

# TigerLink Meeting

New Delhi, 1–3 December 1997

A small *TigerLink* meeting took place in Delhi on 1–3 December 1997 to review tiger conservation in India over the last three years and to exchange ideas and information, in an effort to chart strategies for the future. The network has become so vast that it was impossible to invite everyone to participate. A hundred people/organisations, working in the field or directly on tiger related issues, were called. About 60 participants from many parts of India as well as 10 representatives of foreign organisations attended the three day deliberations. Mainly reporting on different situations from the field, the organisations and the people presented the problems of the tiger and the habitat in their respective regions, along with their activities to tackle the problems. The discussion attempted to assess the strength of tiger conservation activities in India.

One of the most appreciated aspects of the meeting was the personal interaction—the opportunity for funders to meet NGOs, for forest staff to interact with activists, for everyone to inspire each other. Included here are some of the major points discussed and a few resumés of presentations and interventions. More details and/or copies of papers referred to may be obtained from the relevant organisation or from TigerLink in Delhi.

## *Constitution of a team of experts*

The loss of habitat and of corridors, the impact of developmental projects and of economic liberalisation policies which result in more thermal plants, mines, dams, roads, 5-star hotels, prawn farms, processed foods etc. to the detriment of the environment, are leading to tiger extinction. There are scores of such new large-scale projects in tiger habitats that are coming up for environ-

mental clearance. It is extremely important and very urgent that experts should be available to examine the Environment Impact Assessment Reports which are submitted to the MOEF's committees which examine them for environmental clearance. Often the actual contents and the far-reaching consequences and the impact analysis of these projects/reports can be fully understood only by highly specialised scientists, such as chemical engineers, hydrologists, etc.

A team of experts who can be consulted and whose qualifications cannot be dismissed, will be an essential help to put a stop to the disruption and commercialisation of tiger habitats.

## *TigerLink News*

Recognising the invaluable role played by *TigerLink News* as a source of information, as an essential tool of communication and contacts, the participants requested that the frequency of the newsletter be increased, so that three *TigerLink* newsletters are published every year, instead of two as of now.

## *Education & awareness*

Education programmes, awareness campaigns through media and within schools, were presented by some NGOs participating in the meeting as part of their ongoing activities—well known players in the Indian national cricket team appeal from the TV screen to help to save the tiger, the *Teacher and Environment Network* collected 1,50,000 signatures for the *Save the Tiger Appeal* to the Prime Minister among schools and colleges in Kerala.

It has been agreed that many more such awareness campaigns are essential to sensitise the general public on the conservation of the tiger and the wild habitats.

Such education and information drives are even more essential and urgent as the conflicts between man and wild animals are growing; as the competition over land and natural resources has become very serious.

**TigerLink—legal arm**

During the last few years the Judiciary has played an important role in containing some of the abusive policies pursued by irresponsible local authorities, pressurised by powerful commercial lobbies, towards wild habitats. Legal participants of *TigerLink*, have therefore urged the network to send information on violations and abuses in forest areas so that legal action can be taken under the Forest (Conservation) Act and the Wildlife (Protection) Act.

**Tiger crisis**

The tiger crisis continues, and though in a few areas there have been signs of recovery of wild populations of tigers, in others the tiger has been targeted for extermination, not only by poachers but also by farmers who poison the carcasses of livestock that the tiger kills. More and more of such cases are reported.

There is great danger—a rising wave against the wilderness and wildlife conservation—which needs to be addressed with a lot more networking and exposing of facts and figures, with honest information and correct data, with in-depth knowledge of site-specific realities, with appropriate compensatory measures and policies and last but not least with a lot of courage.

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## Reports from the Tiger States

### Assam

**Manju Barua** from Wild Grass, Kaziranga, highlighted "two great things that had happened in Assam". One was the donation of 6 Gypsies to Range Officers in Assam (achieved through *Tiger-Link* networking) and the other was the Supreme Court ruling on forests of 12 December 1996.

**Pankaj Sharma**, a Range Officer from Assam has spent the last five years in Kaziranga National Park and is now posted R.O. Nameri, an area of *babbar* tract contiguous to Pakhui in Arunachal Pradesh. He reported that the morale of the staff in Kaziranga is high and only because of this has it been possible to contain poaching there.

*Other participants pointed out that it is in large part thanks to quality forest officers like Sharma, whose work and support of their staff, keep morale high, despite the lack of funds and resources and against incredible odds!*

Pankaj Sharma also vividly described a day in the life of a Range Officer in Kaziranga—a 24 hour day that, in the example given, resulted in two rhino horns seized and seven arrests made. It was a revealing report that amply illustrated the immense effort—and danger—that goes into the protection of wildlife and revealed how much we all owe to such wildlife staff.

Pankaj Sharma, R.O. Nameri National Park, Assam

**Soumyandeep Dutta** of *Nature's Beckon* gave a run down of his NGO's activities in the North-East and highlighted some of the problems facing the PAs of the region. He spoke of Manas and the disaster of the Bhutan road on which reportedly 600 vehicles a month ply. The blasting for it led to landslides and siltation of the Manas river which affected several villages.

*Manju Barua pointed out that the road had come up under an international agreement so there was little that could be done locally to stop it.*

Dutta requested participants to refer to perpetrators of the violence in and around Manas only as 'militants' or 'extremists' rather than "Bodo militants/extremists". He argued that use of the latter implied condemnation of the whole community and that this was wrong and created hostility amongst the Bodo people.

Dutta also talked of the Chakrasila Sanctuary where community based conservation has been successfully developed. *Nature's Beckon* volunteers look after the welfare and bio-diversity of the sanctuary in the absence of proper Forest Department administration. *Nature's Beckon* produces environmental education awareness material in English and local languages and produces a bi-annual newsletter, *Nature's Beckon News*. N.B., 'Datta Bari', Ward No: 1, Dhubri 783301

### Bihar

**Dr. D.S. Srivastava**, Secretary of the *Nature Conservation Society* (NCS), prepared a report—"*Status of tigers in Bihar (problems and prospects)*", relating the history of the tiger, detailing its situation today and presenting the problems for tiger conservation in the State. He gave the TL meeting a rundown of the disastrous situation in Bihar "where nothing moves" and tiger conservation has all the problems.

"Bihar with its glorious past of tiger country status had 29,232 km<sup>2</sup> under forest cover in 1990 and 18% of it is under protected area of Sanctuary and National Park....

White tiger was seen and killed in Hazaribagh in 1960. *Sunders* reported the awards on killing tigers. Maharaja Surguja, a neighbour of Palamau part of Bihar, killed 1,116 tigers from the forests of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh....

The 1972 census of tigers recorded the presence of tigers in almost all the forest divisions of the state. The first tiger project started in Palamau in 1974 with 22 tigers. Now the state has two tiger projects—Palamau and Valmiki, one each in north and south Bihar.

The official tiger population figures in different ranges from 1993–1997 show that there has been

a decline in tiger population to the tune of 32 tigers within four years".

The NCS present their own estimation of tiger numbers which is almost 50% of the official number—66–71, as compared to 102 (1997). 1997 official census figure for Valmiki is given as 53; NCS estimation is 20–25. Similarly for Palamau the official figure given is 44 whereas their estimation is 23. "The non-official estimation of tiger numbers in different ranges are based on our interviews with villagers, trackers, forest guards and our monitoring methods (at least in Palamau Tiger Reserve). The figure in Valmiki Tiger Reserve fluctuates during the summer months as many tigers move from Nepal to Valmiki. Our estimation of 66–71 tigers in Bihar is nearly realistic and now our goal has to be to preserve this number towards the increasing side."

"It is not the Forest Department alone in Bihar who is to blame for the decline in tiger population. There are several factors which are collectively influencing this crisis. Some of the major factors are:

1. **Political will:** there is complete neglect of wildlife from the government/political parties and apart from visiting national parks and zoos for their recreation, no leader has any concern for wildlife protection.

2. **Fund Flow:** the tiger project schemes in Bihar are temporary and need sanction every year which is given in late January to March. This prevents withdrawal of funds from the government treasury even for essential items like cattle kill compensation, crop protection, patrolling, grassland management and anti-poaching activities etc. The GOI funded (100%) schemes are not even cleared. This has resulted in complete collapse of all wildlife sanctuaries and tiger reserves.

3. **Anti-social activities:** the recent increase in Naxalite activities in Bihar are a deterrent to staff movement in the forest area. No officer is willing to stay in remote guest houses and all the field staff are staying at range headquarters. The entire forest area is open. Anti-social elements posing as Naxalites are having a field day. Apart from Khair extraction, no Naxalite group is involved in poaching or illicit trade.

4. **Poaching and skin trade:** the occasional hunting by local tribals during festivals was never alarming as it was one or two chital or sambar or wild boar; but the recent trend of skin trading through a network of traders from field to big towns is of great concern. The Naxalite activities have stopped the local poachers using guns but the increase in poisoning and noose methods are alarming. We have identified trade routes also for tiger, leopard, herbivore skin and ivory trade, in Bihar and set up an information network who pass on to poaching occurrences and we in turn pass it on to the forest officer of the area for action.

5. **Inadequate facilities:** the lack of facilities including vacant posts, unarmed powerless field staff, lack of transport vehicles for patrolling and lack of funding for time-bound activities causes immense problems.

6. **Legal :** more women are entering the forests for illicit timber or noosing operations. The forest guards are helpless against them for fear of being implicated in false cases of atrocities against women.

7. **Village support:** the villagers in and around the sanctuary area are becoming more hostile as sanctuary prescriptions are anti to them. There are no developmental activities from the Forest Department which makes the rural mass friendly. Villagers think that wildlife is government property. The lack of awareness programmes from the government side is also a major factor—even wildlife week is not celebrated in the state now. Developmental activities like Bihar Forestry Project, Eco-development etc., are entangled in a bureaucratic mess.

Dr. Srivastava's report concludes:

"It is a hard fact that the tiger is counting its days in Bihar. The socio-economic atmosphere is worst. But I am of the view that we have to try to save our tigers and their habitat in Bihar, through our concentrated efforts of TigerLink. I propose that:

1. The Government of India should initiate action to take over both the tiger reserves under its direct administrative and financial control.

2. TigerLink should meet officials concerned in Patna to chalk out a permanent solution concerning tigers and their habitat.



Dr. Srivastava also outlined the NCS activities on tiger conservation:

1. **Anti-poaching**—generation of informer network on poaching and skin trades. Information passed to Project Tiger authorities for action.

2. **Legal**—monitoring of court cases filed by the forest department against poachers.

3. **Awareness**—organise village meetings, rural interaction camps, rural youth wildlife protection groups, rural student nature clubs in schools, competitions among school children on conservation topics etc. in and around protected and non-protected forest areas of south Bihar.

4. **Monitoring**—monitoring the movement and presence of tigers in different forests through our volunteers.

5. **Reduction in village antagonism**—raising of donations and distribution of crop protection materials in Palamau Tiger Reserve villages.

6. **Action Alert**—attempting to pressurize the State Government to release funds to both tiger projects and sanctuaries in the state through the Secretary, Dept. of Forest & Environment, other concerned officials, political leaders and the media.

NCS, ITO Road, Redma, Daltonganj 822101

**Shri S.E.H. Kazmi** has been posted as the Divisional Forest Officer of Daltonganj South Division since August 1991. 500 km<sup>2</sup> of the core and buffer area of the 1026 km<sup>2</sup> Palamau Tiger Reserve comes under his control. Kazmi spoke of his work in Palamau and presented the meeting with an insight into some of the workings of an alert and active Forest Officer.

DFO Kazmi also underlined many of the problems to conservation raised by other speakers on Bihar and declared that 80-90% of the problems could be solved if the funds were made available. Since March 1997 no money has been received and, just to mention one example, petrol can only be obtained on the credit of his personal signature.

