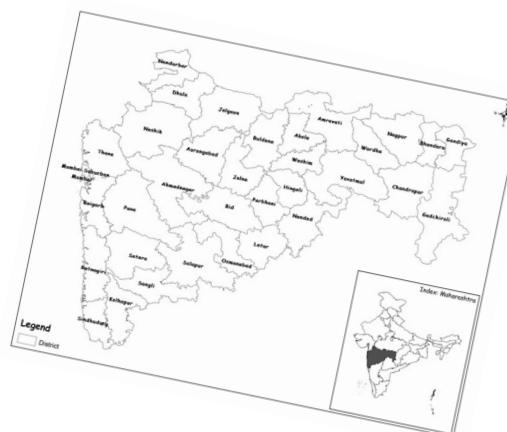
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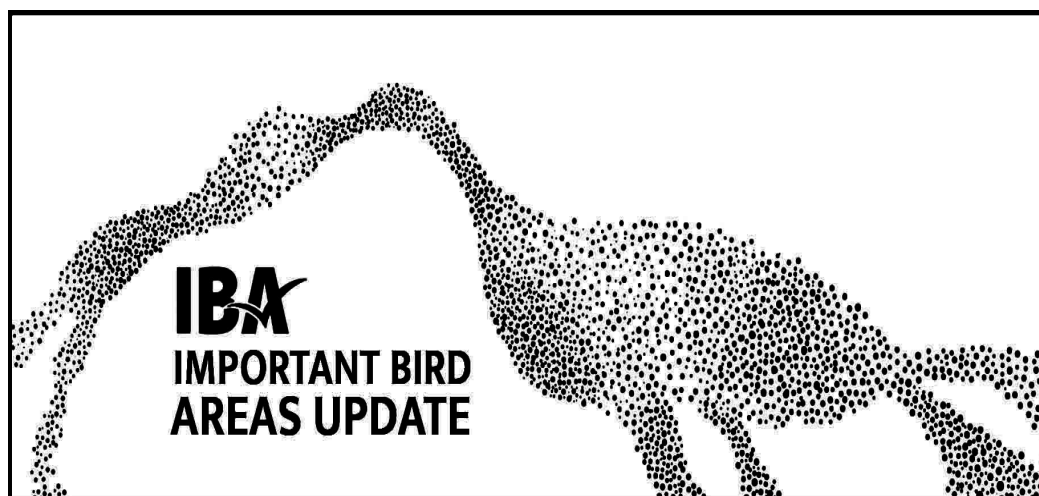
**- Protected Areas in Maharashtra – a brief introduction**

**- 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)





#### ANDHRA PRADESH

##### **Proposals for world heritage and Ramsar site tag for Coringa mangroves**

The Andhra Pradesh government has constituted a committee to study the conditions needed to be fulfilled to get the UNESCO world heritage site tag for Coringa mangroves in East Godavari district.

The committee will be headed by the principal chief conservator of forests (wildlife) and the chief wildlife warden. IFS officer Dr Shanti Priya Pandey, who is the chief conservator of forests, Rajahmundry Circle, will be its vice-chairperson. The other members of the committee include Dr K Thulasi Rao, Director, Biodiversity Research and Extension, AP State Biodiversity Board and Dr Ravi Sankar Thupalli, State Project Coordinator, EGREE Project.

The government has also sent a proposal to the Centre for identifying the mangroves as a Ramsar Site.

Source: 'Andhra Pradesh government forms panel to prepare Coringa for UNESCO world heritage site tag', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 18/06/19.

#### UTTAR PRADESH

##### **MoEFCC seeks proposal to declare Dhanauri as Ramsar site, Sarus sanctuary**

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has asked the Uttar Pradesh Government for a proposal to declare Dhanauri, a large wetland in Greater Noida, as a Ramsar site and Sarus sanctuary. A Noida based environmentalist had earlier written to the state government and the MoEFCC appealing for the same. The MoEFCC's letter comes a week after a right to information (RTI) application was filed asking for actions taken in the matter.

Dhanauri has a large population of the Sarus crane and regularly supports 20,000 or more water birds. While the forest department (FD) pegs the wetland area here at 25 ha, environmentalists have said that the total area including the buffer zone, is over 40 ha. The FD had submitted a 14-page document in September 2018 explaining the importance of the wetland, the need for its conservation, along with current status and threats.

Dhanauri does not have a formal wetland status at the moment.

Source: 'Centre offers green bounty for Greater Noida wetland', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 06/06/19.



**FROM THE ARCHIVES - 10 years ago**

*PA Update 79, June 2009*

**GUJARAT**

**More wells around Gir covered after government hikes subsidy**

The recent decision of the Gujarat State Government to double the subsidy for covering open wells on the periphery of Gir has seen a significant increase in the number of wells that have been covered. The government used to give a grant of Rs 4,000 on each well and had increased it to Rs 8,000 in 2008.

The Forest Department (FD), supported by NGOs and some corporate houses had initiated the move of covering the open wells after it was found that a number of lions and other wild animals had died after falling into them (see *PA Updates* Vol. XIV, No.; Vol XIII, Nos. 5 & 2 and Vol. XII, No. 6). State government figures put the number of lions that died in this manner at 57 for the period 2001 to 2009

The project to barricade the wells was initiated in September 2007. In the initial months 325 odd wells were barricaded on an average every month. Following the increase in subsidy this number has almost doubled and now nearly 650 wells are being covered every month.

Source: Vikram Rautela. 'More wells around Gir covered after government hikes subsidy', *The Indian Express*, 16/06/09.

**KERALA**

**Tiger population in Wayanad WLS estimated at 20-25**

The tiger population in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary has been estimated to be between 20 and 25. The numbers have been suggested following the conclusion of a census exercise in the month of May. Ten big cats, including three cubs, were sighted in the sanctuary during the three-day survey of tigers and co-predators. Five tigers including a cub were

sighted in Tholpetty range, one tiger and two cubs were seen in the Sulthan Bathery range and one tiger each was seen in the Kurichaiyad and Muthanga areas during the count.

