



TIGERLINK

A Linkage of Concerned People and Organisations
Across the Globe to Save the Tiger

NEWS

Vol. 5 No. 3 December 1999

"There is a 6,000 year old ecological lesson in Indian philosophy which says, 'don't encroach upon others' (other species) domain' - if you don't wish to destabilise Nature's intricate balance. Homo sapiens today is doing just the opposite. It has encroached on the domain of all other species, thereby drilling hole after hole in the cobweb of life on this planet".

IN MEMORY OF A VERY SPECIAL MAN

Since the last issue of the newsletter we have lost one of the most devoted and honourable foresters of our time. **Sanjoy Deb Roy passed away** on 16 August 1999 after a brief and sudden illness. He was a founder participant of the *TigerLink* network, and is mourned as a friend as well as a great wildlifer. Having spent over 40 years "on the tiger's tail", he had a vast wealth of experience in jungle lore and whether amateur naturalist or experienced scientist, all could turn to him for advice and discussion, trusting his amazing depth and range of knowledge. His manner was unassuming—a heavyweight thinker and worker, but one who stepped lightly through life with respect and humility—one of his most appealing qualities being the manner in which he interacted with 'high' or 'low' with equal consideration.

Ten years of general forest management in Assam and over twenty years experience in managing protected areas (Manas and Kaziranga) gave him an unparalleled understanding of wilderness regions, of their conservation needs and the potential threats to them. He believed that "we are almost at the edge of the abyss", "in the red in ecological economics—devouring the capital". Deb

Roy coined the term "gap management" to describe the work of the forester and the wildlife manager—they no longer manage the resources but have "to try to manage the 'gap' between the soaring demand and the diminishing natural renewable resources".

He had no doubt that the natural ecosystems needed a rest from biotic interference, that there needed to be areas undisturbed from human use. But

he could also identify with those who were displaced from the core areas of the tiger reserves and appreciated the "serious stress" of such a move, especially when the "better life" promised by the government proved to be a receding mirage. Furthermore he believed that "to ensure protection, it is imperative to obtain full co-operation and support from the local people... Legal provisions and

enforcement can never achieve the desired goal of protection without spontaneous support from the people."

It was this thinking that led him to design an eco-development plan which he saw not only as "the last weapon to tackle the losing battle of saving the remnant natural ecosystems and life forms contained

When a large predator like the tiger starts declining, the only course to follow to allow it to recover its lost ground is to ensure that the food chain leading up to it is kept in a natural, or near natural, state.

* Produced by Ranthambhore Foundation, 19, Kautilya Marg, Chanakyaपुरi, New Delhi 110021

• Tel. 011-301 6261 • Fax 011-301 9457 • Email: tiger@vsnl.com

• For private circulation only

there" but as a means of compensating (at least partially) the people who live in and around protected areas, for all the problems faced by them due to the locking up of these areas against human use in favour of wildlife and ecological interests."

Deb Roy's many years of field experience sowed the seeds of the eco-development plan but it took its shape through his extensive discussions with managers and villagers and its essential element was that it should evolve "from the grass-root level of recipients by involving them in the initial discussions and socio-economic survey etc." Furthermore, "utmost care was proposed to make sure that such planning in no way disturbs the traditional and cultural lifestyle of the indigenous people in the name of 'development', as any cultural change in the lifestyle of the target people shall invariably enhance use of comparatively more resources."

It was one of his greatest sorrows that he saw the whole perspective changed and the "cardinal principles completely glossed over and neglected". "The idea of originating the plan by the target people themselves did not materialise, as after collection of some data from the field, the plan had been formulated here (in New Delhi) by some consultants". When he tried to point this out, the new proponents, not understanding the overall concept, would point to the micro-planning envisaged. To him this was "nothing short of imposing a plan of 'improving living conditions' of the villagers by urbanised line of thoughts, which often smells of strong consumerism." For years, he struggled unsuccessfully to put the plan back on track and his inability to make headway cut him deeply. As the initiator, he felt a deep responsibility to warn everyone concerned with conservation that if the "plan cannot be taken along the desired line of philosophy and right socio-economics, then it would be much better not to start it at all." He understood that if the programme encouraged a particular kind of "development", resource use would be increased rather than diminished. "I can visualise how the last vestiges of ecological interests in these PAs shall be wiped clean by the backlash of a wrong ecodevelopment plan."

Deb Roy was no idealiser of a tribal way of life but he strongly believed that "the solution of the problem of overuse and abuse of the natural

renewable resources has to be sought through traditional customs and practices of the indigenous people, which entails full understanding of this life style".

Unlike most of today's decision-makers, Deb Roy understood the need for a new paradigm of development and the inherent danger to Nature of the prevailing inequitable, consumerist, and unsustainable definition. "When we should contain the use of natural renewable resources within the limits of sustainable yield, the politicians and economic planners are playing to the tune of consumerism and market economy for the sake of what is widely known and acclaimed as development. The word sustainability is being molested by such people to justify unsustainable use of such resources."

"Equitable distribution of the natural renewable resources contained within the limits of sustainability has to be ensured". And this has to go hand in hand with "stabilisation of the population" if there is to be any hope of reducing the ever-increasing demand for natural resources.

Man has to contain the proliferation of his own clan if he is to save his future, which is said to have been borrowed from his children. He has to contain his greed which is engulfing the entire globe in the shape of consumerism and market economy.

