

OPERATION EYE OF THE TIGER - INDIA

Report Submitted to the Save The Tiger Fund 1999-0268-078 for the Period June 1, 2000 to August 31, 2001

A.J.T.Johnsingh and A.S.Negi

PROGRAMMES FOR THE VILLAGERS

LPG cooking gas provision

The Operation Eye of the Tiger-India (OETI) is providing one time financial support (Rs. 500/-) to villagers in the periphery of Corbett Tiger Reserve for the purchase of "LPG cooking gas" connections. Use of the LPG has helped immensely in reducing the usage of wood for cooking, thereby easing the fuelwood pressure on the protected area. During the reporting period, this help was provided to 82 families - 57 on the northern boundary and 25 families on the eastern boundary of the Reserve. Overall, the total number of families which have benefitted from such assistance to date (since April 1996) is 1040.

Medical camps

As part of another ongoing activity of the OETI, four medical camps were organized - two in remote villages on the northern boundary of the Reserve where there are no government hospitals or dispensaries; and two in the southern areas close to the Rajaji-Corbett corridor. A total number of 434 patients, suffering from various ailments, were treated at these camps. On the advice of the physician, free medicines were provided to 16 TB tuberculosis patients in the area for seven months. The patients have since recovered fully.

Around Kotdwar, the major town on the Rajaji-Corbett corridor, we held two medical camps with Dr. S.S.Rawat and his medical assistant. On 15th June 2001 we held a medical camp at Saneh in which 105 patients were treated. And on 16th June we held a medical camp at Kanwashram. In this camp 93 patients turned up and were given necessary treatment. During these medical camps we met several representatives of the villagers including women who promised of their whole-hearted support in saving the tiger.

It may be mentioned that since April 1999, a total of 22 medical camps have been held at various locations, in which 2335 patients have been attended to and treated.

Milch cattle programme

In its efforts to reduce fodder pressure on the Corbett Tiger Reserve, the OETI has been encouraging people to go in for high-yielding crossbred Jersey cows and adopt stall-feeding. Toward this, OET has been providing partial financial assistance to the local people in their purchase of such cows. During the period of this report, four Jersey cows have been given to people in the southern boundary of the Reserve. The total cost of these cows came to Rs. 49,500/-, of which the villagers paid Rs. 20,000/- (Rs. 5,000/- per cow), while the remaining amount of Rs. 29,500/- was paid by OETI. As part of the

agreement, the OETI takes from the villagers scrub cattle in lieu of each crossbred cow taken. The OETI seeks to send these scrub cattle to "cow homes" far away from the Reserve, although some difficulty is being experienced in this, since most of such homes are not in a position to accept the scrub cattle for want of space in their sheds. To date OETI has issued a total of 39 crossbred Jersey cows, besides 3 Jersey or Holstein bulls. In return, about 80 scrub cattle have been removed. Veterinary care is provided to the cows and bulls as before, as and when necessary.

Tree planting

During the monsoons last year, approximately 1200 mulberry and bamboo saplings were given free of cost to the villagers on the northern boundary of the Reserve to help augment fodder availability.

Training for women

In order to help people augment their earnings/savings through alternative income generation or income saving activities, the OETI set up a "Community Welfare Centre" at Rathwadhab on the northern boundary of the Reserve in July 2000. A six-month tailoring course is being conducted for the village women at this Centre. The first course, which finished in February 2001, had 25 women, while the second batch, comprising 18 women, is in session.

The Pradhan of Bhimsinghpur, in the Rajaji-Corbett corridor area, has offered a big room in the Panchayat house free of rent to us for opening a Community Welfare Centre. It is proposed to start tailoring courses here for the village women. A woman with diploma in tailoring is available for teaching.

PROGRAMMES FOR THE FOREST STAFF

Financial assistance

Forest staff often work under difficult circumstances. The OETI tries to provide financial assistance to the staff who get injured or to the families of the forest staff who die on duty. During the period of this report, Rs. 2,540/- was spent by way of medical relief to one forester and one daily wage labourer injured on duty. Another Rs. 5,000/- was paid for the treatment of a DWL seriously injured in Rajaji National Park while burying a dead elephant. In a case of death by drowning of a Forest Guard in Corbett Tiger Reserve while performing census duty in May 2001, Rs. 7,500/= was paid as relief to his wife.