It is based on the actual sightings of these 10 tigers that the total population estimate of 20-25 has been suggested. If correct this would be at least 10 tigers more than were reported during the last census conducted two years ago.

It has also been pointed out, however that a firm idea of the exact number of big cats in the sanctuary could be given only after a detailed analysis of the indicators gathered during the survey, like pug-marks, droppings, hair and scratch marks on trees. The team that carried out the survey is reported to have come across about 50 pug-marks, droppings and hair and scratches on trees. DNA analysis is to be done at the Wildlife Disease Diagnosing Laboratory at Sulthan Bathery.

Source: 'Ten tigers sighted in Wayanad sanctuary', *The Times of India*, 12/05/09

**RAJASTHAN**

**70 black bucks die in Tal Chappar WLS due to 'weather shock'**

At least 70 black buck were reported dead in the last week of May and early June in the Tal Chappar Wildlife Sanctuary. The deaths were blamed on 'weather shock' following unseasonal downpours accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning.

The victims were mostly old animals and the infants and were said to have died due to heart failure on account of shock experienced because of the thunderstorms and lightning.

Source: Rakhee Roy Talukdar. 'Storm shock kills 50 black bucks', *The Telegraph*, 02/06/09  
PJ Joychen. '70 blackbucks die of shock in rain-hit Tal Chappar', *The Times of India*, 02/06/09

## **PERSPECTIVE**

### **Dolphins, Turtles & Relationships**

#### **The challenges of sustaining a marine wildlife stranding network**

What do you get with 680 people watching the oceans every day? A network of eyes and ears that report every dolphin or sea turtle stranding occurring across Goa's coast, documented and responded to. Ocean Watch – Goa, is a collaborative marine wildlife stranding response and monitoring network between IUCN India, a conservation social enterprise, Terra Conscious, a private lifeguard service, Drishti Marine and Goa Forest Department (FD) established in 2017 to monitor Goa's coasts. It has documented 261 marine wildlife stranding incidents in the last two years across the state's 100 km coastline.

Early last year, a striped dolphin *Stenella coeruleoalba* washed up in the morning on the shores of Goa's capital city, Panjim. A group of young local boys playing football spotted the animal and rushed over to help. Lifeguards who had by now been trained in response protocols due to the Ocean Watch network's capacity building programme, began constructing a shade, pouring water to keep the animal's skin moist, cool as well as keeping the crowd away to give it space. My colleagues and I were both on the phone with the FD, finding veterinary support, and on the site assisting rescue efforts, fielding media questions, trying to decide between the various courses of action being suggested and organising permissions. Finally, after a long exhausting day, the animal was released in deeper waters, with the help of trawler fishermen and lifeguards who braved squally weather and rough seas to make sure the dolphin had a chance.

Coordinating so many diverse personalities in high stress situations is challenging for one's mental and emotional health. The sheer enormity of the gaps we have currently in India to address stranding incidents reflect the tremendous opportunity we are losing right now to build large scale collaborative

community networks that can go beyond response and monitoring.

The core premise of collaborative stranding networks is trust and building a strong foundation of mutually respectful, empathetic relationships supported by well thought out processes. This may seem like common sense and an obvious narrative, but the way we have interpreted and in fact taught conservation for so long, has been exclusionary, in my opinion.

Young aspiring conservationists are taught how to understand the technical, scientific and the evidence based aspects of conservation. However, not enough stress is given on enabling them to strengthen their social empathy skills and broaden their perspectives by emphasising on relationship building, compassion, self care, diplomacy, advocacy and leadership. This often leads to networks collapsing because of personal dynamics, politics, poor communication which ultimately does not achieve a long term, sustainable conservation outcome. I am hopeful that networks such as Ocean Watch can encourage a more integrated systems based approach to conservation practice.

- **Puja Mitra** is Founder - Director, Terra Conscious. Email: [puja@terraconscious.com](mailto:puja@terraconscious.com)