But the mainstream does not flow with such thinking and Deb Roy's talents lay less in intellectual persuasion as in translating his creative thoughts and humanist philosophy into ground action. In this way he had nurtured the Manas area for nearly 18 years, thirteen as Field Director, bringing it to international recognition as a World Heritage Site. His exceptional management talents in so doing were recognised in 1982 when he was presented with the National Award for the best managed protected area. He also has the distinction of being the only forester in India to receive (in 1988) the Norman Borlaug Award, the highest global accolade for forester or agriculturalist. The citation noted, "his work has focused much needed recognition of the intimate linkages between ecological security and food security". The award also recognised his "passionate devotion to the cause of protection of flora and fauna" and "the whole range of techniques to preserve and protect wildlife" that he developed.

In Manas he rediscovered the pigmy hog in 1964 and evolved an original system of grassland management that suited the ecological demands of this exacting Red Data book species. He devised a

method of elephant censusing which was accepted throughout the North-East and later, as Chairman of the Task Force, he formulated the plan for Project Elephant. Under his leadership, the annual tiger census in Manas was not a fallible tool for counting tigers of the area over a one week period, but a way of confirming the *"intensive knowledge about the presence and movement pattern of the tigers, present in the area"* as a result of constant monitoring.

His acclaimed success in Manas lay partly in his awareness of the importance of protection and the crucial role of the field staff whose welfare for him was always a recognised priority. But it also lay in the emphasis he placed on maintaining a dialogue with the local communities, understanding their problems and, as a manager, pursuing paths that minimised the *"rising man-animal conflict of interest"*. He could foresee the conflicts that would later lead the *"peace-loving"* Bodo people to armed insurgency. The *"ecological degradation and severe depletion of wildlife"* that resulted from this and wreaked devastation in Manas pierced his heart. He fought long and hard to combat such *"senseless vandalism"* and to try to engender the necessary *"strong will and commitment"* that was so sadly lacking from the State government. But conservation was not high on their agenda.

After four years as Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam and over two years as the Additional Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife) in the MoEF, Deb Roy retired from full time government service and threw himself into active conservation work with the NGO movement. Believing that the *"conservation of natural renewable resources must be made into a people's movement, in which the role of the NGOs must be properly recognised and acknowledged"*, this was a natural progression. He also remained a key member of a number of government committees, including the Steering Committees of both Project Tiger and Project Elephant, and the Indian Board for Wildlife. He was a member of the World Commission on Protected Areas and of the Species Survival

Commission of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and part of four specialist groups—cat, Asian rhino, Asian elephant and pigs and peccaries.

Latterly, as Director Co-ordination of the Corbett Foundation, Deb Roy was embarking on a project in the Kutch District of Gujarat, an area of harsh ecological conditions in western India where average rainfall does not exceed 10 inches a year. He was spearheading an unconventional project with exciting potential. True to character, he was turning his beliefs into action and had targeted a 500 km² area where he hoped to work with the villagers to improve

The importance of political will or conversely the lack of it, strongly influences the tiger—a symbol of wildlife and the natural ecosystems for India.

We are actually in a crisis situation and the need of the hour is to go for a crisis management plan with immediate effect, while the long drawn out main plan of biodiversity conservation may continue to be finalised.

conditions both for them and for the wildlife such an ecosystem could support—such as the caracal, wolf, hyena and great Indian bustard. He was under no illusions that this could be achieved over night but was proceeding *"slow but steady to keep pace with people's understanding of the whole concept of real sustainable living, attuned to nature, in the line of Man and Biosphere concept. If and when the people may lend us support, I don't think we will have to ask for any sort of government help besides using the Wildlife Act."* His objective was to reach the position where the villages themselves would *"demand*

of the government to utilise the vast grassland areas as a conservation; area to be dealt with by themselves." Others may philosophise and talk of community conservation, Deb Roy was amongst those who preferred action and as a forester and fierce protectionist was perhaps unique in these pursuits. It is to the loss of the conservation movement that the mastermind of this creative and potentially model project was overcome by cancer when the plan was at such a nascent stage.

Deb Roy was also a deeply loving family man and a sincerely caring friend. The sum of all his qualities makes him truly irreplaceable and the hollow left by his absence may be only partially assuaged by the attempt to tread a path inspired by his quiet but supremely edifying example. For friends and conservationists across the world, as one admirer wrote, *"a light went out on the planet with the death of Sanjoy Deb Roy"*.

Awards

• *Assam honours a stalwart*

On 7 October 1999, at a special function held during the 45th Wildlife Week, the Forest Department of Assam, with profound respect, presented the late **Sanjoy Deb Roy** with a special citation, along with the traditional *sarai* and *panbata*, in recognition of his **lifetime contribution towards the preservation of forests and wildlife**. The Chief Minister of Assam was present for the occasion along with the Forest Minister of Assam, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Chief Wildlife Warden and local Conservators. The DFO, Guwahati Zoo personally delivered the citation to Mrs Deb Roy in New Delhi.

• *Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Conservation Awards*

The first **Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Conservation Awards** were presented on 4 October 1999 by the Vice-President of India, Shri Krishan Kant at a function held at Vigyan Bhawan in Delhi. The two awards presented carried a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh and a trophy each. Shri Suresh Prabhu, Minister, Environment and Forests also spoke on the occasion.