Scholarships

OETI offers scholarships to meritorious staff children of the Corbett Tiger Reserve at the following rates :-

For children in Class IX - X	Rs. 150/- each per month
For children in Class XI - XII	Rs. 250/- each per month
For children doing Graduation	Rs. 300/- each per month
For children doing Post-graduation	Rs. 400/- each per month

During the financial year 1999-2000 session, 19 students benefited from this programme, as listed below:

Class IX - X	9 children
Class XI - XII	6 children
Graduate	4 children
Total	19 children

During the current session (2000-2001) 19 students studying in the following classes are benefiting from the programme, as listed below:

Class IX - X	9
Class XI - XII	4
Graduation	6
Post-graduation	1
Total	20

PROGRAMMES FOR THE FOREST DEPARTMENT

Anti-poaching efforts

Poaching and poachers are a grave threat to the survival of wildlife in the protected areas. For the wildlifers and the forest department personnel, apprehending poachers often means putting their own lives at risk. In all, 29 cases related to poaching were detected during the years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. In recognition of commendable efforts of individual forest personnel in apprehending poaching cases, the OETI has provided rewards as following : (A) *Wildlife Region Kotdwara* - Paid a sum of Rs. 6,200/- by way of reward to 13 forest employees for the year 1999-2000. In addition, winter jackets were issued to all of them. (B) *Rajaji National Park* - For apprehending major poaching cases in the year 1999-2000, 18 employees were paid Rs. 11,600/- by way of rewards and were also issued jackets. The rewards along with the commendation certificates were issued to them at a simple function in the presence of the Director, Rajaji National Park and Senior Forest Officers. (C) *Hardwar Forest Division* - 7 forest employees were rewarded with Rs. 4,000/= and jackets for apprehending a case of poaching in December 2000. (D) *Dehra Dun Region* - 12 Forest staff, involved in apprehending two poaching cases in the year 2000-2001, were rewarded Rs. 4,000/=, and one jacket each.

Some leopard skins have been seized recently by DFO Hardwar and his staff. The staff involved in the detection of the offence will be suitably rewarded.

One of our field assistants recently reported a Gujjar in Corbet Tiger Reserve to be in possession of an unlicensed 12-bore gun. This information has been passed on to the Park officials.

OTHER PROGRAMMES

Combing operations and intelligence gathering

On 27th December 2000 we learnt from a reliable source at Ramnagar that an adult male elephant was found dead in Corbett National Park and that its tusks had been removed by cutting its trunk.

On 6th February 2001 Shri Uma Shankar Singh Negi, our intelligence gatherer, informed us that one male elephant was found dead near Jhirna and that the Director of Project Tiger and the Chief Wildlife Warden were already on their way to inspect the dead elephant at the site.

On 11th February we received a telephone call from Shri Samir Sinha, Director Corbett Wildlife Training School, Kalagarh that one more elephant was found dead near Paterpani. The on-the-spot inspection revealed that it was a case of poaching by an organised gang. We were asked to reach Kalagarh along with our staff as soon as possible to assist the park staff in apprehending the poachers.

On the same day (11th February 2001) Sri N.S.Negi, Sr. Field Officer along with Shri. P.D. Sharma, Field Officer reached Kalagarh. Field assistants Mahendra Singh Negi, Manbar Singh Rawat and Kuldeep Singh Rana along with five information gatherers were also informed by telephone to reach Kalagarh as soon as possible.

On arrival at Kalagarh we were asked by Sri Samir Sinha to take part in the combing operations, which had already begun in the area with the help of the police, PAC and forest staff. We were told that we would be allotted a specific area for combing by the Director of Project Tiger the next day. The Director asked us to go to Haldupurao with our team and comb areas to the north in the Kalagarh Division. We reached Haldupurao area by the evening of 12th February. In our combing operations, we were accompanied by two-armed forest guards deputed by the Range officers. Over the next four days, we combed areas in the Bailanala block, Mandalti block, Kharsoon block and Gaujira block from Magnukhal to Dhikala. We did not come across any stranger nor find any trace or evidence of the poachers in the area.