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## Index

- A  
A&N Islands vii, ix, 27  
Aarey 38, 46, 50, 141, 203, 213  
Adani 81, 97-100, 103  
adivasi see tribal  
afforestation 12, 17, 103, 129, 144, 214  
agriculture related 4, 7, 10-2, 15, 18, 22, 26, 28, 64, 66, 68, 76, 81-2, 85, 89, 91, 100, 140, 146, 149, 195, 197 210, 222  
Ahmednagar 11-2, 14, 28, 42, 145  
airport 17, 55, 163, 190  
Akola 65, 68, 70, 72, 121, 139  
Ambabarwa WLS viii, x, 62, 65, 121-2, 158, also see Melghat TR  
Amboli 141, 187  
Amravati 20, 63, 65-73, 76, 113, 118, 121-2, 124-6, 130, 136-7, 139, 142, 146, 149, 158, 196, 197  
Andhari WLS see Tadoba Andhari TR  
Andhra Pradesh 56, 108, 138, 183, 203-5, 224  
Aner Dam WLS x, 158  
Assam 143, 145, 147, 153, 203, 206-7, 221, 223  
Aurangabad 9, 122, 125, 134, 136, 137, 139
- B  
bamboo 22, 66, 93, 102, 196, 198  
Basaltic rock 18, 186, 190  
bauxite 27, 89, 121-2, 188, 189  
BEAG 19, 23, 27, 32, 37-8, 40-1, 43, 188-9  
bear, sloth 10, 64, 75, 79, 107, 119, 128-9, 168-9  
Bhamragarh WLS x, 121, 135, 158  
Bhandara 78-9, 95, 101-2, 118, 146, 150  
Bhima River 3, 4, 6, 131, 195  
Bhimashankar WLS x, 3-8, 30-1, 86, 120-1, 124-5, 127, 133, 135, 141, 159, 160, 171-2, 194-5  
Bhorkhada CR xi, 8,  
Biological Diversity Act see BDA  
biodiversity 10, 17, 25, 50, 55, 67, 70-1, 123-4, 135, 139, 143, 176, 184-5, 187-93, 195-6, 199, 207, 224  
biogas 25, 118  
biomass 22, 116, 123  
birds 10-7, 20, 26-8, 51-2, 54-5, 59, 73-4, 91, 122, 131, 138, 140, 144, 147, 148, 150, 166, 189, 204, 224  
blackbuck 13, 26, 28, 129, 216, 225  
bluebull see neelgai  
BNHS 12, 29, 38, 40, 43-4, 52, 54, 56, 59, 68-9, 71, 73-4, 113, 125-7, 138, 143, 186, 189-90  
boar, wild 10, 36, 43, 44, 58, 79, 127, 144, 146, 173, 217  
Bombay Environment Action Group see BEAG  
Bombay Natural History Society see BNHS  
Bor WLS/TR viii, x-xi, 59, 61-2, 104, 116-7, 119, 125, 133, 138, 158,  
Borivili see Borivli  
Borivli 29, 31-3, 39, 42-5, 49-50, 121, 136, 163, 165, 171  
Botezari village 94-5, 99-100, 104, 181  
boundary changes of PAs 5, 11-3, 18, 22, 59, 69, 87,  
Brahmapuri 96, 98, 102, 107, 110-2  
buffalo, Wild 9-10, 59, 69  
buffer zone xi, 21, 31, 47, 49, 64, 73-4, 84-5, 91, 98-9, 104-6, 109-11, 115, 117-9, 162-3, 177-8, 182, 184, 218, 224, also see ESZ  
Buldhana 14, 75, 122, 146  
bustard, Great Indian viii, ix-x, 5, 10-4, 20-2, 26, 59, 132, 138, 139, 140, 155, 159, 160, 163, 172  
butterfly 10, 90, 145, 146-7, 203, 215
- C  
camera traps/trapping 8-10, 46-7, 81, 104, 108, 112, 117-20, 150, 208-9  
CAMPA 110, 137  
cattle see livestock  
Cauvery WLS 203, 209  
CCAs vi, 192-200  
CCMB 75, 204, 119, 221-2  
Cellular and Molecular Biology see CCMB  
census 4, 8-9, 11, 28, 68, 71 73, 78, 88, 96, 111, 113, 117, 127-9, 131-2, 150, 164, 206, 208-9, 216, 219, 225  
Central Zoo Authority see CZA  
CFR 7-8, 60, 106, 72-3, 179, 182, 196-9  
Chandoli WLS/NP viii, x, 28, 86-8, 90-3, 125, 128-30, 135, 158, also see Sahyadri TR

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

Chandrapur 14, 51, 56, 79, 85, 94-6, 98, 100, 102-5, 107-11, 118-9, 125, 128, 132, 136, 139, 142, 158, 168, 179, 196, 198  
Chaprals WLS x, 104, 109, 111, 125, 135, 158  
cheetal see deer  
Chhattisgarh 10, 101, 114, 149-50  
Chikhaldara 62, 64, 65, 69, 121, 130, 131  
Chiplun 129-30, 141, 214  
clearance, wildlife/forest/environment 17, 48, 52-4, 56, 75, 81, 97, 100, 103, 130, 144, 189, 199, 214-5, 218  
coast vii, 51, 55, 130, 144, 146, , 163, 186, 187, 190, 193, 199, 226  
coastal regulation zone see CRZ  
coexistence 115, 176, 180, 182-3  
collar radio/satellite 45, 59, 86, 109, 111-2, 169, 204, 219-20  
community conserved areas see CCAs  
community forestry resource see CFR  
community reserve vii, 132, 139, 199  
compensation 4, 13, 17, 46, 48, 62-3, 82, 92-3, 98, 103-4, 107, 128, 132, 149, 173, 176, 181, 214 also see RoR  
conservation reserve vii, xi, 8, 10, 20, 25-6, 58-9, 188, 199, 210  
conflict, human-animal 13, 28, 30, 35-6, 39, 46, 62-3, 67, 96, 102, 104, 107-9, 111, 118, 128, 132, 145, 149, 153, 155, 159-66, 168, 170-1, 173, 176, 180-2, 184, 200, 208, 217-21  
Corbett TR 204, 216-8  
corridor, wildlife 20, 56, 59, 64, 79, 81, 88-90, 96, 100-2, 104-5, 108, 111, 121, 131, 139-41, 145, 165, 170, 189, 211-4, 218, 221  
crane, sarus 150, 204, 224  
crocodile 10, 173  
Critical Wildlife Habitat see CWH  
Critical Tiger Habitat see CTH  
CTH 72, 73, 104, 105, 114, 115, 177-183  
CWH 6, 7, 59, 60, 114, 178  
CZA 28, 41-2, 57, 147,

## D

dams 4, 14-5, 22, 26, 29, 43, 53-4, 56, 59, 63-5, 75, 84, 87, 91-2, 102-3, 110, 122, 125, 129-31, 140, 146, 163, 194, 197, 209, 211  
    earthquake induced by 91-2  
deer 6, 10, 20, 29-30, 49, 56-8, 61-2, 64, 68-9, 79, 85, 89, 128-9, 144, 166, 203, 208, 216-7  
deforestation see tree felling

demolitions 32-35, 37, 41-2, 57-8  
denotification 5 11-5, 20-3, 39, 50, 59, 64, 66, 69, 83, 86, 122, 130, 138, 146, 155, 159-60, 163, 172  
displacement see RoR  
DNA analysis 75-6, 98, 119, 222, 225  
dogs, domestic 9, 29, 42-3, 68, 138, 166  
    for wildlife crime detection 147, 150,  
Dhyanganga WLS x