The award for outstanding work by an institution in conservation of wildlife was given to **WWF-India** for its contribution to spawning a large number of conservation professionals and NGOs. It was accepted by Shri S. P. Godrej on behalf of the organisation. The award citation states, "*from among its Nature Clubs, other associates and supporters, who are continuing the crusade in whatever personal or professional capacity they may be.*"

The award for outstanding work by an individual was presented to **Shri H. S. Panwar** who was the founder Field Director of Kanha National Park in 1973. In 1981 he became the Director, Project Tiger. He also served as a member secretary of a task force for working out a strategy to involve people in wildlife conservation. In 1985 he joined the Wildlife Institute of India and as Director co-authored the report '*Planning a wildlife protected area network*' which was published in 1988. Shri Panwar announced that his prize money would be donated equally to the Wildlife Institute of India and Kanha National Park.

• *TigerLink Awards*

On 17 July 1999, four **TigerLink Awards** for commendable jobs done by forest staff in the **Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve** were presented by Shri S. Ahmed, Secretary, Forests, Rajasthan and Shri P.

K. Sen, Director, Project Tiger. "*Saving Wild Tigers*", a new U.S.-based NGO, sponsored two of the awards worth Rs 5,000, which were conferred on Shri Mahendra Singh and Shri Balbir Singh. Shri Gobind Singh Akoi sponsored the awards to Shri Harlal Saini and Shri Danender who received Rs 1,500 each.

Shri Mahendra Singh was awarded for his exemplary courage in nabbing poachers, in spite of putting his life at risk. He has shown particular ability in collecting valuable information on anti-poaching activities. His hard work in June 1999 in capturing one injured tiger at Bodal is worthy of mention also.

Shri Balbir Singh, a cattle guard working as driver, has been associated with teams working to nab poachers. He also showed remarkable courage in capturing the sick tiger and rescuing it. He was the first person to approach the animal and help the doctor administer a sedative. In the last two years he has worked very hard in controlling illegal grazing. He is a very sincere worker and is available day and night whenever required.

Shri Harlal Saini is posted in the remotest forest *naka*, Anaptura. Devoted to his duty he has kept constant vigil on the activities of offenders and has been instrumental in nabbing the culprits many times. Because of his devotion and vigil illegal grazing in his area could be minimized. His talent of securing cooperation from his colleagues and in motivating his fellow men is remarkable.

Shri Danender is a forest cattle guard posted in Lakkadadha who is very brave and dedicated to his job. He has also shown remarkable courage in facing illegal grazers even when alone in the forest chowki. It is thanks to the efforts of people like him that the illegal grazing could be stopped in such areas as those surrounding Lakkadadha and Semli.

• *TigerLink Award for Sariska villager*

At a ceremony in **Sariska Tiger Reserve** on 9 November 1999, where Amanda Bright of *Global Tiger Patrol* (GTP) handed over a truck, jeep, hats and sweaters to the forest staff, Valmik Thapar, on behalf of *TigerLink* presented a GTP-sponsored award of Rs 5,100 to **Jagdish Gujjar** for his work in the protection of wildlife in the Tiger Reserve. A resident of Rada village, he has helped to catch poachers. The function was attended by S. Ahmed, Rajasthan State Forest Secretary and Sariska Field Director, Tejbir Singh. Rajendra Singh of the NGO, *Tarun Bharat Sangh* spoke of the NGO's new thrust

to protect forests and wildlife (see 'National News' p. 23) and committed his organisation to making the park free of poaching and then working towards making it "grazing free". A new team spirit is in place in Sariska.

• **Pench's only woman 'Vanmazdoor' awarded**
During a visit to **Pench Tiger Reserve** in June 1999 Shri P. K. Sen and Mr Valmik Thapar presented a cash award of Rs 2,100, on behalf of Gobind Singh Akoi, to **Ms Kamlabai Khursiram Dhurve** for her brave and excellent work in stopping illegal fishing. The illegally caught fish are mostly transported from the park by women and Ms Dhurve has had many encounters with them and on many occasions also suffered assault and injury. She is the only lady "Vanmazdoor" working in Pench Tiger Reserve and in consideration of her ability in protection work, she is posted at the sensitive Salama checking gate. Ms Dhurve does not hesitate to catch either female or male offenders and also takes part in field patrolling work along with the protection squad. She is able in collecting confidential information regarding illegal fishing activities. The Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Nagpur has also given her a letter of appreciation.

Source: www.wildlifevidarbha.org

• **Panna Tiger Award**

The **Panna Tiger Award for 1998** was given by Valmik Thapar at a small function held on 5 August 1999 at the main gate of the Panna Tiger Reserve. Now given for the third year in succession, the award was shared by Shri Shivraj Patel, Forest Guard and Shri Jamil Khan, daily wage driver of the 'Global Tiger Patrol' department jeep.

Shivraj Patel was awarded for his dedication to duty and the keen interest he has in wildlife, especially tigers. His skills in tracing pugmarks and

making plaster casts make him a key person during the annual tiger census. Shri Patel has been in the forest department for 15 years, working in the adjoining territorial forests before being posted to the Hinauta Range of Panna National Park.