On 17th February 2001 we went to Kalagarh and met the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden and reported to them the combing work our team had done. While at Kalagarh, we also went to Sawalda village and contacted Sri Saukat Ali of that village. He had earlier told us that he knew someone in Kaladhungi who had elephant tusks in his possession and that he would try to find out more details on the issue. The matter was brought to the notice of the Chief Wildlife Warden and a sum of Rs. 5,000/- was paid to Shri Saukat Ali as per his demand for helping nabbing the elephant poachers. However, to date we have yet to receive any information on these poachers

Ecodevelopment and conservation education

It has been strongly felt that school children should be sensitized towards conservation and that conservation education should be introduced or extended to all the schools in the surrounding areas of the Reserve. With this objective, the concept of "Bagh Mitra" (Tiger Friends) has been introduced in ten Junior High (up to Class VIII) and Intermediate

schools (Class IX and higher) with the help of their Headmasters/Principals, as listed below:

Sl.No.	Name of the school	Number of Bagh Mitra students		Total
		Junior	Senior	
1.	Govt. Inter College, Ramnagar (Nainital)	-	41	41
2.	Govt. Inter College, Shankarpur (Almora)	-	13	13
3.	Govt. Inter College, Jhargaon (Almora)	-	10	10
4.	Ramganga Project Inter College, Kalagarh	10	10	20
5.	Saraswati Vidya Mandir, Kalagarh (Pauri Garhwal)	7	10	17
6.	Govt. Inter College, Sendhikhal (Pauri Garhwal)	14	12	26
7.	Govt. Inter College, Kartia (Pauri Garhwal)	11	11	22
8.	Govt. High School, Khadrasi (Pauri Garhwal)	12	-	12
9.	Govt. Junior High School, Kanda Nala (Pauri Garhwal)	12	-	12
10.	Govt. Junior High School, Kumaldi (Pauri Garhwal)	11	-	11
	Total	77	107	184

Literature pertaining to wildlife and conservation were distributed among these students, and the field officers delivered periodic lectures to them. In March 2001, the students were tested and "Bagh Mitra" trophies were awarded to the following schools: -

Senior group

Saraswati Vidya Mandir, Kalagarh
Govt. Inter College, Jhargaon
Govt. Inter College, Ramnagar

Junior group

Govt. Junior High School, Kanda Nala
Govt. Junior High School, Kumaldi.

In addition, all students participating in the test were given school bags, exercise books, rulers, pencils and erasers. Individual students securing 60% and above marks on the test were awarded T-shirts with "Bagh Mitra" and Operation Eye of the Tiger logo printed on it. This programme received wide appreciation and was very helpful in imparting conservation education to the students.

Wildlife survey

In January 2000 and January 2001 surveys were carried out in South Pithoragarh Division and in Sharda range in Haldwani Forest Division, although these did not reveal any evidence of the tiger in these areas.

This year a similar survey was carried out on 19th and 20th April 2001, along with the following staff of OETI :

Sri Manbar Singh Rawat, Field Assistant Marchula
Sri Manbar Singh Negi, Information Gatherer, Marchula
Sri Uma Shankar Singh Negi - Information Gatherer, Ramnagar

We had intended to survey Chuka and the surrounding areas where on 17th January 2000, the villagers and a Survey of India team we had met at Tanakpur reported seeing a tiger. It had been arranged that our team would be given a lift in the trucks of the Forest Corporation from Chalthi to Chuka. But on reaching Chalthi we learnt that the only truck engaged that day had broken down. We therefore had no option other than walking the entire 20km distance from Chalthi to Chuka.