## E

eco-sensitive area see ESZ  
eco-sensitive zone see ESZ  
eco-development 7, 9-10, 62, 71, 80, 86, 93 110-1, 116, 129, 132  
ecotourism 8, 71, 89, 109, 118, 128, 133, 137, 150, 211  
education, environment/conservation 6, 26, 42, 44, 51, 55, 63, 71, 76, 123, 150, 174, 181, 195, 197-8, 211  
EIA 53-4, 64, 75, 89, 97, 190,  
Ekjoot Sanghatana 3, 4, 5, 127  
electrocution 69-70, 79, 145, 203, 207-8 214, 220-1  
elephant 133, 145, 148-9, 153, 174, 203-6, 209-11, 216-21  
employment guarantee see MNREGA  
encroachment 16, 29-38, 41-2, 44-5, 60-1, 90, 138, 155, 159, 160-3, 166, 172, 178, 210, 214  
environment impact assessment see EIA  
Environment Protection Act see EPA  
EPA vii, 18-9, 22-4, 56, 75, 133, 136, 143, 148, 212  
ESZ vii, viii, 8, 18-9, 22-5, 47, 49-50, 81, 105, 110-1, 131, 140-1, 145-6, 159-60, 203, 212  
eviction 32, 35, 36-8, 41, 177, 181, also see RoR

## F

farmer/farming see agriculture  
FDCM 20-1, 46, 59, 79, 84, 96, 105, 107-9, 111, 128, 131, 136-8, 140, 147  
fires 9, 13, 29, 40, 44-5, 58, 63, 71, 81, 105, 113-4, 116-7, 170, 173, 213  
fishing 22, 54-5, 82, 122, 194, 209, 216, 226  
flamingo viii 51-5, 173  
florican 11, 138  
forensic studies 41, 98, 210  
Forest Development Corporation of

- Maharashtra see FDCM  
FRA vi-ix, 6-8, 22, 60-1, 72-3, 101, 105-6, 115-16, 163, 170, 172, 177-84, 195-200
- G  
Gadchiroli 12, 13, 59, 69, 102, 121, 128, 196  
Gangetic dolphins 203, 207  
garbage 3-5, 19, 24, 25, 40, 94  
gas connections see LPG  
gaur 28, 63-4, 89, 128-9, 140-1, 173  
Gautala Autramghat WLS x, 9, 122, 133  
GIB see bustard  
GIB Sanctuary, see bustard  
Gnyanganga WLS 14, 121 also see  
Dnyanganga WLS  
Goa 89, 92, 135-6, 141, 145, 186, 189-90, 226  
goat see livestock  
Gondia 77, 79-82, 95, 101-2, 107, 110, 118, 139, 149-50  
Goregaon 38, 40, 46, 50, 167, 214  
Gosikhurd 59, 102  
gram sabha 8, 22, 60, 89, 100, 105, 141, 179, 180, 196-8  
grassland 11-3, 140, 142, 193  
grazing related 13, 16, 22, 62, 64, 66, 80, 116, 122, 138, 179, 181, 187-8, 195, 197  
Greenpeace 103-4, 199  
guard, forest 9, 40, 45, 48, 74, 77-8, 104-6, 112, 115, 117, 126, 133-4, 138, 142, 197, 219, Gugamal NP viii, x, 62, 158, also see Melghat TR  
Gujarat 5, 54, 136, 138, 145, 172, 203, 207, 225
- H  
HC 19, 27-8, 30-44, 78, 88, 90, 102, 126, 131, 133, 141, 166, 167, 169, 171, 188-9, 213  
high court see HC  
highway see roads  
Himachal Pradesh 203, 208  
hydro (hydro-electricity) 63, 130, 196, 198, 199 also see dams
- I  
ICCA (Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas) 192, 193, 199  
IFA 43, 58, 129, 148  
Indian Forest Act see IFA  
Indravati TR 10, 104, 114, 145  
IUCN 58, 192, 226
- J  
Jaikwadi WLS x, 15, 122, 133  
Jamni village 100, 102, 104, 114, 181  
Joint protected area management see JPAM  
JPAM 14, 15, 83, 154, 171
- K  
Kalpavriksh 4-8, 15, 60, 63, 65-7, 86, 113, 115, 124, 192  
Kalsubai-Harishchandragad WLS x, 15, 120, 124  
Kanha TR 81, 114, 120, 168, 221  
Kanhargaon WLS (proposed) 108-9, 119  
Kanhari caves 30-1, 48, 165  
Karanja Sohal WLS x, 121, 158  
Karnala WLS x, 16-7, 160, 163  
Karnataka 89, 92, 113, 136, 138, 141, 145, 147, 149-50, 153, 183, 185-6, 189, 203, 205, 209-12, 215, 220  
Kasturirangan Committee 140-1, 145  
Katepurna WLS x, 124-5, 158  
Kaziranga NP 145, 153, 172, 203, 206-7  
Kerala 135-6, 141, 145, 150, 185-6, 215, 220, 225  
Kheoni WLS 203, 215  
KHOJ 65, 67, 68, 72, 124, 177, 205  
Khutwanda 103, 110, 182  
Koka WLS viii, 76-81, 116, 146, 158, also see Nawegaon-Nagzira TR  
Kolamarka CR xi, 9-10, 58, -9, 69,  
Kolar 94-5, 103, 110, 214  
Kolhapur 28, 87-91, 129-30, 136, 140, 145, 148-9, 186, 188  
Kolsa village 95-7, 99-100, 104, 106, 128, 135  
Konkan 75, 125, 130-1, 139, 189-90, 194  
Koyna WLS viii, x, 28, 68, 86-92, 120-1, 124, 129-30, 158, 187, 189, also see Sahyadri TR
- L  
lake see wetland  
land acquisition 10, 13, 43, 65  
langur 10, 144, 206-7  
leopard 8, 10, 20, 26, 28, 35-6, 38-43, 45-6, 48, 50-1, 58, 68-71, 75, 79, 89, 102, 107-9, 111-3, 119, 127-9, 153, 164-6, 168-9, 173-4, 176, 208, 213, 217, 220