Jamil Khan joined the National Park as a daily-waged helper on one of the park vehicles. Although now promoted to driver, he is still on daily wages. He has driven the Patrol gypsy for three years and been an invaluable member of the anti-poaching team. During this time he has contributed in the capture of several poachers. He has an amazing knowledge of wildlife.

• **IFS Officer from Maharashtra awarded**

Dr Mohan Jha, Dy. conservator of Forests, Buldhana Forest Division has been awarded **Indira Priyadarshni Vrikshmitra Award 1997** by the Government of India for his excellent work in joint forest management. "Mr Jha has empowered people and showed them the path to earn from forest without destroying natural wealth." The award carries a plaque, citation and Rs 50,000 cash.

Source: Web page of Forest Department, Nagpur www.wildlifevidarbha.org

• **WWF-TCP calls for award nominations**

WWF-Tiger Conservation Programme is **inviting nominations** for their eleven tiger conservation awards for 1999 (see *TL News* vol.5 no.2). **Two special awards** have been instituted this year—the **Millennium Award** of Rs 2,00,000 judged on the quality of management of a Protected Area over the previous 12 months and a "**Saving from fire**" award of Rs 50,000 which will be judged on the period January to June both in 1998 and 1999 (only those preventing fire in areas containing at least 20 tigers may be nominated).

"The awards will be given by year-end."

Source: *Tiger Update* October 1999

Sanctuary Millennium Awards

Sanctuary Magazine is inviting entries for a series of awards "to recognise and draw national attention to the contribution of individuals working for the protection of wildlife and natural habitats in India."

Sanctuary Lifetime Service Award: to be awarded to an individual whose life has been devoted to the protection of wildlife species or their habitats.

Sanctuary Wildlife Service Award: for an individual working in the field who has displayed extraordinary courage, dedication and determination in the field of wildlife conservation.

Nominations should reach Sanctuary no later than 31 December 1999.

For further information please write to The Sanctuary Millennium Awards, 602 Maker Chambers V, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400 021 Fax: (022) 2874380 E-mail: sanctuary@vsnl.com

Sanctuary Wildlife Photographer Award: to be presented for the best image taken in the wild that depicts the 'Call of the Wild'

Sanctuary Natural History Writer Award: to be given for an essay, between 1,000 and 2,000 words, titled *Call of the Wild*.

Arunachal Pradesh

• *Desecration of N-E forests*

The Chief Conservator of Forests, Avinash Kumar, is reported to have been **suspended** for alleged corruption on 6 October 1999, after the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) unearthed a **Rs 400 crore** (approximately US \$ 95 million) **timber scam in the north-eastern states**. A **CBI inquiry** has been ordered by the Union Home Secretary who has directed that they also investigate the involvement of “*several politicians’ including former Arunachal Chief Minister, Gegong Apang*”.

Only legally felled timber with the Forest Department’s “*hammer mark*” can be transported by the Railways but according to a Home Ministry report, illegally felled timber is being transported “*on a large scale*” mixed with the legal timber. During a raid in October 1999 at the Tinsukia railway station in Assam, half the timber in the 46 wagons ready for despatch was found to be illegally felled and without the mandatory hammer mark. The wagons were loaded with twice as much timber as shown in the papers and all the consignments were self-addressed to be received in Delhi, West Bengal and Punjab. There were 29 consignments—23 from Arunachal Pradesh, 5 from Assam and one from Nagaland. Reports estimate that **timber worth Rs 100–200 crore** has been **smuggled** out of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh **in the past year alone!**

Both the MoEF and the MHA are reported to be surprised at the “*go-slow attitude towards the case by the Assam Government*”. MoEF has directed the governments of Assam and Arunachal to

register cases under the Environment Protection Act “*and in view of the Supreme Court ban on felling and transportation of timber*” (in the Godavarman Thirumalpkad forest case). The Railway Ministry and the Railway Board have been directed that no railway wagons loaded with timber may be moved without an authorised seal from the forest authorities and that they can only be unloaded in the presence of authorised forest officials.

“*The busting of the racket has brought to light the possible nexus between smugglers, politicians, forest authorities, police and railway officials in the region.*” The Union Home Ministry is reported to be closely monitoring the case “*as it is widely believed that a portion of money out of this illegal trade goes to the coffers of some rebel groups.*”

An unholy reminder of the commercial worth of our wildlife habitats!

Source: Swati Chaturvedi in *Indian Express* 2 November 1999; *The Northeast Daily* 25 October 1999

• *Two-horned rhino in India?*

There may still be a small population of **Sumatran rhinos**, *Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*, within India. The local people along the Indo-Myanmar border are familiar with the species, as distinct from the one horned rhino, and report occasional sightings deep in the jungle.

Mridupaban Phukan, chief coordinator of *Nature’s Beckon*, was told by villagers on the **Arunachal-Myanmar** border about an animal that fitted the description of the Sumatran rhino. The NGO is taking a keen interest and is investigating its occurrence.

Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury of the *Rhino Foundation of India*

records similar reports from **Manipur and Nagaland** and is hoping to visit the area this winter to try to confirm the presence of Sumatran rhino and to gather more information.