We set out on foot from Chalthi bridge at 0900 hrs. After having walked about 4km we met some villagers who informed us that only the previous night a tiger had killed a cow in Chanchri village which was only about 2 km ahead. We reached Chanchri and inspected the area, amidst *Dalbergia sissoo* and *Adhatoda vasica* thickets, where the carcass of the cow lay. It had been partly eaten from the hind portion, and closeby we saw the pugmarks of a young tigress. The pugmarks measured 13 x 9 cm. The villagers told us that they have occasionally seen a tiger in the area. Having found the evidence of the presence of tigers in the area we returned to Tanakpur.

The next day, we surveyed islands Nos. 64 and 65 in front of Tanakpur Forest Rest House. These islands are on the left bank of river Sharda and in the Indian Territory. Here we came across the pugmarks of a young tigress, which had come from the forests in Nepal on the other side of the river. Although we did not find any evidence of it having crossed the river and entered the Indian territory, we believe that tigers from Nepal do cross over to the Indian territory. The two incidents cited above are encouraging and suggest the possibility of saving tigers outside protected areas.

Village surveys

In order to acquaint ourselves with the problems of conservation around Kotdwar, Shri NS Negi and Shri PD Sharma, accompanied by Sri Brijendra Singh Rawat, our Intelligence gatherer, surveyed the areas in the region on 18th and 19th May 2001.

The following Table gives information on the villages located between Kotdwar and Gularjhala along the Kotdwara - Laldhang forest road on its left.

S.N.	Name of the village	Distance from	Number of families	Total population
------	---------------------	---------------	--------------------	------------------

		Kotdwar		
1.	Shivpuri	1 km	1000	5000
2.	Lalpur	2 km	850	4500
3.	Satichaur	4 km	400	2500
4.	Mawakat	5 km	400	2500
5.	Katla	6 ½ km	40	250
6.	Chaukighat	7 km	25	150
7.	Udairampur	13 km	400	2500
8.	Lachhampur'	14 ½ km	150	800
9.	Trilokpur	15 ½ km	100	600
10.	Telibara	16 km	50	300

At Telibara, we asked the villagers why there was very little water in the Sigadi Sot. They blamed the *gujjars* and goatkeepers, which were being allowed by the Forest Department to graze in this area. [TIC editors' note: the *gujjars* are a nomadic tribe who rear livestock.] Heavy lopping of fodder trees was noticed, which was done by *gujjars*, as the local villagers do not usually lop very tall trees.

After Telibara is the Gularjhala village, where there is an old abandoned forest resthouse and a forest guard chawki. Returning from Gularjhala, we took the Pond Road from Kalalghati. On the way to Kotdwar, we came across two villages - Kanchanpur, which has about 150 families with a population of about 900, and Motadhak, which has about 1000 families. Our next phase of conservation work will be done in the villages between Kotdwar and Gularjhala so that the pressures exerted by these villagers on the Rajai-Corbett corridor can be minimized to make the corridor much more suitable for wildlife.

Operation monsoon

In view of elephant poaching activities and its continuing threat in the Corbett Tiger Reserve, we had expressed our desire to extend support to and participate in "Operation Monsoon" to the State Chief Wildlife Warden who also happens to be the Trustee of our organization. The matter was discussed with Director of Project Tiger who welcomed our participation in the operation.

It was decided to send the staff of OETI in two batches to participate in Operation Monsoon. Shri N.S.Negi, Senior Field Officer, led the first batch, and it surveyed areas in the southern boundary of the Reserve from 22nd July to 29th July 2001. The second team was led by Shri P.D. Sharma, former Range Forest Officer and Field Officer, Operation Eye of the Tiger- India, and they patrolled Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary from 4th August to 11th August.

Miscellaneous support from our savings (10% administrative charges)

At the request of the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehra Dun, a training workshop on Eco-

tourism and Planning was sponsored in January 2001 by the OETI, towards which Rs 10,000/- were contributed.

A sum of Rs. 10,000/= was paid to Ms. Divya Cauvery Mudappa, a researcher from Wildlife Institute of India who has studied small carnivores in Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, the southern most tiger reserve in the country and the funds will be used to prepare a wildlife poster on small carnivores for educational purposes.

Mr. Ramsthanu Moorthy and his team of staff from Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve were awarded a sum of Rs.5000.00 for apprehending a sambar poacher.