*Mr. P.K. Sen, Director Project Tiger, informed the meeting that there was one small "ray of hope"—he had been assured by the Forest Minister that by the end of December the fund flow problem would be solved.*

Some of the activities Kazmi highlighted were:

1. **Undercover investigation to tackle illegal trade.** In the 17 years prior to 1991 only 3 cases of tiger/leopard poaching were recorded. One leopard and two tiger carcasses were seized and four persons were arrested and prosecuted. From 1991 to the present, seven cases have been detected and investigated with two tiger skins, two other tiger parts, 9 leopard skins and 6 guns seized. 47 persons have been prosecuted. This was the result of developing a network of informers and decoys which gave the correct field situation in respect of poaching and trade. Kazmi reported that he "realized that a lot of poaching and trade had gone unnoticed and unreported and that there is an organized network of poachers, retail traders, carriers and wholesale dealers. Agricultural pesticide and locally made guns are used for poaching and all poaching leads to trade... "I have collected the information, investigated it, laid the traps, planned the raids, lead my men, arrested the culprits and packed them off to jail." As he reported, this "sting method" carries high risks and 3-4 good informers have been killed and the culprits are out on bail.

2. **Saving fruit-bearing trees.** "The Government of Bihar had issued executive orders exempting fruit-bearing trees growing on private land from the purview of timber transit rules. The timber mafia became active and started purchasing mango, jamun, mohua and kathal trees by paying Rs.700/- to Rs.1500/- per tree and sold it outside the state at the rate of Rs.250/- to Rs.400/- per cu.ft." With the help of the then Commissioner, Palamau, Shri U.K. Sangma and the press who both put pressure on the Government, Kazmi succeeded in getting the order rescinded and an attempt to reverse this in the court prevented.

3. **Delaying the submergence of tiger habitat.** "A hydro-electric project popularly called 'Kutku dam' is being constructed on the Koel river at Mandal. The dam has been completed in all respects except the installation of sluice gates. The closure of gates will result in submergence of about 10,000 hectares of prime forests of the tiger reserve. About 30 villages will be affected by the submergence.... The irrigation department was not ready to follow the provisions of the Forest Con-

servation Act (FCA) saying that the construction had started much before 1980. They were also not following the environmental conditions laid down earlier. Kazmi prevented the installation of the gates by physical and legal means and raised a lot of 'halla'. Finally a proposal under the FCA was forwarded, with adverse opinion. Recently the Superintendent Engineer, Kutku dam was killed by Naxalites. In view of this it is unlikely that any significant development will take place in the near future.

**4. Illicit felling of khair and teak in the reserve.** Kazmi reports that the Palamau Tiger Reserve is the only forest area left with a sizeable number of khair trees (*Acacia catechu*) of exploitable diameter and that for the last year illicit kattha making has increased. This is being done under the active protection of ultra-left outfits who are fully armed. The kattha is transferred by stopping coal loaded goods trains and trucks. "From February 1996 to October 1997 about 3,200 kg of kattha was seized in 32 raids out of which 14 were conducted without police protection; 12 persons were arrested and 6 guns have been seized."

Several teak smugglers are operating in the area and teak is being transported by goods-trains with some of the railway staff involved. In July 1996 one train was detained and the guard and driver arrested. They were released and the train allowed to move only after the intervention of senior railway officials.

**5. Illegal encroachment in tiger habitat.** "The first major problem I had to face was of illegal encroachment. A very respectable NGO was inciting the villagers to encroach the tiger habitat." "There were 46 cases against 580 tribals involving 394 acres of forest land. I tried to establish a direct

dialogue with the encroachers by a series of village-level meetings and tried to distinguish between hard-core encroachers/ring leaders and passive type of offenders. Since many of the latter were ready to vacate the forest, we acted with flexibility. The villagers appreciated this and it generated a lot of goodwill and support for conservation."

**6. Netarhat field firing range.** The army wanted to establish a firing range in the Project Tiger forests. Kazmi opposed it on all fronts, mobilized the public and enlightened the army about the FCA and Wildlife Protection Act (WPA). For the time being the army has shelved the proposal.

**7. Horilong underground mining project.** The Central Coal Field company were forced to submit a proposal for FCA clearance for an underground coal mining project near the tiger reserve after first saying that it was not needed. The project was cleared by the Central Government but mining has not started to date.

**8. Orsapat Mining Project.** This is a major open cast bauxite mining project of Hindalco whose mining lease was cleared by the Bihar Government in 1986. "Some of the leased area is forest land. This project if cleared will result in large-scale deforestation and consequent siltation of water resources." Kazmi opposed the project in 1992 and reported that his "official opposition" was being used by local activists to stall the mining.

In spite of his diligent performance of duties, "as per my conscience and belief", Shri Kazmi reports that he is facing a Supreme Court enquiry for the actions taken during the course of his duties.

Mr. S.E.H. Kazmi, DFO Daltonganj South, Palamau T.R. Bihar

## Karnataka

**Praveen Bhargav** presented a succinct resumé of *Wildlife First!*—their philosophy, background and aims and their activities since their inception in 1995. They are a strong group of around 30 activists coming from many different disciplines and they have been working on a number of projects and campaigns including lobbying/policy advocacy, protection activities and press/media campaigns. Recently they have produced four "Save

the Tiger" advertisements with Indian cricket stars, Saurav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid, Anil Kumble and J. Srinath, appealing to help save the tiger. These were screened to the great appreciation of the meeting. *Wildlife First!* is trying to get them on various TV channels for maximum exposure.

Wildlife First!, 248, 4th Main Road, Chamarajapet, Bangalore 560018. Email: pbsolus@blr.vsnl.net.in

Mr. K.M. Chinnappa gave a delightful slide presentation illustrating the education awareness project run by him under the *Nagarhole Wildlife Conservation Education Project* (NAWICOED). The programme has already reached 20,000 teenagers through schools, clubs etc. and has been so effective that villages have taken votes to protect wildlife. Mr Chinnappa sets out to change the prevailing view in Coorg that "animals are for eating" by answering why we need forests. Then, with the aid of illuminating colour photographs, he shows how the animals "protect" and "grow" the forests—elephants, through whom hard-coated fruits pass to germinate in their dung; wild boar, the "cleaners" of the forest who also plough, create ponds through their digging and bury seeds; smaller cats, jackals, owls and other species that eat rodents and so help farmers reduce their food grain loss; carnivores that control crop raiders; birds who control insects and pollinate the plants and down to the smallest creatures like ants. All have their roles and support each other, living in

harmony. Many lessons may be learnt from them—the wild dogs' family planning, the sharing of food and lack of waste that is in such contrast to humans' behaviour. Mr Chinnappa's passion for his subject and his simple straightforward approach presents a powerful appeal that cannot leave his audience unmoved.

Mr. Chinnappa believes that the forest department are "log-oriented people" in need of wildlife training. He spoke of his work training the wildlife guards which is done with the support of the Chief Wildlife Warden. Later in the meeting Chinnappa also gave us the benefit of his experience in bringing Nagarhole from being an area where one heard nine gunshots in a day and saw only people—it was a luxury to spot even a deer—to one of the best parks in India for wildlife viewing where no gunshots were heard. He achieved this through strong protection with the help of informers and staff incentives.

K.M. Chinnappa, NAWICOED, P.O. Kakur, via Srimangala, South Kodagu 571217

## Kerala

Mr. K.N. Changappa, Chairman of the *High Range Wildlife Environment Preservation Association* provided information on his Association's background and activities. It was started in 1920 in Munnar with the support of the tea company John Finlay & Co. This became the Tata Tea company who continue to provide Rs.3 lakhs a year for the Association.

*Other participants pointed out that this was an excellent example of a corporate body putting its weight behind wildlife conservation which could be emulated elsewhere.*

Mr. Changappa and Mr. Jayakumar spoke of the situation generally in the state, mentioning the drastic reduction in forest cover, the lack of wildlife NGO activity and the poaching, connected to the gold and silver smuggling. About 5% of Kerala is under National Park or Sanctuary and there are perhaps 50-60 tigers. It was suspected that 4 tigers had been killed in the state although the official figures do not show this.

They also highlighted the problem of tourist activity and the increase in its impact. It is essential

that well-planned tourism, suitable to an area, is adopted. Within the protected areas only the Forest Department should be permitted to operate. At present in Kerala PAs, the Tourism Department also functions and the conflicts are "never ending". In Munnar the number of tourists have increased enormously and as it is not possible to increase the number of 'watchers', the Association has been training volunteer schoolchildren to help as 'watchers' on Sundays. The Association has also been active in stopping a road and in taking High Court action against inappropriate building development.

Mr. Jayakumar introduced the *Nature Club Council* which is a coalition of school and college nature clubs of Kerala. The council has 450 clubs on the mailing list and it publishes environmental education materials, newsletters and other educational materials. They will be completing 25 years in 1998. Posters, certificates and small gifts are given away to schools and students; slides/film shows are being organised in schools and a Nature Camp, with tiger as the theme, is being run for the 90 students who collected the most signatures.

The Council is finding it difficult to continue the activities on its own but is planning a two year Educational Programme to reach out to more schools and colleges.

The **Teacher and Environment Network** is a forum of teachers and educators active in environment and nature education in Kerala. The network has over 300 educators on its mailing list. Together with the High Range Association they are taking up teacher training and leadership programmes to equip individuals and groups to work better for nature conservation. Reference facility by mail and technical support to students to take up field projects are also provided.

The Nature Club Council launched a drive to collect signatures for the tiger appeal from schools and colleges of Kerala. The Teacher and Environment Network and the High Range Wildlife and Environment Preservation Association were partners in the programme. The signature campaign was also an awareness campaign and over 1000 helped to collect signatures. 153,000 signatures were collected.

High Range W/I & Environ. Preserv. Assoc., Tata Tea Ltd., Munnar 685612

## Madhya Pradesh

**Ms Vandana Dwivedi** of the **Bandhavgarh Foundation Trust** (BFT) presented a brief run-down of the activities of their organisation which was founded in 1996 "to protect the forest and save the tiger", as well as to address the problems of the villagers dwelling near and around the forest. They are particularly concerned with the peripheral areas which need greater protection, as most of the attention is focused on the core area. BFT has been made the co-ordinator of the WWF-Tiger Conservation Programme in this area and through this have been enabled to give assistance to Park officials in the form of raincoats, motor-bikes, jeeps, wireless sets, shoes, cash awards etc. They have run cattle inoculation camps and health camps and have carried out surveys regarding problems relating to cattle, female education, the basic needs of farmers pertaining to fertilisers and seeds, fodder, wood and other necessities. BFT activities include anti-poaching patrolling and com-

Nature Club Council, Post Box 815, Kowdiar, Thiruvananthapuram 695003

• *During the TL meeting the signatures were handed over personally to the Environment Minister, Prof. Saifuddin Soz who accepted them on behalf of the Prime Minister. Later, in acknowledgement of their receipt the Minister wrote:*

"I have received the Tiger Appeal signed by 1,53,000 school and college children of Kerala. I appreciate your interest in taking the wildlife conservation movement to the youth of our country and I am sure that with their interest and commitment, they will be able to take this movement forward.

My Ministry is taking necessary steps to ensure that the tiger and its habitat within the country is provided the highest protection so that future generations are not deprived of this magnificent species.

I am hopeful that with the support of deeply concerned individuals like yourself and the thousands of youth who have signed the Tiger Appeal, we shall succeed in our endeavour to preserve our national heritage."

munity work, generating alternative income schemes etc.

Ms Dwivedi reports that the corridors linking Bandhavgarh are all badly disturbed. "On the east, where the Vindhya cross the Sone and enter Sidhi district via Beohari, after Manpur, due to Bansagar, this straight link will be affected thus affecting Sanjay and Bagdara National Parks." "The river Banas which later meets the Sone, forms a vital water source for the Vindhya after they leave Shahdol." In the south western area the ranges disturbed are the Barhi/Katni/Mandla and Umariya/Naorozaabad/Shahdol/Ghunghuti/Palardadar links up to the St. Michel ranges—Amarkantak and Achanak Marg. BFT has already started to regularly patrol this area also.