Source: *Nature’s Beckon News* June 1999; *Assam Tribune* 17 June 1999

Assam

• *FD attacked by encroachers*

Encroachment has become a **major problem** in various protected areas of Assam. In accordance with the Guwahati High Court’s order of 29 June 1999 and also the Supreme court orders of 22.8.97 and 17.7.98, a massive eviction drive was planned to clear **Kaziranga National Park** of encroachers. On 14 and 15 July 1999 encroachers were evicted from Panpur RF and on 30 July from Baghmari Tapu, Bhasa Tapu, Miri Tapu and part of Bholakata Tapu. However, on 31 July 1999 the **eviction party** led by Eastern Assam Wildlife Division DFO, Mr P.S. Das, was **attacked** by a gang of 200 people, armed with *daos*, axes and spears, in the Bholakata Chapori area on the northern side of the park.

It is reported that the Minister for Minority Welfare and Development has been found attempting to stop the evictions which, it is argued, violates the Election Commission’s Model Code of Conduct.

After the attack, in spite of the court order, the local District Administration refused to re-start the eviction operations without a green signal from Dispur (the capital). It seems that a minister has been exerting pressure on the local administration. It is reported also that some MLAs have approached the Chief Minister to stop the evictions. Some of the

encroachers and local leaders have filed a case at the Guwahati High Court against the eviction and got a stay order. The state government has filed a counter petition and the matter is *sub judice*.

Source: B. K. Talukdar, *Aaranyak Nature Club*, Samanwoy Path (Survey), PO Bel-tola, Guwahati 781028, Assam.
Tel/fax: (0361) 566087
E-mail: bibhab@gw1.vsnl.net.in/
bibhab@hotmail.com

• **Guard mauled by tiger**

In August 1999, **Forest Guard, K. K. Das** was severely **mauled by a tiger** on the periphery of the Kaziranga National Park. He was one of a party who had been sent to drive a tiger back into the forests from the village into which it had strayed. The mission was successful but Shri Das had to be rushed to Guwahati hospital for treatment. WWF-TCP provided Rs. 10,000 for his treatment.

Source: *Tiger Update* October 1999

• **Encounters with poachers**

Since May 1999 **three poachers** have been **killed** inside **Manas National Park**. On 20 May 1999 forest staff patrolling in Changlapani area had an encounter with a gang of timber smugglers—one died on the spot while the rest escaped. A similar encounter took place on 21 August 1999 when a patrolling party of Bansbari range were on duty in the Bhouraguri area. The third case occurred on 4 September 1999 when a patrolling party on elephant back in the Goruchera area of the park were attacked by a group of seven poachers. In the encounter one poacher was killed, one poacher was arrested and a number of guns were recovered.

Source: Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve, Barpeta Road, Assam

• **Legal workshop in Manas**

On 24 July 1999 a **legal workshop** for front-line staff of **Manas Tiger Reserve** was held on issues related to wildlife and forest cases in the context of amendments to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Assam Forest Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1995. The objectives of the workshop were to develop knowledge of the application of relevant acts related with wildlife and forest offence cases, to develop an understanding of legal procedures for following cases in the courts and clarification on various short-comings in writing Offence Reports. The workshop provided useful interaction of forest staff with local experts and the judiciary and aimed to enlist their co-operation in defending cases.

Shri T. C. Jain, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Barpeta gave the inaugural address, and appreciated the workshop in the common cause of Manas. Advocates from Barpeta District provided technical inputs and offered voluntary service for legal advice in matters relating to Manas. The formation of a Legal Forum of advocates to provide legal advice on a regular basis to the staff of Manas National Park was also discussed.

Source: Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve, Barpeta Road, Assam

• **Manas Nature Camp**

Nature's Beckon, in collaboration with Project Tiger, Manas, organised a 3-day **Nature Orientation Camp** from 8–10 October 1999 at Mathanguri, inside **Manas National Park**. The objective of the camp was the conservation of forests and wildlife and to motivate people living in the fringe villages to preserve the flora and fauna of the park. More than 120 youths from different parts of

Assam, including members of the 'Manas Bandhu Groups' (MBG) and selected staff of Manas participated in the camp. The MBGs, groups of inhabitants from the Manas fringe villages with the concerned range or beat officers as facilitators, were created to actively co-operate in the protection of the flora and fauna and to spread the word to friends, family and contacts to convince them not to indulge in activities detrimental to the National Park.

Source: Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve, Barpeta Road, Assam; *Assam Tribune* 7 September 1999

• **Bongaigaon cats**

One morning in May 1999, a **leopard cub** was discovered **playing with a pet dog** in the Bongaigaon district. Naba Jyoti Chowdhury caught the cub and handed it over to the D.F.O., Ms K. N. Barman for forwarding to the Guwahati zoo. *TL* participant, Gautum Ghosh writes that it may have come from the Kakojjana Reserve Forest or possibly it had escaped from a smuggler. He reports that poachers and smugglers are active in the area. Two years ago, **two tiger cubs** had been **booked for carriage** as pet dogs at Bongaigaon Railway Station.

Source: Gautum Ghosh, Nr. Prakash Cinema Hall, PO Bongaigaon 783 380

• **Diminishing forest cover**

Land cover mapping of four elephant areas Manas-Buxa-Jaldapara, Dibru-Deomali, Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong-Intanki and Kameng-Sonitpur are reported to have been undertaken by the Assam Remote Sensing Application Centre (ARSAC), using satellite imagery and limited ground truthing. The report reveals the **large-scale dwindling of**

elephant habitat as a result of **massive deforestation**. Encroachment on the forest and increasing human activities in the reserve areas have added to the severity of the problem. **Vital corridors**, such as that between the Buxa Tiger Reserve in West Bengal and the Manas Tiger Reserve in Assam, have been **snapped** and are no longer in use by elephants. Apparently the report is being scrutinised by a committee set up for the purpose before it is forwarded to the Government for follow-up action.