## *State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

attacks by 8, 35-6, 39, 51, 63, 67-8, 107, 109, 132, 176  
lion 29, 41, 45, 208, 225  
livestock 7-8, 10, 13, 15, 22, 43, 62-3, 66, 68-9, 80-1, 86, 97, 101, 116, 122, 132, 173, 178-9, 181, 192-3, 195, 197, 200, 210, 222  
Lohara village 97-8, 100, 103, 111  
Lonar WLS x, 17, 18, 122, 134  
LPG 62, 80, 110, 116, 118

**M**  
Madhya Pradesh 5, 54, 70, 73-4, 83, 101, 114, 117, 119, 121-2, 138, 147, 150, 168, 193, 203, 215, 220-1  
Mahabaleshwar 18-9, 23-5, 90, 91, 125, 160, 188  
Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation see MTDC  
Mahashivratri 4-6, 30, 40, 159  
Mahendri RF 20, 122, 126  
Malvan Marine WLS viii, x, 121-2, 124, 158  
mangroves 51-2, 54-5, 224  
Mansingdeo WLS 12-3, 20-2, 84, 86, 117, 122, 125, 146, 160  
Marathi media 170, 173-6, 205  
marine related viii, x, 55, 129, 158, 175, 193, 199, 226  
Matheran 22-5, 159, 160, 171-2  
Mayureshwar Supe WLS x, 121, 125, 158,  
Melghat vi, viii, x-xi, 20-1, 54, 59, 61-76, 88, 103, 113-9, 121-3, 125, 127-8, 130-3, 135, 146, 149, 158-60, 162, 164, 172, 177-82  
mining 4, 18, 23, 27-8, 86, 138, 140-1, 145, 160, 162-3, 169-70, 187-9, 198-9, 210-1  
    bauxite 27, 89, 121-2, 188-9  
    coal 97-100, 102-4, 132, 169  
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change see MoEF  
MMRDA 23, 30, 52  
MNREGA 196-7, 199, 203, 206-7  
MoEF 13, 14, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 35, 39, 43, 48, 49, 51, 52, 54, 64, 65, 69, 73, 74, 81, 83, 84, 89, 98, 100, 103, 107, 108, 110, 114, 116, 130, 131, 134, 135, 136, 138, 140, 141, 143-4, 204, 211, 216, 224  
MoEFCC see MoEF  
Moharli 94, 97, 103, 109-10, 119, 135  
MTDC 18, 24-5

Mumbai vi, 5, 14, 16-9, 29-58, 69, 78, 88, 90, 94, 96, 100, 102, 109, 113, 121, 124-6, 133, 139, 141, 143, 155, 157, 163, 165-7, 170-3, 184, 188-9, 211, 213-4

**N**  
Nagpur 12-3, 21, 25-6, 30, 56, 59, 61, 63, 77, 78, 83-5, 93, 95, 100, 102, 105, 107, 110, 114, 117-8, 122-6, 129, 132, 135-9, 142, 146-7, 150, 172, 184, 214  
Nagzira viii, x-xi, 21, 59, 76-81, 101, 104, 116-21, 124-5, 131, 133, 138, 149, 158-60, also see Naigaon WLS x, 158  
Nandur Madhameshwar WLS x, 26-7, 146  
Nannaj 11-3, 21  
Narnala WLS viii, xi, 62, 121, 125, 158, also see Melghat TR  
Nashik 8-9, 12, 14, 26-7, 125-6, 137, 139-40, 145-6, 186, 188  
National Board for Wildlife see NBWL  
National Green Tribunal see NGT  
National Highway Authority of India 101, 220  
National Tiger Conservation Authority see NTCA  
National Zoo Authority 46  
National Zoo Policy 61, 85  
Nawegaon-Nagzira TR viii, x-xi, 21, 59, 76-81, 85, 100-1, 104, 116-21, 124-5, 131, 133, 138, 149, 150, 158, 159, 160  
NBWL 12, 15-7, 21-22, 48-50, 54, 64, 74, 81, 83-4, 92  
neelgai 20, 61-2, 64, 79, 84, 127, 144, 146, 168  
NGT 50, 144, 163, 216,  
nistar rights 65, 73, 100, 181  
Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti 33, 34, 36, 37  
NTCA vii, ix, 72, 74, 85, 88, 92, 96, 99, 103-4, 106-7, 111, 114-5, 117-9, 137, 149, 169, 178, 204, 206, 217-8  
NTFP 22, 66-7, 102, 120, 137, 170, 181, 196-8, 206