BFT, Fort, Rewa 486001; Branch office: 14/131 Hanuman Mandir Chowk, Development Area, Shahdol 484001

**Ajit Sonakia**, Conservator of Forests in Madhya Pradesh, drew the meeting's attention to the



serious situation for tigers and other wildlife in M.P., including depletion of the tiger's prey base, loss of habitat (around 5000 km<sup>2</sup> of prime forest lost to encroachments, felling, degradation etc.), considerable tiger poaching, the Sal borer epidemic, the local extinction of gaurs from Bandhavgarh, which was the last population in M.P. north of the Narmada, and the need for a solution to the problem of crop raiding by wild animals.

He highlighted several of the problems to effective conservation in the State, citing the total lack of real administrative and political will for this, the lack of direction and the slipping away of control from the Chief Wildlife Wardens as areas are opened up for non-timber forest produce, the enormous push tourism is being given in the state to the detriment of the natural habitat and the lack of adequate attention to court cases and prosecution. He also mentioned that morale in the wildlife wing was very low and many now want to come out; political interference in wildlife postings is one reason for the low morale.

Ajit Sonakia, E-9/K-3 Charimli, Bhopal 462016.

**Pradip Krishen** of *Vanya* talked briefly of the work he is doing in Pachmarhi which is a beautiful hill station in the Hoshangabad district, surrounded by the protected areas of Satpura National Park, Bori Sanctuary and Pachmarhi Sanctuary. The plateau is under threat particularly from the State Government's plans for mega tourist development in the area—they want to increase the number of visitors by a factor of 12 by the year 2011. Krishen is now developing an "Integrated Conservation Plan" for Pachmarhi and will collect baseline information and suggest alternative methods of development; under the auspices of INTACH an agreement has been signed with the M.P. government for this project.

Krishen presented two aspects of the problem to the *TigerLink* meeting—the water issue and the

habitat destruction. Showing graphicly illustrative transparencies he spoke of the beauty and invaluable bio-diversity of the area and of the present and potential damage being caused. Waterways are polluted by raw sewerage and other effluents, and grassland is under threat for building development. He spoke also of the involvement and motivation of the local communities for such issues, noting that water is an issue that everyone can relate to and that gets an active response from people but mobilising support for habitat conservation is less easy.

Pradip Krishen, Vanya, (res.) 2A, Kautilya Marg, New Delhi 110021.

### Sal Borer Epidemic

The present 'epidemic' of *sal* borer in the forests of M.P. was raised at several points over the three day meeting. Participants were shocked to hear that more than one/two million affected *sal* trees in various forest divisions may be cut and they signed a resolution which was forwarded to the M.P. State Government: "*No sal tree in any Protected Area be felled, whether affected by sal borer or not, and that it should be left to nature to rationalize the eco-system in its own way. And further that the matter should be duly investigated to ascertain the causes of this epidemic spread of sal borer and responsibility thereto.*"

Brij Bhushan Sharma reported that the Kanha meeting discussed: (i) enumeration of all infested trees in Kanha Tiger Reserve, (ii) resorting to traditional/preventive measures in the buffer zone, (iii) earmarking priority areas and deployment of winter patrols, (iv) burning of badly infected trees at the site after prior girdling, (v) fire management practice (if necessary) for badly affected areas, (vi) carrying out tree-trap operations, (vii) continuous monitoring of the entire habitat.

The Kanha Meeting agreed that there should be no major felling in Kanha or other PAs. (See *TL News* for latest update.)

## Maharashtra

**Kishor Rithe** of the *Nature Conservation Society, Amravati* (NCSA) gave a run-down of the conservation issues in his area and the work of their society. He spoke eloquently of his use of the

*TigerLink* network and the importance of such links and of how unified action had helped in certain instances. He reported on the situation in Pench where even though it is seven months since

the Supreme Court decision, the Maharashtra and M.P. Governments have not been able to restrict the fishing only to the people who have got permission "due to very high political and money influence". Recently Maharashtra Forest Department appointed a committee under the chair of State Forest Minister, Mr. Gudadhe Patil, to explore the possibility of giving fishing permission in the core area of the park from the Maharashtra side of the reservoir!

NCSA and other TL participants have decided to move the court with a contempt matter.

Rithe told the meeting how the corridors between Melghat and other wildlife sanctuaries were vanishing and cited grazing along with encroachment as the two main problems.

Rithe related that reportedly Rs. 90 crores was provided to tarmac and improve roads in Melghat, even through the core area of the Tiger Reserve. 19 villages were electrified (see *TL News* vol. 2 no. 2). This has "created havoc in Melghat". No sanction for this work was taken either from the Government of India or from Melghat's Field Director. Rithe also informed the meeting that work on the Chikhaldara Pumped Storage Scheme, situated only 4 km from the reserve, was still going on in spite of the GOI saying that no permission had been granted.

Among other problems that the reserve is facing he highlighted grazing and the fact that Project Tiger and the Forest Department are not co-ordinated. Poaching is more rampant than official figures reveal—hyenas, wild boar, one tiger and three leopards have been killed. The *Mobile Tiger Conservation Action Force* (MTCAF) of the NCSA is now organising anti-poaching activities with the help of the WPSI. They are planning to offer compensation in cattle kill cases.

The NCSA also encouraged the Govt. Engineering College in Amravati to organise a one-

day seminar in collaboration with the Institute of Electronic and Telecommunication Engineers on "The role of engineers for the sustainable development of Melghat". Experts in agriculture, computers, electronics and radio engineering pooled their knowledge to evolve news ideas for sustainable development with the help of latest technology.

The *Mobile Tiger Conservation Action Force* (MTCAF) was established as a force of young activists from all over the Vidarbha region for protecting the tigers in this area and in adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh. Due to the donation of a Gypsy by Care for the Wild, MTCAF was able to visit 10 PAs in M.P. and collected some very shocking information which will be published soon.

MTCAF also organised a two-day consultation in Melghat (8 and 9 November) to "explore new working strategies for effective nature conservation in central India". Twenty-five Forest Officers, journalists and wildlifers discussed the problems of Pench National Park, new sanctuaries and the present status of proposed PAs in the Vidarbha region, threats to tigers in the Melghat Tiger Reserve and the scope for wildlife conservation in the Marathwada region. A follow-up action plan was prepared and sent to various concerned government departments for further action and implementation.

PAs in the Satpuras are becoming isolated forest patches due to illicit tree felling in multiple use areas. The wildlife corridors which provide forest contiguity between the PAs are fast disappearing. Rithe reports that around 4,900 hectares of forest was lost in 1996 alone and in south-west M.P., over 37,500 hectares of forest land have been encroached during the last 5 years. NCSA is planning to move the High Court on this issue. MTCAF, NCSA, 'Pratishtha Bharat Nagar, Akoli Road, Nr. Sainagar, Amravati 444605.

## Rajasthan

**Ashutosh Mahadevia** of *Tiger Watch* identified some of the problems he saw besetting the Ranthambhore National Park—grazing, very low staff morale, excessive time necessitated by tourism management, lack of staff training, lack of protective and communication equipment, the utilisation of

funds in unnecessary areas and the lack of tourist awareness leading to disturbance of the animals.

He then outlined some of the projects *Tiger Watch* were taking up. These had been developed after discussion with the Dy. Field Director (Core Area), Sri G. Viswanatha Reddy and include

reconstruction and repair of surrounding walls to restrict grazing within the park and reduce crop raiding outside, provision of protective equipment for confrontations and the introduction of a *Tiger Watch* patrol force to supplement those of the department. As part of the need to bolster staff morale, the NGO plans to provide uniforms to the forest guards, organise special and comprehensive training programmes for them and initiate an award system.

**Fateh Singh Rathore**, the Field-in-charge of *Tiger Watch* explained the importance of on-ground protection and the role of *Tiger Watch* in this process.

*Tiger Watch* plans to draw up a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Forest Department for its activities and recommends that other NGOs sign similar written agreements—useful especially to ensure smoother operation of their activities in the event of personnel changes in relevant officers

Mahadevia acknowledged the support of the organizations *Care for the Wild*, who had donated a vehicle, and of *Rhino Rescue*. He also made special mention of Mr Reddy's good work in Ranthambhore "in spite of danger to his life".

Tiger Watch: Fateh Singh Rathore, Director, Maa Forestry Farm, Ranthambhore Road, Sawai Madhopur 322001

**Dr. Goverdhan Singh Rathore** of the *Ranthambhore Foundation* (RF) spoke of the activities they were pursuing with the communities living around the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve and circulated a paper outlining the background and work of RF. He noted that "without the support of the people, the tiger cannot survive" and with this clearly in mind RF had been started, with the hope of saving the tiger in Ranthambhore, but with people always in mind. He emphasised that people had responded because RF had provided care and not just conservation education. Rathore is himself a medical doctor which gives him exceptional access into people's homes and he is especially aware that it is necessary to understand the communities and appreciate that when children are dying still of polio and adults from TB, the disappearance of a park does not feature high on their list of concerns. By not only concentrating on environmental issues but also

people's general well-being, the Foundation has been able to help them realise that there are ways whereby their lives can be made better and the Park and its tigers can also co-exist. In this endeavour the Foundation has tried to involve leading NGOs with expertise in a particular field of work, including Dastakar (craft development), the Ranthambhore School of Art (Handicraft), Prakaratik Society (medicare), BAIF (breed improvement), RCDF (dairy development), INTACH and many local village protection societies.

1. **Illiteracy:** Sawai Madhopur District as a whole has the lowest literacy rate in Rajasthan and probably in India—among boys it is 36% and among girls only 6% and it is lower in the immediate villages surrounding the tiger reserve.

2. **Health and family planning:** even basic primary health care is non-existent in the villages situated within the immediate periphery of the National Park. Infant mortality and maternal mortality are higher than other areas of the State.

3. **Traditions:** Many traditions have been prevalent for hundreds of years. The Gujjar communities have for hundreds of years free-grazed their animals. But this was when the population was low and there were abundant grazing lands available near the villages. Can this lifestyle be sustained today? Similarly the people living around the Park have never felt the need to plant trees as there has always been an abundant supply in the neighbouring forest which has been taken for granted.

4. **Breakdown of village leadership:** What is happening in the national politics is not absent at the village level. Today most communities are fragmented without good intentioned leadership.

5. **Total political and bureaucratic apathy towards R.N.P.:** The last few years have seen complete political and departmental apathy towards what happened to Ranthambhore or the people that live around the park. The result was that the Park had become a free-for-all. The forest department's lack of action was one of the biggest problems as it discouraged villagers from taking up or continuing tree planting, cattle improvement etc.—"why should we put effort into all this when our neighbours are going into the forest and getting it for nothing?" The management of the Park,



however, was recently changed and now has a much welcomed new commitment and dynamism.

Programmes implemented by the Foundation include:

(1) **Primary health care and family planning**—This was the first programme to be launched by RF and it now provides primary health care to over 40,000 people living in 33 villages along the northern and western periphery of the N.P. In 1996-97 effective modern contraception was provided to 5% of all eligible couples in the target area and over 70% cataract surgeries in the region were done.

(2) **Income generation through handicraft promotion**—Through Dastakar, the Foundation has supported a viable craft co-operative which involves over 100 families. This effort alone now generates over Rs.1.4 million each year. A lot of these families would otherwise have sold wood taken from the park.

Similarly a group of young artists were encouraged to form the Ranthambhore School of Art and now these formerly unemployed youth make some of the most exquisite wildlife paintings on pure silk. They have also tied up with RF in non-formal education programmes, using painting as an educational tool for teaching children about the environment.