The elephant range in Assam is approximately 25,000 km², with an estimated population of 5,500. Source: *The Sentinel*, Guwahati 29 July 1999; *Nature's Beckon News* June 1999

• **Radios for Orang**

In the last issue of the newsletter, while reporting the sad state of affairs and problems in Orang Sanctuary, we reported that the "wireless system had been inoperative for over one year". We are informed that the **Rhino Foundation for Nature in North East India** removed this particular problem in January 1999, when they **donated to Orang Wildlife Sanctuary**, two static **wireless sets**, 16 hand-held wireless sets with eight 2-position battery chargers for these, along with other accessories and necessities for the system. The Foundation also proposes to maintain and repair the donated equipment over the next five years. "This donation was made possible through funds raised by the Foundation and the generosity of the Rhino and Tiger Conservation Fund of the US Government."

Source: *The Rhino Foundation*, Tollygunge Club Ltd, 120 D.P. Sasmal Road, Calcutta 700033 Tel/fax: (033) 4733306

Bihar

• **Tiger? reserves?**

Tiger reserves in India suffer from a variety of problems but few are as **wantonly beleaguered** as those in Bihar. One of the original nine reserves created in 1973/74, the **Palamu Tiger Reserve** is reported to continue to be **in dire straits**. The post of Field Director has been vacant since March 1999 and no salary or wages have been paid to permanent staff since then. Daily wage workers have not been paid for fourteen months. Staff cannot move inside due to regular hold-ups and assaults and no support is forthcoming from the District Administration to tackle the law and order situation. Big and small criminals are operating in the guise of extremists. Tree cutting is rampant with *khair* almost wiped out and livestock are grazed freely, even in the core area. During the fire season, 100% was affected. There is inadequate budget provision and even vehicles meant for Palamu are being withdrawn at will. There are no funds for patrolling, crop protection, cattle kill and habitat management and man-elephant conflicts are reported to have risen manifold. This has resulted in elephants being targeted by the villagers and agitations have started targeting the forest staff also.

Valmiki Tiger Reserve has had no Field Director for more than two months and salary has not been paid to Valmiki staff for more than 16 months! Here also illicit felling is rampant and the law and order machinery non-functional and unable to provide support to reserve staff. Apparently the sawmills, closed in the West Champaran District, are again operating

full swing due to political pressure and the timber mafia.

In this situation, with prey base also being wiped out, the fate of the tiger can only be imagined.

Source: TL participants; letter to Commissioner cum Secretary, Dept. Forest and Environment, Govt. of Bihar from State Wildlife Advisory Board member, Dr D. S. Srivastava

Delhi

Mr. Peter Jackson, Chairman of the Cat Specialist Group of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) was invited to give the **Kailash Sankhala Memorial Lecture** in Delhi on 5 October 1999 during wildlife week. He spoke on "**Tigers: Yes, but what about all the other cats?**" and described and illustrated with colour transparencies, the fourteen other cat species found in India. He made an eloquent plea for their conservation, pointing out that not only are they some of the most beautiful and attractive of all wild species but they are essential for the control of rodents species and their conservation should be encouraged "*in the human interest*". The event was jointly organised by **Tiger Trust**, the NGO founded in 1989 by Shri Kailash Sankhala, and by WWF-India.

A booklet, "**Born Black: the melanistic tiger in India**" by Dr. L. A. K. Singh was also released on the occasion.

Contact: **Tiger Trust**, 206 Rakeshdeep, 11 Commercial Complex, Gulmohar Enclave, New Delhi 110049 Tel: 6853760 / 6858656 Fax: 6865212
E-mail: TT@indiantiger.com

Goa

• **Goa protects Western Ghats**

A large area of forest in Goa (419.5 km²) has been declared as Sanctuary. The **Madei Wildlife Sanctuary** covers 208.48 km² and

Karnataka

• **Kudremukh mined
—dollars before tigers**

In spite of the legal violation and contrary to expert and public opinion, the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) has given the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd (KIOCL) a year's **extension** on their **mining lease** for the **Kudremukh National Park** (see previous *TL News* issues vol.3 no.2, vol.5 no.1). Even the Chief Wildlife Warden had recommended that all mining activities should be brought to a halt, concluding that *"the continuance of mining activities will be injurious to the very existence of wildlife in the National Park."* In granting this extension it seems that the MoEF has ignored the assurances and directions given in a number of court cases. They have apparently also overlooked various violations by KIOCL of both the Forest (Conservation) Act and the Wildlife (Protection) Act. *TigerLink* understands that a lot of pressure was put by senior politicians in the state to extend the lease.