**O**  
owlet, Forest spotted 54, 59, 69, 73-4, 126

**P**  
Painganga WLS xi, 146, 158  
Panchgani 18-19, 24, 186, 188

- pangolin 10, 64  
 Paratwada 65, 68, 122, 197, 205  
 pastoral/pastoralism/pastoralist 181, 192, 193,  
*PA Update*  
     history of 154-6  
 PCCF 5, 12, 18, 42, 49, 51, 61, 74, 81, 83-4,  
 86, 92, 97, 108, 118, 133-7, 142, 150, 216  
 Pench TR viii, x-xi, 20-2, 68, 70, 74, 76, 81-6,  
 88, 103, 106, 113-22, 122, 125-6, 128, 133,  
 135-7, 158, 160  
 Phansad WLS xi, 158  
 pig, wild see boar  
 pilgrims see temple, also see religious activities  
 plastic waste 3-6, 16, 18-9, 24-5, 31, 40, 44, 72  
 plateaus, rocky 18, 22-3, 27, 139, 185-91  
 poaching 30, 58-9, 63, 66, 69-70, 74-6, 79, 84,  
 93, 98, 104, 112, 117-8, 125, 128, 130, 135,  
 138, 142-3, 147, 149-50, 155-6, 159-60, 162,  
 165-6, 169-73, 206, 213  
 Pohara Malkhed RF 122, 125, 149  
 poisoning 40, 67-8, 149, 173, 221  
 police 32, 39, 57-8, 61, 69-70, 74, 78, 94, 102,  
 120, 126, 130, 142, 147, 206  
*Protected Area Update* see *PA Update*  
 Pune 3, 4, 7, 12, 13-5, 18, 25, 31, 42, 45, 68,  
 71, 73, 85, 90, 92, 114, 121-2, 124-5, 127, 130-  
 1, 136-7, 139, 141-2, 145, 148, 154-5, 170-2,  
 177, 185-6, 191, 193-9, 204, 226
- Q**  
 quarrying 18, 23, 37, 145, 187, 188, 189
- R**  
 Radhanagari WLS xi, 27-8, 87, 89-91, 121-2,  
 124, 128-9, 141, 160, 189, 212  
 Raigad 24, 28, 53, 125, 130, 139, 145  
 railway line/ railways 45-8, 106-8, 110, 144-5,  
 150, 165-6, 211, 214, 218-21  
     wildlife deaths in accidents 106-8,  
 218-21  
 Rajasthan 138, 220, 221, 225  
 Rajmachi WLS 12, 13, 125, 130-1  
 Ramsar site 14, 55, 204, 224  
 Ratnagiri 68, 91-2, 129-30, 141, 145, 186, 188,  
 190, 214  
 rationalisation of PA boundaries see  
 denotification  
 Rehekuri WLS xi, 40  
 religious activities/significance 4-6, 13, 30-1,  
 40, 58, 94, 150, 159, 187, 194-5, 210 also see  
 temple  
 relocation, wildlife 38, 51, 58, 61, 69, 85, 164-  
 5,  
 relocation, human see RoR  
     induced 67, 114, 177, 180-2  
 resettlement see RoR  
 rights, settlement of 26, 65-7, 86-7, 100, 124,  
 159, 163, 179,  
 roads, impact of viii, 5, 7, 9, 16-8, 22, 28, 30,  
 39, 42-3, 45, 52-3, 62-4, 66, 80-1, 83, 87, 90,  
 92, 94-5, 97, 100-4, 119, 122-3, 129, 133, 144-  
 5, 163, 166, 170, 173, 181-2, 186, 194, 198,  
 204, 207, 211-2, 214, 216, 218, 220, 222  
 RoR 31-8, 51, 59-60, 63, 65-8, 70-2, 81-3, 87-  
 8, 91, 94-7, 99-100, 102, 104, 106, 108-10, 114,  
 132, 159-70, 172, 177, 178, 180-4, 193, 199,  
 201, 209, 211, 213, 222
- S**  
 sacred groves 3, 4, 7, 193-5, 211  
 safari 29-30, 41-2, 45, 51, 110, 146-7, 166, 218,  
 220  
 Sagarshwar WLS xi, 29, 87, 128, 129  
 Sahyadri TR viii, x-xi, 86-93, 116-7, 119, 158,  
 160, 188, 190  
 sambar 6, 20, 64, 79, 132, 144 also see deer  
 Sangli 28-9, 90-1, 145, 189  
 Sanjay Gandhi NP see SGNP  
 Satara 18, 86, 88, 89, 91, 128, 130, 139, 145,  
 186-7, 189, 190, 191  
 Satpuda Foundation 12, 59, 70-2, 84-5, 102,  
 115, 124, 139-40, 149  
 Satpuda range 12, 54, 60, 71, 113-4, 121, 124,  
 179  
 Sawantwadi-Dodamarg 89, 140, 141, 203, 211  
 SBWL 16, 22, 46, 52, 54-5, 75, 121, 123, 127,  
 130, 132, 140, 145-6, 148, 210, 213  
 SC 12, 22-3, 26, 32, 37, 41-2, 44, 47, 64, 75,  
 84, 169, 218  
 SDLC 72, 179, 180, 182  
 Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest  
 Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act see FRA  
 Sewri Wetlands viii-ix, 51-3, 160, 163  
 SGNP x, 29-51, 56, 58, 109, 120, 126, 133,  
 155, 157, 159-60, 162-9, 172, 203, 212-4  
 Shashwat 7, 86, 114, 122, 124

sheep see livestock

Sindhudurg 75, 89, 121, 130, 140-1, 145, 188

slums 31-8, 42-3, 45, 50, 163, 166-7, 172

Solapur 10-14, 20, 22, 140

solar related 8, 9, 47, 62, 85, 108, 110, 112, 118, 129

Special Tiger Protection Force see STPF

spider 20, 50, 71-2, 141

squirrel, Giant 4, 6, 8, 10, 64

state board for wildlife see SBWL

STPF 74, 106, 117-8, 120, 149

supreme court see SC

## T

TATR vi, viii, x-xi, 21, 51, 59, 70-1, 73-4, 76, 88, 93-119, 124-6, 128, 131-3, 135-6, 148-9, 155, 157, 159-60, 162, 164-5, 168-9, 177-9, 181-2, 184, 203, 214

Tadoba Andhari TR see TATR

Tamhini-Sudhagarh WLS 12-3, 125, 130

Tamil Nadu 136, 145, 147, 183, 185, 205, 209, 215, 220

Tansa WLS xi, 45, 53-4, 203, 211

telemetry, satellite 138, 148

temple 3-4, 6, 9, 29-31, 40, 57, 103, 159-60, 188, 194-5, 217

Thane viii, xi, 12-3, 24, 28, 32, 35, 43, 47-9, 53-5, 57, 129, 136-7, 142, 145, 163, 195, 212