(3) **Dairy development**—This has been one of the Foundation's major areas of work as cattle and associated issues have been the biggest problem for the park management. RF has worked very closely with the Rajasthan Dairy Co-operative Federation which was already running a milk union in the region. Many new co-operatives were formed, new milk routes developed and milk yield improved through the introduction of crossbred cows and good quality Murrah bull buffaloes. Some of the crossbreed cows have produced over 24 litres compared to the average yield of less than a kilo which the local cows give.

(4) **Artificial insemination**—RF invited BAIF to start artificial insemination in Kundera village. Three years later over 200 calves have been born.

(5) **Afforestation and agro-forestry**—RF tries to encourage farmers to grow fodder and fuel wood trees along the peripheries of their land to augment income and generate self-sufficiency in-

dependent of the Park. Initially the saplings were distributed free but there were not many takers. However last year over 100,000 trees of different varieties were sold to over 500 farmers in more than 45 villages scattered all around the park. A recent survey has shown that there is an average survival of over 30% of the trees planted in the last couple of years. Today, where there were barren fields, some farmers have their own mini forests and do not need to go into the forest for fuel wood.

Local schools have been encouraged to plant trees and three schools now have a thick grove of forest under which classes can be held.

Through awards schemes, lending vehicles such as a Canter to the park management or networking with local authorities, the Ranthambhore Foundation has tried also to motivate local forest officials and politicians to take a greater interest in park management. Without good management, no matter how hard an NGO tries, the Park cannot be saved. As the local people often point out: "If the fence starts eating the crop, then what hope is there to save the crop".

Dr Rathore concluded by mentioning that Ranthambhore again has excellent Park management thanks to some good committed officers in Delhi, Jaipur and, most importantly, in Ranthambhore. Dr. G.S. Rathore, Hon. Field Director, R.F., 10 Bal Mandir Colony, Man Town, Sawai Madhopur 322001

**G. Viswanath Reddy**, the Deputy Conservator of Forests and Deputy Field Director (core area) at Ranthambhore National Park was unable to attend the meeting but sent an 'update' for circulation.

In his note he states that grazing was the most critical and unmanageable problem of the park. Going by the records and statements of staff and people associated with the park, more than 20,000 animals freely grazed in the park during the monsoon period! But this year grazing has been enormously reduced; confrontations with villagers were less and none of the *chowkies* were attacked. Only on the eastern part there was not much success and new strategies need to be worked out for the coming season. Elsewhere the measures that had brought about these encouraging results were:



(a) existing inadequate manpower was strengthened by mobilising an extra force from the social forestry division which were deployed at all vulnerable points;

(b) common mess facilities, medical facilities and material used for patrolling were provided;

(c) to reduce absenteeism, a new system of casual leave was introduced—for every three working weeks, one week leave was allowed;

(d) it was ensured that ALL officers also participated in the patrolling along with the staff and that when emergency situations arose, additional forces were rushed for reinforcement;

(e) village level meetings were conducted to try to convince villagers about the ill effects of grazing inside the tiger reserve.

The India Ecodevelopment Project is being implemented from this year onwards. Village ecodevelopment programmes and habitat improvement works and infrastructure development works will be taken up.

Village relocation: The village contact and identification of the area for rehabilitation has been complete and the rehabilitation package is in the process of approvals. Hopefully in one year's time rehabilitation would be completed. (Two of the villages have been desperate to move out for the last five years.)

Mogya rehabilitation : the Mogya community's socio-economic condition is very pathetic and

doubtless encourages them in their involvement in wildlife poaching activities. For a long-term solution to the poaching problem, rehabilitation of these tribes is essential; project preparation is being developed.

Dy. Field Director, Project Tiger, Ranthambhore National Park, Sawai Madhopur 322001

**Rajendra Singh** of *Tarun Bharat Sangh* gave the meeting a passionate appraisal of the situation in Sariska. He detailed some the conservation work villagers had done, speaking especially of the achievements from their water harvesting techniques. Five, virtually dry, rivers have begun flowing again. (See also *TL News* vol. 2 no. 2 & vol. 3 no. 1.) He spoke of their efforts to close the mines which threatened to destroy them, using the Wildlife (Protection) Act to protect the area.

Singh emphasised that only community conservation would work. Governments and NGOs will come and go, he contended, but the community remains and has the greater understanding and knowledge. We must work with them and respect their wisdom. Many villagers around Sariska equate the presence of the tiger with a successful crop and will thus conserve it. But, Singh warned, if villagers are distanced emotionally from the environment, then they will not care for the fate of the forest and may move to poaching also.

Tarun Bharat Sangh, Bhikampura, Thanagazi, Alwar 301022

## Uttar Pradesh

**Mr. Dilip Khatau** of the *Corbett Foundation* gave a synopsis of the activities of his organisation which was established in 1994. Major works undertaken by them are:

(a) Co-operation extended to the authorities—including provision of warm jackets to the field staff of Corbett Tiger Reserve (50/50 cost with the WWF-TCP), availability of two jeeps with drivers for anti-poaching patrolling (since 1996), provision of secret funds for poaching information, medical aid to Corbett staff posted in isolated areas, provision of awards and any other help as required.

*Corbett Foundation* is also involved as an NGO to implement an Ecodevelopment Plan, partially supported by the World Bank. Two persons from

the Foundation have already undergone a 10 day training programme in this connection.

(b) Working amongst the people around the National Park. The total number of villagers is more than 50,000 with approximately 75,000 heads domestic stock. The Foundation provides free medical aid with two doctors and an ambulance through coordination with local health organisations. They also pay some ex gratia compensation when livestock is predated by tiger or leopard. Frequent meetings are arranged in the villages to promote awareness about nature conservation and its importance for human survival and some vocational training has been imparted to help in income generation. Electric fencing has

been successfully provided around a village to ward off crop raiding by wild animals.

The Corbett Foundation collaborated with the WPSI and the U.P. Forest Department in doing a survey of the areas around the Corbett National Park.

They have future plans to take up a quick survey of the ecological status of the tiger in adjoining areas along the Himalayan foothills with a view to developing a plan for the ecological restoration of the entire area for maintenance of a viable tiger population.

The Corbett Foundation, A-3 Geetanjali Enclave, New Delhi 110017. Fax: (011) 6861219

**Dr. A.J.T. Johnsingh** of the Wildlife Institute of India presented a brief overview of the state of the habitat and wildlife in northern U.P. noting that Rajaji is more or less isolated in the western area as all efforts to establish a corridor have failed. Only some bull elephants still cross. Many of the areas have good forest but little wildlife due to the amount of poaching both by locals and by intruders from neighbouring Nepal. He reports that due to the settlement of Nepali soldiers on the Nepal side of the border, Dudhwa has become an island, although tigers can still cross from Dudhwa to Kishanpur through sugarcane fields when the river is low.

### West Bengal

**Mrinal Chatterjee**, Hon. Secretary of the *Institute of Climbers and Nature Lovers* (ICNL) provided some information on the Sunderbans where his organisation is engaged in various activities. He reports that the number of people killed has come down greatly due to good management. Ecodevelopment projects outside the reserve mean less people enter inside and last year only three people were killed. However poachers have now entered the Sunderbans and tiger skins originating from here have been recovered from Calcutta.

The Institute operates a 'Project Lifeline Sunderbans' which is engaged in various eco-development programmes in the fringe villages of the Reserve. They also run a Primary Health Care Unit at Anpur (Lahiripur) which caters to about

• *The WPSI/Corbett Foundation survey also covers these areas as does the Western Terai Conservation Initiative launched earlier by Dr. Vikram Soni, who reported that the Haldwani division is decimated. The Forest Department is unable to deal with the amount of poaching and the area has many hunting dogs and guns. It is an area that "used to be comparable to Corbett for tigers and other wildlife" and Soni argues that it should be given protected area status.*

**Mr Vinod Rishi**, Director, Project Elephant in the MoEF, informed the meeting that the project has 11 elephant reserves that go outside PAs also. One, the Shivalik Elephant Reserve, extends from the western boundary of the Rajaji National Park up to the Nepal border. He noted that no tiger cubs had been seen in Rajaji for the last four years which means that tigers are not breeding. Project Elephant has also provision for resettlements and argued that Project Tiger and Project Elephant should combine their resources in such areas for more effective results. Regarding the removal of the army ammunition dump in the Rajaji/Chilla 'corridor', he said that the problem was that the army kept raising their demands (in terms of amount of alternative land to be provided and cost of moving etc.) to the extent that no action could be taken.

70,000 villagers as well as organising medical camps in other villages. They provide educational support programmes and provide midday meals to 400 primary school students every day. Financial support and know-how is provided to tiger victim widows and the Institute provides support and information on benefits from various Government projects to villagers.  
ICNL, 17 New Santoshpur Main Road, Santoshpur, Calcutta 700075 Fax: (033) 4728112  
Field Camp: Vill. Anpur, P.O. Jamespur, via Gosaba 743370 (Satjelia Island), Dist. South 24 Parganas.

*Participants raised the question of the Canal way proposed through the Sunderbans and expressed their concern that this would have seriously damaging effects on the ecology of the Tiger Reserve.*

## Participants Speak

### Project Tiger Director: An Appraisal

**Mr. P.K. Sen**, Director, Project Tiger, spoke of the "precarious" tiger situation. He feels that greater harm was done to tiger conservation by those who hid the facts and tried to prove that everything was fine and thus talked frankly of the dire situation in some areas. He said that 30% of the tiger reserves had "practically gone out of hand" while "the remaining 60%" all had some management problems.

He welcomed the fact that the "iron curtain" that had existed earlier between the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had now fallen, as "we all have to join hands to fight the battle by placing demands before the authorities for wildlife conservation".

Fifty to sixty thousand square kilometres of tiger habitat must be made inviolate. While recognising that lack of funds was a constraint, he felt that no state government could claim that they are using available funds in a proper and timely manner. He said that it would be proper if managers made efforts to win over villagers so that their number is added to our strength and such activities do not require "extra money". He emphasised that NGOs play an important role here as a "second line of defence". Mr. Sen also referred to the positive situation where Union and State Governments

have agreed to accept infrastructural facilities in kind for the parks, from international and national organizations.

He informed participants that the Government was receiving hundreds of appeals every day from all corners of the world expressing concern and support. But he stressed that the States are the main players in the management and conservation of wildlife habitat. The Centre, he had come to realise, plays a limited role.

Project Tiger never had any direction unless it came from the highest authority of the Government. Recently the highest authorities had accepted the facts and thus there were hopes that the 9th Five Year Plan would bring an enhanced allocation of funds for wildlife. However in the present changing political scenario it is impossible to predict what will happen.

Mr. Sen believes that we spend too much time on identification of the issues rather than on solving them but nevertheless he concluded on an optimistic note. The situation, he felt, can still be retrieved "if we forget our self-interest and join hands and take a pledge to try to stop the decline forthwith".

Director, Project Tiger, Bikaner House, Shah Jahan Road, New Delhi 110001

### "Governments are not Serious about Wildlife Conservation"

**S. Deb Roy**, Director Coordination, *Corbett Foundation*, looking at the situation since the inception of *TigerLink* nearly three years ago, recorded that "human pressure, both directly and indirectly, is continuously eroding wildlife and the ecological interests of not only tiger but also other wild fauna and flora". "Some of the core areas of P.T. reserves...have been vandalised beyond belief in the last decade or so." He felt that the present status of some of the areas may be worse than when P.T. was first launched there.

Mr. Deb Roy noted that the situation outside the PA network was so "pathetic"—"the habitat is severely degraded and the natural prey base very badly decimated"—that survival of tigers in such

areas beyond the present generation "will be nothing short of a miracle". He noted that even the PAs were coming under pressure; some NGOs wanted to open the minuscule 1% sacrosanct National Park areas for collection of NTFP. "In reality the benefit of such exploitation of renewable resources is siphoned off cleverly by the urban communities up to 75% by using the indigenous people as their handling agents." It is ironic, he said, "when such people are crying hoarse for indigenous people's traditional rights they are at the same time welcoming a cultural invasion in lifestyle of these people for the sake of what is termed 'sustainable development'". The impacts of developmental forces are pushing the

tigers more than ever and "the socio-economic factors at play are probably causing more damage to the tiger than the biological". Thus the situation is grim.