Perhaps this permission is not unconnected to the fact that state-owned KIOCL is a 100% export oriented unit, a *"star trading house"*, which bagged the Federation of Indian Export Organisation's trophy for its record export performance of Rs 528.25 crore during 1997–98. The iron ore concentrate and pellets go to Japan, Iran, China, Taiwan, Turkey and Australia. (*The Economic Times* 1 October 1999)

Source: letter to MoEF from *Environment Support Group* <esg@bgl.vsnl.net.in> and others

• **Nagarahole tribal resettlement**
Controversy and confrontation has been raging around **Nagarahole**

links Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary to the reserved forests of Sawantwadi in Maharashtra. The **Netravali Wildlife Sanctuary** covers 211.05 km² and bridges the corridor between Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary and the Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary. These are extensions of the forests of Bhimgad in Karnataka (see *TL News* vol.4 no.2) and with this Goa becomes the first state in India to protect all of its Western Ghats. More than **20%** of Goa's forests are now **protected**, the highest proportion in the country.

Source: Vishweshwar Madhav <visum@bom.3.vsnl.net.in>; Bittu Sahgal <bittu@giasbm01.vsnl.net.in>

• **Serious mining violations**

At present, the forests of **Goa** still form a **vital link corridor** for tigers **between Maharashtra and Karnataka**. With the notification of the new sanctuaries, (see above) the entire stretch of **Western Ghats** forest in Goa is protected. The area boasts a rich diversity of fauna including tiger. Black leopards have also been sighted here. However, lack of political will has meant the area has seen ups and downs—the most serious problem is the *"horrible devastation being caused by manganese and iron ore mining in Goa"*.

Valmik Thapar, member of the MoEF Expert Appraisal Committee on Mining, and member of the Steering Committee of Project Tiger, after a recent site visit, reports that *"in a 10 km radius of the protected areas, at least 100–150 large mines are operating and not just defacing the Western Ghats but pumping their toxic cocktail of effluents into the river systems of Goa."* He observes that this is *"the most serious violation of the Environment Protection Act"* (EPA) and he urges the MoEF to constitute a committee

immediately to inspect all the mines and draw up a regional action plan. *"All private mine owners violating the law must be punished under the EPA"* and he recommends that 1–3% of all money turned over by the mines should go into a fund for protecting the forests and water. *"There is not a second to lose"* as otherwise Goa *"will end up with a fate worse than death as its forests get mined out and blasted, water systems get toxic and beaches become large garbage dumps."*

Thapar talked to forest staff who had seen tiger, and saw plaster of paris pug marks taken from the area. He believes there could be at least **3–8 tigers** in the PAs of Goa and recommends that a survey of prey and tiger density be undertaken to ascertain the true situation. He advocates the idea of a *"new inter-state Tiger Reserve"* covering 740 km² of PA area in Goa along with forests either end in Maharashtra and Karnataka. This would be a first in the history of Project Tiger.

However Goa has a **severe shortage of wildlife staff** and is woefully short of **infrastructure** to manage its protected areas. For example, Bhagwan Mahaveer Sanctuary and Molem National Park have only one Ranger Officer, one Forester and 7 Forest Guards to manage and run them; they have no vehicles, no mobility and no patrolling or anti-poaching infrastructure. Furthermore, in **violation of the Forest Conservation Act 1980** and without anyone's permission, the Goa Tourism Development Corporation is running a **tourist resort** of 13 cottages inside the National Park.

Source: Report to MoEF on 'Site visit to protected areas and other important ecological sites in Goa' by Valmik Thapar, 14 September 1999

National Park—on the ground, in the press and on the net—on the issue of relocation and rehabilitation of tribals from within the protected area. Such conflict is not new to Nagarahole but it is unfortunate that the State Government's move to actively try to meet the aspirations of the tribals and the needs of conservation has led NGOs to lock horns in even greater public acrimony.

Approximately 1,500 tribal families now live within the 643 km² area of National Park. In 1997, an active tribal organisation, *Living Inspiration for Tribals* (LIFT) and the Indian Institute of Tribal Education (IITE) took up the cause of those wanting a fair resettlement package and in September the same year, **fifty-one families** from Nagarahole met the State Minister of Forests to submit a memorandum expressing their willingness to move out of the park (see *TL News* vol.3 no.2). Based on this, the Chief Wildlife Warden forwarded a proposal for resettlement of the families under the "**Beneficiary Oriented Scheme for Tribal Development**" (BOTD) of the Directorate of Project Tiger. (In spite of the resettlement being entirely funded by the Government of India, approval still has to be sought from the World Bank because of the memorandum signed to receive World Bank funds for the eco-development project in Nagarahole! This provision is reported to be causing undue delays in implementation of the voluntary resettlement programme.)

Funds were received from the Government of India in 1998. Under the BOTD scheme each family has been given **2 hectares of land** and **Rs 1 lakh** for housing, land development etc. In addition,

other State Government schemes for bore wells, electricity, schools etc. are being dovetailed with the GOI package.

However, the newly-built houses and the land allotted to these families, in Nagapura of Hunsur taluk, Mysore District, were forcibly occupied in June 1999 by other villagers and tribals living outside the park, encouraged by NGOs opposed to the resettlement. This resulted in the eviction of the encroachers.

The 51 families have now moved into their new accommodation. Two of the tribal beneficiaries, Krishna and Kencha, are quoted as saying, "*life in the forests was fraught with dangers from wild animals on the one hand and on the other, the forests could no longer meet our demand for food.*"

The successful implementation of the resettlement has encouraged over 200 more families to request a similar package.