Thane Creek WLS viii, xi, 53-5, 163

tiger vi-ix, xi, 10, 20-1, 28-30, 38, 41, 45, 49, 59, 61-120, 122-4, 127-9, 133-5, 139-40, 144-7, 149-50, 157-9, 162, 164-6, 168-9, 171-4, 177-84, 198-9, 203-4, 206, 212, 214-8, 221-3, 225

attacks by 61-2, 81, 86, 96-7, 102, 107-9, 120, 132, 164, 173,

tigress 59, 69-70, 78, 80, 81, 85-6, 96-8, 107, 120, 215

Tipagarh WLS 12-3

Tipeshwar WLS xi, 56, 121, 203, 212

Totladoh 22, 82-4, 122, 126, 128

tourism 8-9, 18, 22, 24-5, 30-1, 71, 78-80, 87, 89, 91, 94, 109-10, 117-9, 124, 128, 131, 132-4, 137, 139, 150, 159, 160-2, 166, 170, 172, 174-5, 184, 186-8, 200, 204, 211, 214, 217, 221

trade, wildlife related 35, 65, 126, 142, 147, 150,

traps

camera see camera traps

poaching 84, 93-4, 104,

tree cutting 4, 12, 16, 19-20, 30, 50, 53, 60-2, 76-7, 88-90, 99, 102, 108-9, 118, 128, 131, 133, 143-5, 170, 195, 197, 212, 216,

tribal 3, 8, 18, 26, 38, 53, 60, 62, 64-7, 70-1, 93, 101, 106, 113, 120, 127, 140, 147, 162, 165, 168-9, 177, 182 179, 193, 195-9, 209 211, 213, 223

Tungareshwar WLS xi, 40, 45-8, 56-8, 160

turtle, marine 129-30, 204, 226

## U

Uttarakhand 147, 215-8, 220

Umred-Karhandla xi, 58-9, 81, 107-8, 111, 117, 150

## V

Vanashakti 55, 212, 213

Vidarbha 10, 14-5, 58, 76, 113, 117-8, 121-6, 131-2, 134, 138-9, 142, 146, 163, 172, 179

vulture 10, 148

## W

Wan WLS viii, xi, 62, 65, 121, 158, also see Melghat TR

wages, non-payment of 78, 106, 115-6, 135

warden, wildlife 9, 14-6, 63, 67, 81, 84, 109, 125-6, 139, 213, 217, 224

Wardha 116, 118, 123, 132

WCCB 139, 142

wetland 17-18, 27, 29, 43, 51-3, 66, 94, 125, 131, 133, 160, 163, 173, 186, 193, 206-7, 224

Western Ghats 12, 54, 88-9, 91, 93, 113, 129-30, 135-6, 139-41, 145-6, 158, 185, 189, 191, 194-5, 210-1, 215, 220

WII xi, 11, 13, 38, 52, 83, 85, 109, 111, 114-5, 117, 119, 133, 138, 144, 154, 157-8, 172, 216, 218, 220

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau see WCCB

Wildlife Institute of India see WII

Wildlife Protection Act see WLPA

Wildlife Research and Conservation Society 73, 74

Wildlife Trust of India see WTI

windmills/farms 88-90, 139, 163, 186-9

WLPA vii, ix, 5, 31, 33, 38, 44, 57, 58, 90, 103, 107, 114, 115, 124, 127, 129, 143-4, 148-9, 178-80, 182, 199, 217-8



wolf 13, 142, 222  
WTI 21, 40, 81, 84, 101  
WWF-India 31-3, 40, 113, 123-4, 138, 147,

## Y

Yavatmal 12-3, 56, 118, 121, 137, 146  
Yawal WLS xi, 54, 59-61, 122, 135, 172  
Yedshi-Ramlingaghat xi, 121, 158  
Yeoor 32, 38, 40-1, 44  
YUVA 63, 86, 124

## Z

zoning 139, 160-3, 169, 170  
zoo 28-9, 41-2, 46, 49, 57, 61, 85, 136, 146-7,  
165-6, 213,

## Year Index

1958 xi  
1968 x, 188  
1969 xi, 213  
1970 x-xi, 150, 196  
1971 xi, 143  
1972 vii, ix, 143, 148, 178, 218  
1973 vii, xi, 177  
1974 viii, 62, 158, 179  
1975 x, 12, 30, 43  
1977 80  
1978 137  
1979 137  
1980 xi, 154, 209, 213  
1981 165  
1985 x, xi, 90, 195-6  
1986 x-xi, 143, 206, 216  
1987 x  
1988 x  
1990 166, 173, 197  
1992 83, 127  
1993 xi, 92, 113, 135  
1994 vi, x-xi, 66, 73, 154-7, 179  
1995 3, 22-3, 32, 37, 41, 56, 98, 120, 168,  
1996 v, vi, x, 65, 121, 143, 153,  
1997 x, xi, 14, 29-30, 38, 54, 62, 74, 82, 89, 98,  
113, 121-2, 126, 185, 210