Nevertheless, he contended, the Government seems to believe that the status of wildlife is more or less fine—no one appears to be seriously concerned. The gross violations of the Forest Conservation Act, the dilution of its principles, de-reservation of PAs and the non-implementation of the reports and suggestions of numerous committees appointed by the government itself, all indicate that governments are not serious about conservation. The inadequate financial support received reflects the low priority given to the

wildlife and forestry sector. The country's development planning has little consideration for ecological aspects; the proposed liberalisation and globalisation of the national economy will adversely affect the ecology, Deb Roy argued.

"Losing the tiger shall certainly be a black day in human history and will indicate with no ambiguity our inability to hold on to sustainable living." He warned that the authorities need to do something "on a war footing". "The human community has a challenge, a point to prove for the sake of nothing but their own future existence." S. Deb Roy, A-16 Shalimar Apts., Sth. Extension Paza II, 209 Masjid Moth, New Delhi 110049

### A Separate Wildlife Service

**Billy Arjan Singh** of Tiger Haven, bordering the Dudhwa National Park, spoke of the tiger's desperate situation and made three key suggestions in his address to the meeting.

He argued strongly for the creation of a separate Wildlife Service as the only way to save the tiger and other wildlife. The Forest Department cannot save the tiger—they have too many other priorities. In Arjan Singh's view the disciplines of Forest and Wildlife are antagonistic; as an example he cites, "a clean forest floor is the forester's dream, whereas it is the wildlifer's nightmare".

Arjan Singh also emphasised that wildlife is endangered and can only be saved with drastic action; a writ to this effect should be submitted to the Supreme Court, he contended. Indeed, as the tiger is in touch with every part of the ecosystem and can be used as an 'umbrella' species, saving the tiger should be written into the Constitution.

He pointed out that tiger populations are small and being depleted and he believes that we must study reintroduction. He believes that inbreeding depression is a serious factor which will begin to show—it may be that the lack of breeding in Rajaji could be due to this, he speculated.

He spoke of the tigress, Tara and of the refusal of the Park authorities to accept that, though hand-reared, she had returned to free-living to breed and pass on her genes. It turned out that she had Siberian genes as no pure Bengal tiger was available then. In March 1995, Arjan Singh reports seeing a tiger, "the pale pelage, wide stripes, large head and white complexion (having) the characteristics of Siberian stock". Later the Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology in Hyderabad performed a micro satellite test on a hair sample and stated that there was a 70% certainty that the hairs were from a hybrid of Indo-Siberian origin. Unfortunately this animal has now disappeared. Arjan Singh believes that there is no crime in 'spoiling the lineage'. Indeed it may be the way to increase production, if we can offer enough protection from the poachers. He suggests that the W.I.I. should study these factors.

He noted that in U.P. there is no recruitment for forest guards and was of the view that the only recourse seems to be to go to an apex court. Echoing several other participants he bemoaned the fact that "priorities have got lost". Billy Arjan Singh, Tiger Foundation, Tiger Haven, P.O. Pallia, Kheri Dist. 262902, U.P.

### The Biggest Threat to the Survival of the Tiger in India

**Bittu Sahgal**, editor of *Sanctuary Magazine*, introduced a session on 'large-scale projects'. As a major threat to the tiger and its habitat, he feels

these are given less than their due attention. Such projects are becoming the biggest threat to the survival of the tiger in India.



He spoke of the damaging effect of the 'new economic policy' and the "pepsi culture" which result in more thermal plants, mines, dams, roads, 5-star hotels, prawn farms, processed foods etc. to the detriment of the environment.

Even forestry projects, ostensibly funded to improve the forest cover, work against the wilderness areas and wildlife. The billions of dollars coming in are spent in ways counter to the interests of forests and the tiger. Money goes on infrastructures in forest areas, such as concretising guard huts and, most insidiously, on building roads. Forest officers are subverted by the money and the lure of World Bank consultancies and foreign trips.

Sahgal stressed that all efforts towards protection of the tiger against poaching become useless if infrastructures are set up to remove all the forests between. He brought many examples of large-scale projects threatening tiger habitats to the meeting's attention:

1. The proposed waterway for the Sunderbans.
2. In Palamau, \$1 million is slated for an ecodevelopment project even as \$275 million is going for a dam that will drown the core area!
3. Bastar is threatened by a series of dams (only the presence of the Indravati Tiger Reserve has stopped these from coming up before) and from the continuing food for work schemes that result in roads that go nowhere but make it easier to poach valuable timber.
4. Melghat Tiger Reserve has suffered from Rs. 90 crore worth of roads and is threatened by a proposed dam.
5. Periyar Tiger Reserve and several other important protected areas have temples inside which expand and press for denotifications.
6. Kaziranga National Park is threatened by the release of organochlorines into the ecosystem from the massive amount of pesticides being used in the catchment area.

Sahgal listed many more areas including Manas, Gir, Dalmia, Hazaribagh, Namdapha and others which were threatened by such activities. (For further details, see *Sanctuary* vol. XVII no. 5 Oct.'97).

He also spoke of the severe threat of tourism; it is used to justify building damaging roads,

dams, bridges etc. and brings in its wake, airstrips and helipads, disturbance and timber use.

Sahgal submits that such human-induced changes in habitats to meet urban imperatives have been the real cause for the tigers decline. He reiterated his view that far stronger concerted action should be taken against the insidious and menacing threat of all these projects. He said that they were examining the possibility of going to the Supreme Court contending "a conspiracy to destroy the PAs as all the consumption outside the PAs is complete".

**It is essential that we have some advance warning systems so that detrimental large-scale projects can be tackled at the planning stage.**

**Bittu Sahgal is preparing a report and a map which will depict the threats in relation to India's remaining forest cover and PAs. NGOs should send information to him on such projects. Such information should also be forwarded to the TigerLink newsletter for dissemination.**

Bittu Sahgal, Editor, Sanctuary Asia, 602 Maker Chamber V, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021  
Email : bittu@giabm01.vsnl.net.in

• Many participants agreed with Sahgal on the danger of these projects.

Mr Vinod Rishi felt that the major threat was the lack of land use planning and haphazard urbanization which was leading to agricultural areas being gobbled up and thereby increasing the pressure on the forests.

Participants stressed the importance of NGOs keeping abreast of such threats in their areas and first attempting to deal with them on a local and state level. If it fails there, then it must be fought at the centre. The need to broaden the constituency of people understanding the threat of these projects was recognised—photographs and videos can be very helpful for this.

Dr. Goverdhan S. Rathore, while endorsing a ban on roads and electricity being introduced into National Parks, pointed out that in order to successfully fight such projects, we need to win the support of local communities who need such facilities. He said that if they can receive them on a small scale, then they will understand that big dams are not required but we have to recognise that their basic needs need to be dealt with.

## Tiger Research

### The Ecology of Tiger in Panna Tiger Reserve

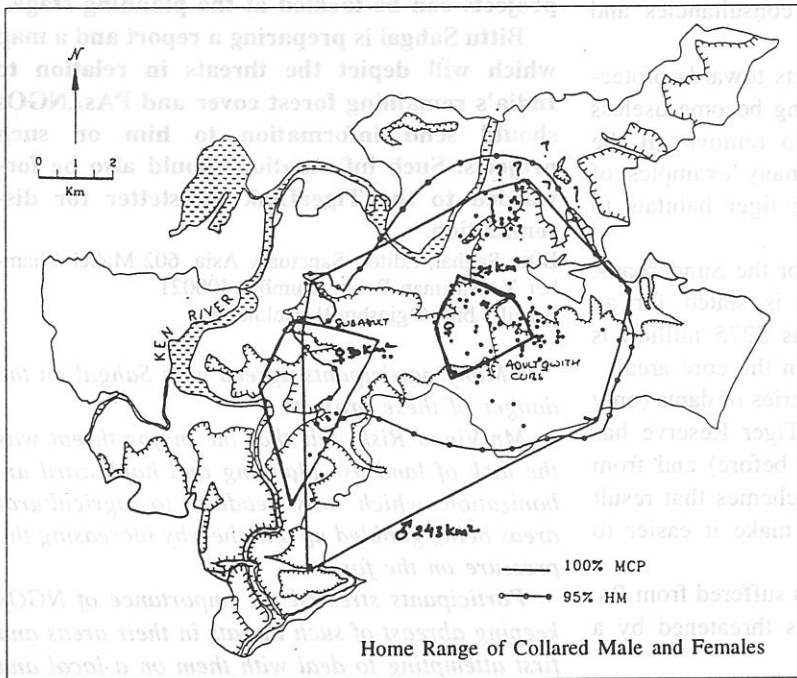
**Dr. R.S. Chundawat** of the Wildlife Institute of India spoke on the project in Panna Tiger Reserve on "the ecology of tiger: to enable a realistic projection of the requirements needed to maintain a demographically viable population of tigers in India". He presented some of the fascinating results of the data collected by researcher, Neel Gogate, and discussed conservation implications of the information being generated.

The study being conducted in the 543 km<sup>2</sup> Panna Tiger Reserve which falls in this zone highlights the problems. Radio-collaring was begun in April 1996 and three tigers have been radio-tagged. A sub-adult tigress (12-15 months) died after six months of tracking. The male tiger has been tracked for 16 months and his home range was 243 km<sup>2</sup> which is the largest recorded for the Indian sub-continent. This covers 45% of the

Panna reserve. Within his summer range, five centres of intense activity were seen associated with water and dense vegetation. The winter range was used more homogenously. The adult tigress collared was raising three, 7-8 month old cubs and was tracked for six months. Her summer (March-June) range was 16 km<sup>2</sup> and fell within the 70-80 km<sup>2</sup> most undisturbed habitat which is the intensive study site for the project.

The tigress killed more sambar and the male more cattle. The male's preference for cattle makes him extremely vulnerable to poisoning. Other findings were that Nilgai were not killed in

proportion to their availability; scat data showed that more nilgai were preyed on in winter, sambar in summer and chital in the rainy season. The contribution of small (< 40 kg) mammals to the diet of tiger was significant. The status of the tiger in Panna is very critical and it is suggested that two more disturbance-free mini-core areas should be created by encouraging the shifting of ten villages. W.I.I., P.O. Box 18, Chandrabani, Dehra Dun 248001  
Email: wii@giasdl01.vsnl.net.in



In spite of holding half the world's population of tigers, the future for the animal in India looks bleak mainly because of the small and isolated nature of the tiger habitats and populations, biotic pressures and poaching.

The problems related to habitat are more pronounced in the dry deciduous and semi-arid habitats which form 40% of the tiger habitat in India. Intensely unfavourable conditions widely prevail in the semi-arid zone and the tiger has become extinct in 70% of habitats there.

## The Role of Science in Saving the Tiger

**Dr. Ullas Karanth** of the WCS-India Program spoke on the need for research and its role in saving the tiger. He compared the scientists' role to that of "accountants and auditors". The role of science is to evaluate and acquire knowledge through which the requirements for saving the tiger are learnt. Between 1974 and 1986 the tiger experienced a fantastic recovery but there is no data to prove it, he said. The tragedy of such lack of documentation is that wrong policies are pursued. Karanth also spoke of the need to move away from the all-pervasive desire to count tigers and move to more scientific and reliable sampling methods which will show density trends. Sampling through pellet counts on linear transects to get a 'population trend index' and an 'encounter rate index' obtained by counting animals or droppings over a specified distance can take care of most management needs in India. Apart from requiring a proper sampling design from science, these can be done with very little skill and applied anywhere. They are very simple and easily learnt.

In Nagarhole, a well-protected area had been compared to more hunted areas of the same type. The latter, more hunted area, was found to have 80% less biomass than the less hunted tracts. For example, the well-protected areas had 66 chital per square kilometre while the hunted area had only 9/km<sup>2</sup>.

Dr Karanth also expressed the view that controlling trade in tiger parts and products was no substitute for field protection. It is important not to overstate one, as they both complement each other. He emphasised that knowledge of basic demographic data of mortality and recruitment was essential in order to assess the impact of anything. Radio-collaring is required to obtain such information on tiger population dynamics. Vulnerability increases as the number of breeding females gets smaller. The number of breeding females is determined by the number of prey species. Hence the vital importance of field protection.

Karanth's project in four protected areas looked at how the size and density of prey species affect

the tiger and other predator community structure. For obtaining the density of tigers, he had used camera trapping with capture-recapture models. The full results of this work will be published soon. His comparative results for tiger are as follows:

<i>Density of tigers per 100 km<sup>2</sup></i>			
<i>Pench (M.P.)</i>	<i>Kanha</i>	<i>Kaziranga</i>	<i>Nagarahole</i>
4.11*	11.7	16.8	11.5

\*The low figure in Pench was a result of very few transients due to poaching around the park.

Karanth also introduced the WCS, WWF and WCMC project to map the distribution of tigers in the wild. The aim now is to learn where tigers are present/absent throughout the country as well as collect certain other ecological information about the tiger, its prey structure and availability, poaching and other biotic influences.

Karanth believes the Forest Department should focus on this exercise as they have the manpower and the ability to marshal it but the help of *Tiger-Link* participants is also sought. A format for information collection, involving multiple choice questions has been developed and this will be distributed, along with 1:250,000 scale maps and a set of guidelines.

If this data can be collected and maintained, it will be yeoman service and be very much more useful than the present attempts at total count, Karanth believes. Mr. P.K. Sen and Mr Vinod Rishi have been very cooperative on this issue and Karanth is optimistic that a three-way interaction (of scientists, amateur naturalists and the forest department) towards applying good science to tigers can give them a chance for the future. Samba Kumar in Bangalore is co-ordinating the project.

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## NGOs and Funding

### Funds for Tiger Conservation and Protection

The TigerLink meeting brought together several international and national donors with potential users. The discussion threw up several problems and com-

plexities in funding tiger conservation in India and there was a constructive exchange of information between the donors and potential recipients.

### WWF-Tiger Conservation Programme

**Dr. M.K. Ranjitsinh** from the WWF-Tiger Conservation Programme circulated a 'Brief overview of work', listing the items disbursed by them and the areas which they have shortlisted for support. He said that the idea has been to concentrate on adjacent areas (between states and countries) and on those areas that have the potential for improvement but that have languished so far due to lack of support. 1.8 million Swiss Francs (approx. Rs. 4.5 crores) is committed for a 3 year period.

WWF-TCP's two year workplan has four categories:

1. Assistance to tiger conservation in the field;
2. Regional co-operation for tiger conservation in Asia;
3. Legal redressal; and
4. Trans-sectoral & trans-regional activities.

Of these I and III are their main areas of focus, Ranjitsinh said. They want to work in co-operation and collaboration with other NGOs in the field forging long-term partnerships and avoiding duplication. The kind of action and spheres of interest they are looking at include monitoring—of areas outside PAs, of equipment donated and of the impact of conservation activities undertaken.

They have allocated money for strengthening forest staff's hands in fighting threats to PAs when they are in the offing, to provide assistance for anyone taking Public Litigation cases in the conservation interest of the tiger and to help those who face litigation for doing their job.

They are also instituting annual awards in five categories:

- (i) outstanding management of tiger PAs,
- (ii) contribution to the suppression of trade in tiger derivatives,
- (iii) notable work in the involvement of people in tiger conservation,
- (iv) special acts of bravery, and
- (v) exemplary or innovative contributions to tiger conservation.

Ranjitsinh also highlighted a number of other major fields where he felt work should be concentrated—the "important constituency" of children and students, involving people in conservation (he cited Prakash Amte's work in winning tribals' empathy for animals), trying to win over some Naxalites and network with them and collaborating through TRAFFIC with the government in ferreting out channels of illegal trade.

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### Wildlife Conservation Society

**Dr. Ullas Karanth** spoke as representative of the *Wildlife Conservation Society* (WCS) whose strategy is presented in their policy report (no.3), "Saving the Tiger". The WCS is essentially a science-driven organisation but recently has also become involved in projects involving implementation. In this context Karanth spoke of the 'Karnataka Tiger Conservation Project' and of how they were dealing with funding in Karnataka. They recognised that a number of partners were

required, a major one of which has to be the Forest Department. However they did not want to be part of the "gravy train" where "too much money in too short a time with too little thinking" can create more problems than it solves.

Being a bio-centric organisation the core need identified was protection and a major component of this, in the face of government resource limitation, is to supply equipment, especially vehicles, to the Forest Department. Another need identified



was low staff morale and WCS want to approach this problem by creating trust funds, under each park DFO, but with NGO participation, for wildlife staff in the parks to get certain benefits. Wildlife training, another area WCS hope to get into, also addresses this need.

Another aspect is an education project, extending the work already being done by Mr. Chinnappa and involving local NGOs with theatre and other communication skills in this. Part of the project's aim is also to create wildlife-friendly NGOs in the four areas they will be working. WCS's scientific role will be to monitor the effect on wild animals of all these schemes.

Karant emphasized the strong "audit component" of measuring the animal population response to the plan activities as ultimately this

has to be the currency by which such programmes are judged.

WCS visualises the Chief Wildlife Warden being the de facto chief of the project and NGOs probably being a part of an overseeing board and on this basis a plan was submitted requesting a Government order laying out the agreement. However, in spite of Forest Department support, the proposal sat for nearly one year with the Karnataka Government and only came through eventually with much lobbying. The WCS project which is part of their Global Tiger Campaign, will be funded by *Save the Tiger Fund*, Gary Fink-MCG Healthcare and other donors. The envisaged cost is \$ 3-400,000 for four areas for a three to four year period, beginning at the end of 1997.

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### Save the Tiger Fund

**John Seidensticker**, Chairperson of the *Save the Tiger Fund* Council ran through the history and hopes of the *Save the Tiger Fund* (STF) which was launched in 1995 as a partnership between the *National Fish & Wildlife Foundation* (NFWF), who are administering the fund, and the Exxon Corporation. The goal of the STF is "to save the tiger and its principal habitats in Asia and secure the tiger's future" (see *TL News* vol. 2 no. 1 & vol. 3 no.1). Apparently more than \$ 3.5 million has to date been invested in over 50 projects.

Seidensticker said they are looking for "proven delivery systems for effective tiger conservation actions" and that they want "to target the 'white space'—those areas that need support but are not receiving it". They are looking at evaluation methods to guide projects for the future, making sure they are doing what they are intended to do.

"We believe in consensus building and that cooperation is essential." NFWF emphasises partnerships and working with NGOs "to the exclusion of governments" in a 'people to people' relationship.

STF does not fund litigation or political advocacy.

It is important for projects to be focussed and specific when applying for funding. Seidensticker

outlined some of the predefined criteria which project proposals should address:

- (a) the anticipated benefits to wild tiger populations;
- (b) how it will lead to improved management/protection of tiger areas and enhanced prey/protection measures,
- (c) the coordination with other tiger conservation organisations (key),
- (d) how the project integrates with governments and the local communities involved,
- (e) how it supplements ongoing efforts without duplication, and
- (f) what methods it uses to resolve conflicts between tiger conservation and economic development.

Seidensticker's exposition of STF's aims indicated that the orientation towards captive tiger projects is changing; under his chairmanship, efforts are directed towards wild tigers.

He also said that they were trying to fix the situation "where money never left the USA". Less than ten projects were being funded in India but in the evolving grant philosophy, the goal is to reach grassroot organisations in range countries. He had come to the meeting to spread information about the STF in the belief that the paucity of

proposed projects from India resulted from lack of knowledge of the fund.

Seidensticker also suggested that a registry should be kept of people who know India and the problems surrounding tiger conservation who could be referred to for comment when organisations such as the World Bank come to him for reaction to issues like road building—an issue that participants highlighted throughout the meeting as a major problem in many areas.

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• In the general discussion which followed, it was clear that the situation was more complex

than just lack of awareness of the STF project. Not least of the problems is the difficulty in obtaining FCRA clearance to enable organisations to accept foreign funds.

Participants also voiced the view that STF's criteria was too "harsh", especially for the fledgling NGOs who do not even have money for petrol and telephone. However, Seidensticker's presence at the meeting is part of STF strategy to be available to listen to potential recipients and thereby help define more useful funding mechanisms. In response to participants' comments, he said that NFWF will push for more visits to NGOs in India and he would look into the possibility of individuals being given funds.

### WCU, Cat Specialist Group

**Peter Jackson**, chairperson of the *Cat Specialist Group* of the *World Conservation Union (WCU)*, although not strictly a donor organisation, spoke about the structure of the WCU, which used to be known as the *International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)*. The WCU was founded in 1947 and now has 60-70 governments as state members, 100-200 government agencies and many non-governmental organizations as members. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland and it is divided into various sections dealing with forestry, wetlands etc.

To help the WCU there are six Commissions, made up of volunteer persons from around the world to give their expertise and advice. One of these is the *Species Survival Commission (SSC)* which has over 7000 members and over 100 specialist groups. The Chair of the SSC (presently David Bracket of the Canadian Wildlife Service) is elected by the WCU who appoints the chairs of the specialist groups. Jackson has been chair of

the Cat Specialist Group since 1983. It has over 200 members in 50 countries and concerns itself with the world's 36 species of wild cats.

The WCU is basically a scientific organization. Initially the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) was founded to raise money for projects identified by the IUCN although of course WWF has spread "its net" further in the intervening years. Occasionally specialist groups may get small donations to disburse and the Cat Specialist Group has received funds three times from the U.S. State Department which has enabled them to promote international workshops and provide a vehicle and boat for Madhya Pradesh. The Group is expecting a small amount this year for "promoting international cooperation" but they are not truly funders, rather 'reviewers' and advisers for cat conservation.

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### WWF-U.S.

**Tom Mathew** of the *World Wildlife Fund—U.S.* spoke of the work WWF-US was doing in the field of tiger conservation. It has supported and implemented projects in almost all the range countries. For example, WWF-US, with WCS and WCMC, produced the habitat prioritization framework for tiger conservation: "A Framework for Identifying

*High Priority Areas and Action for the Conservation of Tigers in the Wild*".

Currently TRAFFIC-USA is working on a six-city survey on the availability of tiger and rhino parts and WWF-US is surveying the demographic and national attitudinal focus of the population within the US towards traditional Chinese

medicine (TCM). They are also involved in advocacy and lobbying (especially at present for passage of the US Labelling Act which attempts to prohibit the sale of products that list tiger and rhino parts as ingredients), in researching alternatives for endangered species ingredients in TCM and in fund raising, aiming for \$ 15 million for tiger conservation.

### Global Tiger Patrol

**Amanda Bright**, chairperson of *Global Tiger Patrol* (GTP) introduced the organisation which was set up 9 years ago in the U.K. and now receives money from company donors as well as individuals. GTP is now also part of a tripartite agreement with *Tusk Force* and the London Zoo, called 21st Century Tiger (see *TL News* vol. 3 no. 1). **Peter Lawton**, GTP's previous executive director, explained that GTP is not a programming agency, nor a fund raising agency but somewhere between the two. They are a small organisation acting as catalyst to fill "white spaces". They are a conduit for funds given by donors.

In India, WWF-US works strictly through the Tiger Conservation Programme. They are interested in establishing a tiger trust fund and propose to work for aspects such as for buying up land to secure it for conservation which in the US is "considered a sacred way of approaching conservation". Thomas Mathew, WWF-USA, 1250 24th St. NW Washington DC 20037 U.S.A.  
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Lawton stressed the importance of GTP (and other such funders) getting feedback from recipients with an appraisal, according to the objectives, of the money spent, so that GTP can return to the donor for further partnership associations. A report at least once a year is required and a further important aspect is "attribution", i.e. accrediting the relevant companies for their donation.