1998 xi, 3, 15, 27, 29, 56, 62, 67, 82-3, 93, 122-  
4, 126, 130, 188, 189  
1999 x-xi, 3, 14, 26-7, 30, 33, 64-7, 70, 76, 82-  
3, 86, 130-1, 154, 159,  
2000 x, xi, 10, 22, 28, 32, 33, 38, 67-8, 76, 87,  
104, 113, 123-4, 126, 127, 131  
2001 x, xi, 4, 18, 20, 22-3, 29, 34, 49, 56, 67-8,  
77, 79, 93, 113, 126-9, 166, 185, 189, 225  
2002 vii, 19, 23-4, 28, 35-6, 68-9, 87, 93, 113,  
128-9i, 132-3, 135, 155, 159, 171  
2003 x-xi, 4, 15, 24, 37-8, 56, 69, 88, 129, 143,  
155, 189, 199  
2004 19-20, 38, 59, 70, 88, 131, 150, 182  
2005 11, 15, 39, 41, 60, 71, 73, 83, 113, 117,  
131-2, 147, 155, 166,  
2006 vii-ix, 13, 22, 58, 60, 79, 93-4, 96, 114-5,  
132, 168, 178, 182, 184, 195, 198-9  
2007 viii, 4, 15, 25, 39, 61-2, 71, 73, 82, 84, 91,  
94, 96-7, 99, 113-4, 132, 155, 158, 170, 178,  
179, 225,  
2008 xi, 8, 11-3, 17, 25, 40, 43, 51, 56-7, 88,  
95-8, 105-6, 114, 116, 134, 155, 169, 178, 183,  
187, 197, 225  
2009 xi, 4, 7, 12, 16-7, 20, 26, 42-3, 45, 58, 61,  
76, 78, 81, 85, 98, 101, 103, 106, 116, 135, 166,  
170, 189, 193, 225  
2010 vii, ix, xi, 5, 12, 16, 20, 44, 78, 88, 90-1,  
100, 102-3, 105, 110-1, 114, 117, 135, 143,  
153, 159, 170, 181, 189, 193, 221  
2011 v, 7, 13, 21, 25, 45, 53, 59-60, 72, 89, 92,  
102-4, 110, 115, 137, 147, 153, 166, 179, 189,  
193, 196,  
2012 viii, xi, 7, 24, 46-7, 54, 58, 62, 73-4, 78,  
79, 80, 84, 86, 91-2, 104-6, 108, 110, 117-8,  
138, 153-4, 158, 187, 197-8  
2013 v, xi, 7, 8, 10, 14, 17, 21, 25, 47-8, 55,  
59-61, 72-6, 79-82, 85, 105, 107, 110, 116, 139,  
141, 146, 158, 177, 179, 182, 206, 208, 212  
2014 xi, 9, 48-9, 51, 54, 59, 74-5, 80-2, 109,  
117, 141, 142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 158, 203,  
206, 211, 214, 220-1  
2015 vi, xi, 9, 17, 19, 49, 52, 55, 58, 81, 85,  
118, 143-4, 149, 154, 156-7, 166, 188, 206-7,  
219-20

*State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra*

*The Protected Area Update* started publication in 1994 and fulfils an important need of news and information related to protected areas from across South Asia, particularly India. The newsletter is published six times a year and mailed to nearly 1,800 people. Additionally, it goes out in an electronic form to about 2,000 individuals via an e-discussion group – <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/paupdate> – and now also has its own Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/protectedareaupdate/>

*The Protected Area Update* is published by Kalpavriksh and edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria. Financial support for the newsletter has been provided by a number of organizations over the years. These include, among others, the Foundation for Ecological Security, Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust, World Wide Fund for Nature – India, Bombay Natural History Society, Greenpeace India, and Action Aid India. Many individuals have also extended support either as donations or by sending in a subscription.

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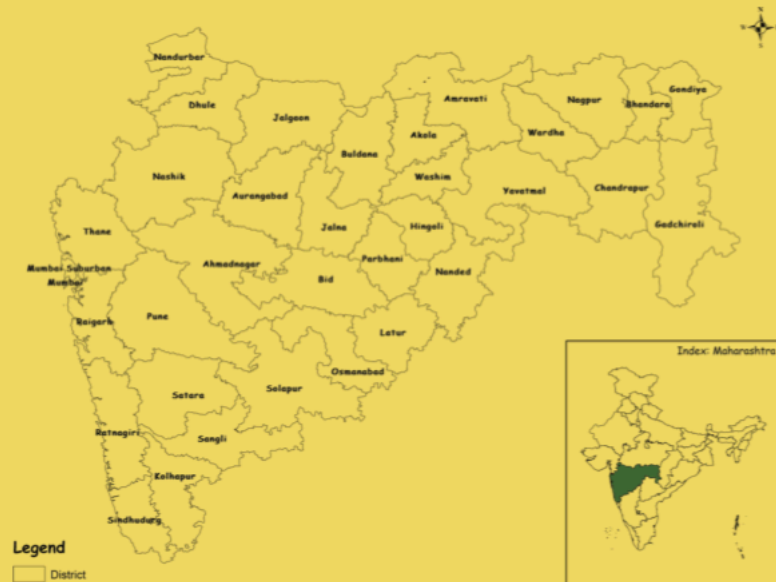
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#### List of Contents

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Perspective & Opinion: The Print Media's Kaziranga Obsession – An analysis (Mehak Siddiqui & C Rajesh Reddi); A Case Study of Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation in Western Assam (Sonali Ghosh); Snow leopards in the Land of the Rising Sun (Yash Veer Bhatnagar); Karbi Anglong: A little-known wilderness of Assam (Anwaruddin Choudhury); Elephants and Other Memories of the Garo Hills (Nimesh Ved); Dams in the North-East (Neeraj Vagholikar); and Community Conservation of Wildlife (Neema Pathak).



For nearly two and a half decades now the *Protected Area Update* (PAU) has religiously presented a consolidated account of India's wildlife and protected area (PA) network. Published six times a year, it carries in a tightly edited format, news and information of what is happening in, to and around these national parks and sanctuaries that have been at the core of India's wildlife conservation strategy.

In the second of a series of edited books that synthesize this huge body of information on geographical lines, *The State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra: News and Information from the Protected Area Update 1996–2015* presents a consolidated historical account of developments in the PA network in Maharashtra over two decades. While the primary unit still remains the individual protected area, the timeline has changed from two months of one issue of the PAU to 20 years that this publication covers.

In following one news item after another about any particular PA we see what happened month after month, year after year; what developments recurred at what periodicity; what were the issues that were important and what was done about them—it's an important glimpse into the contemporary history of a place (many places) marked on the map as a protected area.



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