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### Environmental Investigation Agency

**Dave Currey**, Director of the *Environmental Investigation Agency* (EIA) clarified that this is a "campaigning organisation", not a donor agency. It is totally dependent on public donations and grants from charities and foundations. Founded in 1984, EIA campaigns against abuse of wildlife and the natural environment all over the world. The organisation carries out in-depth research, undercover investigations and documents wildlife abuses to create strong campaigning tools. The campaigns are then taken to the public through the media and to decision-makers to create change.

However since 1996 when they launched the tiger campaign here, they have been approached by the public with offers of help and have thus "crossed over into the donor realm". Currey spoke of the suspicion amongst the general public as to whether funds to charities reach the field and get used properly and the need to overcome this through media awareness and education.

EIA themselves were able to raise \$50,000 from a few lines at the end of one article on the problems of conservation in Kaziranga National Park in a Saturday newspaper magazine in the U.K. by promising that all money donated would go to the field. It is an indication of the amount of public support that exists on this issue and it enabled EIA to purchase the ambulance for use of park staff and local communities around Kaziranga and also the uniforms, warm clothes and first aid equipment provided to park staff.

Currey said that they were open to funding in the future but they do not actively go out to look for it, only when it comes up on the back of a campaign. He also brought up the question of money to individuals feeling that this was something even the larger donors should look into.

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## Tiger Action Fund for India

**Geoff Ward** introduced the *Tiger Action Fund for India* (TAFI) a private not-for-profit foundation set up to provide financial support for the tiger in the Indian subcontinent. TAFI plans to remain "modest in size with minimal overheads" and the fund-raising and operational work will be done by volunteers. They plan to begin fund-raising in 1998 and are interested in supporting projects which help to provide better protection for the tiger and its prey species and the natural habitat without which it cannot survive. They also hope to provide support for programmes aimed at

benefitting people who live in or near tiger habitats, "so long as those programmes also directly benefit wildlife". Geoff and his co-chair, Diane Raines Ward and Nina Rao, secretary TAFI, were spending some time in India to meet potential recipients and explore project ideas. They are also involved in awareness raising and lobbying in the U.S.

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## Foreign Contribution Regulation Act and Small NGOs

**Valmik Thapar** reported that in the last 3 years nearly \$1million has been spent on field protection for tigers from different organisations across the world. 90% of this has gone to governments. Project Tiger and State Governments spent about \$ 20 million on Tiger Reserves in the same period. He said that the monitoring of these donations has been extremely difficult—the cost of and lack of funds for monitoring being main problems.

*Other participants pointed out that monitoring was important as you could not rely on the government too much as they may say one thing, but think and act in another.*

Thapar suggested that donor agencies visit more often and come to grips with the ground realities themselves; it can boost morale for those using the donated equipment to meet the donors. It is also the best way for a donor to check the value of an organisation/individual/work. The *TigerLink* meeting where some of the donor agencies were able to interact with the people working in the field, enabled everyone to appreciate the benefit of this.

Thapar also spoke of the complications of the FCRA clearance and the time and difficulties in obtaining this. Generally the Ministry of Home Affairs requires that an NGO should have been in existence for at least three years before it can be registered under the FCRA. Thapar clarified that it is not possible for one FCRA registered NGO to act as a clearing house through which to pass

on funds to others, as some participants were suggesting. The conditions of registration include the NGO ensuring that "before any funds are passed on to any association in India that the recipient is eligible to accept foreign contribution under the Act or has obtained prior permission of the Government under section 6 of the Act".

- *The possibility of individuals receiving funds was raised but donors were hesitant to say they could provide these. It was pointed out that many NGOs are really committed individuals rather than "organisations" as such.*

- *Apart from the FCRA obstacle, another main hurdle in funds flowing from international donors to grassroot organisations active in the tiger conservation field is the gap between the strict expectations of the donors in terms of the proposal, its aims, objectives, likely achievements, 'proven delivery systems' etc. and the ability of organisations to match up to this due to a lack of articulateness, resources etc. The Tiger & Rhino Fund, administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service was felt to be a classic illustration of this problem (unfortunately no one from there had been able to come to the meeting). Their requirement of a government letter endorsing proposed projects was felt by most NGOs to be unacceptable in principle.*

- *Local NGOs who are not internationally known and who may not prepare well-articulated proposals fail to secure funds. Participants suggested that it would be helpful if there was a body*



to assist smaller NGOs to get funds—a "clearing house organisation for remote NGOs". In this connection Ashutosh Mahadavia of Tiger Watch, in Bombay, offered help to NGOs in the western region and Valmik Thapar of Ranthambhore Foundation, in Delhi, said he was also "always available" to render such assistance.

• Recipients noted that several NGOs do not have enough infrastructure even to be able to prepare reports for donors on use of their funds, equipment etc. Methods of evaluation and simplification of report formats need to be addressed.

• There was some discussion on the possibility of raising funds locally. Obviously a good idea, but several participants were pessimistic at the possibility of raising corporate funds. There were suggestions that Rs.5/- could be collected from all those signing the P.M. tiger appeal, that this could be an expression of hope and create a sense of empowerment in people. It was pointed out that the Rs.10/- note has tiger, elephant and rhino on it so perhaps we should start a 'Ten Rupee Fund'. Mahendra Vyas was requested to examine the feasibility and to set up such a fund.

• The need for a central nodal agency that could coordinate funds and act as a link between the international donors and remote NGO recipients in India was also mooted. This could also make simpler the disbursement of smaller amounts, too little for the large international donors to look at. However it was pointed out that it was unlikely anyone would volunteer to take on everyone's headaches when most NGOs had enough of their own!

• Bittu Sahgal voiced the view that the principal problem of the tiger is "too much foreign money", referring to the World Bank, FAO, UNDP etc. forestry, ecodesvelopment and

### Funding Issues in Brief:

1. FCRA—how to obtain (takes 2–3 years; suggestion that NGOs applying could form a delegation and together visit the Home Minister).
2. Monitoring systems, cost etc.
3. Lack of infrastructure, proposals, reports etc. : help to articulate a project proposal/report.
4. Local funds—list of potential donors from those who now have, to help smaller NGOs (90% of tiger related work is with rupee fund).
5. More involvement by international donors; should visit more often to develop trust and understand the problems. Support NGOs that stand up to wrong designs of the state.
6. Effect of large donations.
7. Review process may need to be tightened.

other mega projects. The tiger is dying because such large donations lead to alteration of the habitat and a change in the relationship of people to the forest. There was general consensus that aspects of these created more problems than they solved and they could be disastrous for the environment in some areas. A participant noted that "one of the depressing things" is that when such money starts to flow in an area, the good people are often moved out.

• Sahgal wondered whether money would be available to study and critique the effects of these mega projects? He bemoaned the lack of our ability to create a climate in which we can raise money in India to save the tiger. He also emphasised that there should be greater transparency in funding; from where funds have come and to whom they have gone should be in the public domain.

## Wildlife Trade

### Wildlife Protection Society of India

Ashok Kumar of the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) talked of their work which focuses mainly on control of illegal trade in wildlife

and concentrates on the city trader rather than field protection.

Since July 1996 there have been 25 seizures

that WPSI have had involvement with, out of which 9 related to the tiger.

WPSI offers funding, technical assistance by way of information/knowledge, training in identification of fakes and assistance to NGOs and individuals. They have people in north Bengal, Calcutta and Orissa and many other parts but not all of India. They want to expand but have been constrained not just by shortage of funds but also in finding people prepared to do this kind of risky work. They are looking for people to join them, especially from south India.

WPSI does not stop at assisting in the seizure and arrest of traders but also works closely with people in the courts. They have two cases in the Delhi High Court, one in the Supreme Court and are helping in about 30 elsewhere, mostly in trial courts. They have had intervention petitions admitted in 16 cases where they have been allowed to "assist" the prosecution and in some cases perform a checking role on the prosecution. The situation in the courts is not good and not a single tiger trader has yet been jailed.

*Mr Kazmi mentioned that in fact, in Palamau 4 persons were convicted and jailed by the lower courts. However they were released after 6 months*

### "Raise the Indian Voice Internationally!"

**Vivek Menon** has spent the last seven years monitoring wildlife trade and poaching in India and is presently working on the trade in rhino and elephant parts/articles. However in his pursuit of the ivory trade he also comes across tiger trade information as the routes are very often the same. In Vietnam, Japan and Thailand he reported that tiger items are openly on sale. There is a certain amount of fake claws etc. but much of it is real. In Ho Chi Minh city, he was offered tiger skin while in a barber's shop and prices were "ridiculously low". The skins were possibly coming from Cambodia and Burma.

Menon also spoke of the view prevailing at the last CITES conference held in Zimbabwe which was epitomised in Robert Mugabe's words in his opening speech: "Every species must pay for its own survival". South Africa sung a similar song

*and it is not known whether they ever completed their two year sentence.*

WPSI's collection of data on the wildlife trade is useful in helping to convince the Government that there is still a problem. It can also highlight facts such as that 1997 has been the worst year ever for elephant poaching with 105 cases recorded up to the meeting's date. They have also been preparing a report on West Bengal and this has now been presented to the State Government. It concludes that there is fairly substantial poaching in Sunderbans—three seizures have taken place—though it would appear, in that area, it is still more for skin than for the bones.

WPSI brought out a report on 'shahtoosh', the smuggling of which has a direct connection to the tiger bone trade (see *TL News* Dec. '96).

There are several wildlife trade routes from India—one through Burma, others through the Himalaya, via Tibet or Nepal; the Ladakh route through Leh became comparatively under control after a major seizure. However it may have started again. A large seizure recently near Shillong of lesser cats, tiger, ivory etc. was going to Burma. WPSI, Thapar House, 124 Janpath, New Delhi 110001 Email: wpsi.wildlife@gems.vsnl.net.in

in its view that "unless you own a species, you won't protect it". Menon and other participants felt that we should be more vocal in our different philosophy and address this issue now. "India is unique in its conservation philosophy of not attaching an economic price-tag to its wildlife, notwithstanding the overbearing realities of population, poverty and increasing conflict between man and animal. The Indian example of protecting a species without looking for personal gain, monetary or otherwise, must be presented to the international community in a unified fashion. In this way, a philosophy alien to us will not be passed off as a developing country or Third World view." This opinion was also echoed by other participants at various junctures of the meeting. Vivek Menon, P.O. Box 3150, New Delhi 100003 Tel: 6451397

## Environmental Investigation Agency

**Dave Currey** of the *Environmental Investigation Agency* spoke of the necessity of directing a concerted effort against consuming states as the only way to make tiger protection in range states effective. He said that a number of major countries, such as China, Taiwan and Hong Kong now have good and strong legislation that prohibits the import/export and domestic sale of tiger products so we should take heart from this although a lot of work still needs to be done. Along with legislation, has to go enforcement and awareness.

He pointed out that in the U.S.A. there is no federal legislation that provides the tools for committed enforcement officers to seize and prosecute people who have tiger bone products. In some areas the state legislation is good but in New York it is not and when they did their two day survey of pharmacies there, they found that over 80% offered products claiming to contain tiger bone. Given the practical difficulties and expense of forensic testing of these medicines, it is essential for enforcement that legislation is brought in that makes it illegal to sell anything claiming to contain tiger parts. In February 1997 a bill was introduced by Senator Jeffords in an effort to close the loopholes in the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Although it just failed to go through this year, it will be introduced again in the next session. EIA circulated for signatures, a letter of support addressed to the Senator expressing appreciation of his efforts and concern at the continuing sale of Chinese medicines labelled as containing tiger parts in the U.S.A.

EIA surveys reveal that, in spite of tiger product sale being totally illegal throughout the European Union, at least in Amsterdam one can buy medicines claiming to contain tiger parts as easily as aspirin. In Japan, EIA's telephone survey revealed that the percentage of pharmacies offer-

ing tiger bone products had increased in the last two years. The problem there is the big loophole that fails to ban products where the endangered species is not readily recognisable. Thus tiger bone wine etc. would not be illegal.

We are up against the 'utilisation lobby' more than ever before and it grows larger and better organised, Currey opined. He pointed out that it is ten years since the last tiger sub-species was included on Schedule I of CITES and yet some countries still do not have the legislation in place to enforce its ban. When he questioned the Chairman of the CITES Standing Committee, Mr Rob Hepworth, concerning what was going to be done about the developed countries still selling wildlife products, Hepworth's reply was that he thought there were "more important things to be addressed in the range countries". A letter was circulated and signed by the participants addressed to Mr Rob Hepworth requesting him to deal with the consumption of tiger parts with the greatest priority and asking him to explain the measures he intends to take in order to eliminate the trade in tiger parts and derivatives. Forty participants representing over 25 organisations signed these letters but EIA urge that all participants should write to the Japanese P.M., American President and Mr Hepworth (Head of Global Wildlife Division, Room 813a Tollgate House, Houlton Street, Bristol BS2 9DJ, U.K.) on these issues.

"Be heard"—the "Indian voice" needs to be heard much louder internationally. Letters and opinions from range countries carry so much more weight. Range countries should express their outrage, asking consumer countries how they dare to sell "our tigers".

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## A Russian Experience

**Steve Galster** of the *Global Survival Network* opened a window on the situation in the Russian Far East where the decline of resources is going quickly. Operation Amba began in 1993 and

Galster attributed its success to a number of factors:

(1) the core idea behind anti-poaching was a local idea,

(2) timely co-ordinated financial transfers to the field,

(3) political support and protection,

(4) proper equipment—radios, vehicles, guns etc.,

(5) good relations with the local community.

In Operation Amba, the Rangers spend about 80% of their time on anti-poaching activities.

• *Participants pointed out that in India very few areas have separate anti-poaching squads and that other management duties take up too much time. Work related to tourism, for example, in some parks takes up 90% of the manager's time!*

Galster shared his anti-poaching experiences in the Russian Far East, stressing that an anti-poaching strategy has to work on all levels. The remit of the programme had now been expanded to use the Rangers to collect scientific information while they are out looking for poachers; this is

useful data to exchange with the scientific bodies. The reverse is also true and the scientific work being undertaken by the Hornocker Institute has been helpful in identifying areas where tiger density is highest and therefore the ones most productive for concentrating patrols.

Along with the anti-poaching, the Rangers' activities include: increasing the prey base, habitat protection, the collection of scientific information, community awareness and educational work in schools and the local communities. In view of this expansion, it was felt that they should be known nationally and internationally for more than just tiger protection and thus a new broader umbrella organisation has been formed, 'Phoenix'. This "collective biodiversity recovery programme" has its own board and raises funds directly to split amongst the different tasks.

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## Legal Concerns

### LAW-E

**Mahendra Vyas** reported that LAW-E is about to be constituted as a trust. He gave a rundown of the activities undertaken by LAW-E members over the last few years, which include court interventions on a number of public interest litigations including cases concerning the Sariska mining, sloth bears, elephant corridors, tendu patta collection, sandalwood and the forest matter. Also, action has been undertaken on a number of individual matters, including for officers in Orissa, Corbett and Rajasthan.

Vyas said that more could be done if there was greater feedback from the states and suggested that one NGO in each state should co-ordinate information for LAW-E and comment on State affidavits when required. He cited an example of the sandalwood case where information was required on the exact location of the sandalwood factories before the court could close them.

Vyas spoke particularly of the 'forest matter'—the case of T.N. Thirumalkpad vs. Union of India and others (in civil writ petition no. 302 of 1995)—which resulted in the Supreme Court interim order

of 12 December 1996 (see *TL News* June 1997). 215 interim applications from miners, sawmill owners etc. have been scrutinised and 150 remain to be done. But those in favour of the order have responded less actively and information from the field is lacking.

*TigerLink* participants are requested to help by sending information concerning any violations taking place in their areas. The following is a guideline of the information required:

1. Nature of violation reported:

(a) illegal felling of trees or clearing forests (or even cutting or removal/transport of timber) within forest areas without approved working plans. Mention the forest range and officers involved.

(b) illegal mining activity within a forest area without obtaining approval under the F.C. Act 1980. Name of the agency/contractor etc. involved.

(c) Sawmills, veneer and plywood factories illegally operating within forest areas without obtaining approval under F.C. Act. Give names and addresses of owner or agency involved.



(d) any other activity which constitutes diversion of forest land for non-forest use such as road, canal, dam building or for any other purpose including hotels, resorts etc. without F.C. Act clearance.

2. Area involved in hectares/acres/square kilometres with site maps and photographs.

3. Exact location of the area, i.e. forest range or forest area, village, town, tehsil, district etc.

4. Documentary proof if possible in the form of photographs, newspaper reports of such violations etc.

5. Ensure that the local/national newspapers report such violations if no such reports have been published.

6. Send a duly notarised/attested affidavit by the individual or an office bearer of any NGO reporting violations affirming that the facts and circumstances reported are correct. (Sample affidavit available.)

7. A covering letter reporting violations should be addressed to Shri Harish Salve, Senior Advocate Supreme Court, Amicus Curiae, 42 Poorvi Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi.

It is important to send the information of violations in the form of brief report specifying the nature of the violation, area involved, exact location of the area, supported by photographs, and, if possible, with as many newspaper clippings as possible reporting such violations.

Reports of violations may be sent to *TigerLink*.

i. All the documents including the report itself should be in English or be translated into English.

ii. Use only one side of the paper.

iii. As far as possible type in double space.

iv. All photocopies of documents including maps/diagrams or even photographs must be clear and readable. If documents are not clear, then they should be retyped and not sent as they are.

Vyas stressed the importance of these actions in relation to the tiger—the emphasis must be on habitats and river catchments not just the tiger, "there is no point having the flag but no ship".

He argued that India needed a National Forestry Commission to strengthen the working of the F.C. Act.

Vyas informed the meeting that even national policies and international conventions can be legally enforced where there is no law and gave as example the ban on cutting evergreen forests.

• *In the ensuing discussion Bittu Sahgal offered to publish an "activist aid booklet" if LAW-E were to prepare it.*

• *Mr. S. Deb Roy while emphasising the need for the country to have a proper land use policy, "essential in an agrarian economy", also asked about the changes being made to the National Forest Policy. Mr. S.C. Dey, the ex-Addl. I.G. Forests (Wildlife) said that the MoEF had appointed a committee to look into the National Forest Policy (see TL News). Two meetings had already been held and the matter had been discussed in the meeting of P.C.C.F.s. He said that the "broad consensus holding until now" is that the policy does not need revision but that the strategies need to be spelt out more clearly. Thus they "and certain details may be slightly different than we have today" but the policy is not likely to be revised. He said that even the 1988 policy is not being implemented properly.*

• *The issue of the Dilip Singh Barua commission was raised. This was a committee set up by the central Government to go into aspects of tribal self-rule. An amendment to the Panchayat Raj Act was passed by Parliament and came into force on 24 December 1997. This is applicable to "scheduled areas" only but a fear was expressed as to the relation of this Act to the Protected Areas in these regions as it appears that gram sabhas are interpreting it as allowing them to take control of the area totally, to the exclusion of the Forest Department. Also, concern was expressed at the danger of groups trying to notify new areas as "scheduled", such as Mandla District in M.P., over and above the PAs. Vyas agreed that this could cause problems for PAs still awaiting the second notification and the only solution would be to challenge the Act. (See TL News page 15.)*

• *Regarding full notifications of national parks and sanctuaries and the Supreme Court rulings on this, particularly in the case filed by WWF-India, several participants pointed out that in "settling" the rights, there was a danger of large areas being carved out of the PAs. All TigerLink par-*

participants should be particularly vigilant and report back if such 'de-notifying' is taking place. Dr. Ranjitsinh said that WWF should also be informed so that they could take it up, as the court has accepted that denotifications have to go to the

IBWL. He also drew the meeting's attention to the fact that in Reserve Forest there is no need to re-acquire rights and thus any Reserved Forest areas within Protected Areas can be deemed to be national parks/sanctuaries.

## The TigerLink Network

In a final session, participants at the meeting were requested to give their views on the functioning and development of the *TigerLink* network—how to strengthen, reinforce and create new links and support mechanisms across India and the world.

Thanks to the *TigerLink* network, between 1995 and 1997 around Rs. 3.4 crores (approx. \$ 900,000) has been spent on infrastructural support across India by networking with donor organisations across the world. Equipment and support have gone for anti-poaching, protection,

field action and community conservation—from elephant rations and sweaters to awards, training camps, motorbikes, jeeps, boats, etc.

Thapar spoke of the interesting links created between the Government and the NGOs, a view supported by Mr. P.K. Sen who spoke of the falling of the 'iron curtain' that had been between the two until two years ago. It was clear that there were scores of links created that had helped in tiger conservation and some of them could not even be revealed.

## Views and Suggestions Expressed by Participants

Readers are invited to consider these points and contribute their own opinions through the newsletter.

### *TigerLink Network*

*TigerLink* should be registered as a society/association. [Under consideration.]

*TigerLink* should not be an organisation. A network is more viable.

There should be paid membership and an annual fee. [Not felt to be appropriate.]

It should be a mechanism for dissemination; ways must be found to increase its capacity for this.

We need to increase the speed of information from the field.

### *Co-ordinating TigerLink*

There is need of a centre point for contact.

There should be satellite networks on a regional basis.

There should be more links at a state level. Regional links should be stronger.

Participants in the States should create more links with each other and with the state government.

One NGO could take responsibility for co-ordination in each state.

### *Tasks for TigerLink*

*TigerLink* should become a body that assists NGOs in writing proposals, identifying expertise etc.

Can be used for special 'action alert' letters to be sent out.

Need a mechanism for 'sign-ons'.

Every person should be requested to do one small thing in their own capacity for *TigerLink*.

There needs to be more activity—the more active we are, the stronger *TigerLink* will be.

The more active we are in the field, the stronger *TigerLink* will be.

### *TigerLink News*

A newsletter is the most important link a community can have.

The newsletter is an important organ for information exchange.

The frequency of the newsletter should be increased to thrice a year or more. [The frequency will be three times a year, starting 1998.]

To lessen the burden, organisations could sponsor pages/issues of the newsletter. [Not felt to be workable.]

Regular information packages should be sent from the States. [It would be highly appreciated.]

**TigerLink meetings**

There should be more regional *TigerLink* meetings, especially before a national one. The next meeting should be a legal one with Judges present. [Under consideration.]

**Special offers from TigerLink participants**

- **WPSI** offered to take up every **tiger-related court case** where there was adequate evidence and a possibility of winning.

- **Dr. Ullas Karanth** offered one week **field monitoring activity training** to a few sincere young people. The idea is to train individuals who can then pass on the training to others in their area. He warns that the work is exacting and so far they have had a 30% drop-out rate. If you are interested and think you can handle hard work in the field write to:

Praveen Bhargav, Solus Communications Resources, 36 1st Floor, Kanakapura Road, Basavana Gudi, Bangalore 571217, Karnataka. Email: pbsolus@blr.vsnl.net.in



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सत्यमेव जयते

प्रधान मंत्री  
PRIME MINISTER

**MESSAGE**

I am very happy that TIGER LINK is holding a meeting of experts to assess the strategies and mechanisms that govern the life of the tiger in order that they can be finely tuned so that this splendid symbol of our natural heritage survives into another century.

The protection of the tiger has the highest priority of my government. I look forward to receiving the recommendations of the meeting so that my government can strengthen its policy in the area of both tiger protection and the conservation of our natural heritage. We will do our best to preserve the rich flora and fauna of this country.

I wish you the very best in your deliberations.

(I.K. Gujral)

New Delhi  
November 27, 1997