Source: 'Background note on the voluntary resettlement of tribals living in Nagarahole'; LIFT, Kabbinagadde Girijana Colony, Rangasamudra Village & PO, via Kushalnagar 571234 Tel: (08272) 29641 Thamoo Poovalah; R. Krishnakumar, *The Hindu* 2 August 1999

• **KTCP—update**

The Karnataka Tiger Conservation Project (KTCP), launched in January 1998 to strengthen the conservation status of four important tiger habitats in Karnataka—Nagarahole, Bandipur, Bhadra and Kudremukh, continues to make an impact at field level with the implementation of several planned activities and continuous field monitoring. The 3-year project has an overall outlay of Rs 1.4 crore (US\$ 350,000 approx.) provided by the *Wildlife Conservation Society* with assistance from 'Save the Tiger Fund' (*National Fish*

and Wildlife Foundation in partnership with Exxon Corporation), Gary Fink-MCG Healthcare and other donors. Some of the project highlights are:

The 14 patrol jeeps and 2 high speed motor boats donated under the project to important ranges form the crucial backbone of the protection machinery and have greatly helped in active patrolling and protection. In July/August 1999, field kits were distributed to staff in **Bandipur Tiger Reserve** (see 'Field Support') and in June 1999, the installation of 3 new wireless base stations with solar panels, new ground plane antennae etc. were completed. In addition 10 walkie-talkies have also been distributed. Twelve new anti-poaching camps have been set up in **Bhadra Tiger Reserve**.

In June, three **legal workshops** for forest officers were conducted at Bhadra, Bandipur and Mudumalai in association with *Legal Action for Wildlife and Environment* (LAW-E). Fifty-six officers participated—one Conservator, 6 Deputy Conservators of Forests, 7 Assistant C.F.'s, 31 Range Officers and 11 Foresters and a sitting High Court judge who was on a private visit to Bandipur also took part. It is reported that the officers greatly appreciated the content and conduct of the workshops. LAW-E presented all the participants with a copy of their publication, '*A Handbook for effective processing of cases under the Criminal Procedures Code and the Wildlife (Protection) Act*' with case laws.

The NGO, *Nagarahole Wildlife Conservation Education Project* (NAWICOED) headed by Mr K. M. Chinnappa has continued its efforts to educate children and local youth including teachers in

the Kodagu District (around Nagarahole). A total of 12 slide talks were organised in the Kodagu and Kudremukh areas between June and September, reaching more than 250 teachers and over 1000 students.

Source: *Wildlife First!*, 248, 4th Main Road, Chanarajpet, Bangalore 560018
E-mail: pbsolus@blr.vsnl.net.in

• **Livestock/wildlife study**

The Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) (see *TL News* vol.4 no.2) has undertaken the study, "a preliminary assessment of livestock-wildlife interactions in tropical deciduous forests" in the **Bhadra Tiger Reserve**. This project, funded by the Chicago Zoological Society, "attempts to evaluate the effect of cattle grazing on plant biomass and community composition, which influence wildlife use of the area. The related issue of human-wildlife conflict generated by livestock killing by tigers and leopards is also being studied." It is hoped that information from the study will assist reserve management and help resolve such conflicts.

Source: NCF Annual Report 1998-99. NCF, 3076/5 IV Cross, Gokulam Park, Mysore 570002 Tel: (0821) 510335
E-mail: mdm@vsnl.com

• **Nagarahole resort**

It appears that the State Government is still trying to grant land in **Nagarahole National Park** to a group who want to set up a resort there (see *TL News* June 1997). In September 1999 the *National Committee for the Protection of Natural Resources* (NCPNR) and other organisations sent a telegram to Suresh Prabhu, then Minister, Environment and Forests requesting him to reject the state's plea for permission to hand the land over to the group. The telegram, signed by former Lok Sabha speaker Rabi

Ray, president of NCPNR, and others, alleged that there had been serious violations of regulations pertaining to forest and wildlife laws and urged that the Union government order an investigation into the alleged irregularities in leasing the land and buildings to the group. They allege that "the Forest Minister, instead of implementing the order of the Ministry and the Supreme Court and taking over the land from the resort, has tried to cover up serious violations of the Forest (Conservation) Act and is still trying to favour them at enormous cost to the forest, wildlife and tribals in the area."

The former Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court, Justice D. M. Chandrashekar led a delegation to meet the principal secretary of the State Forest, Ecology and Environment Department in July to appeal to him to take over the forest land.

Source: Bittu Sahgal, Editor, *Sanctuary Magazine*, 602 Maker Chambers V, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021 Fax: (022) 2874380
E-mail: bittusahgal@vsnl.com

• **Tiger kills boy**

An 18-year-old **youth** is reported to have been **killed by a tiger** on a coffee estate in the Chikmagalur district. The animal had dragged the boy into a cave where his half-eaten body was found after a police search, begun when he did not return home. *Wildlife First!* member D. V. Girish visited the spot and confirmed from the tracks that it was a tiger.

Source: *The Tribune* 11 September 1999

Kerala

• **Forest for votes**

The Government of Kerala is reported to be attempting to allocate about 10,000 hectares of

forest land in Wayanaad District "on a political basis" in the name of allocation to Scheduled Castes/Tribes. This attempt, writes Vinod Kumar Damodar, President of the *Friends of Elephant Forum*, will really finish off Wayanaad. Once a hilly district with abundant forests and "numerous tigers", the district is becoming barren, "with innumerable companies extracting forest assets and other commercial activities with the support of the same people who should have protected them".

Source: Vinod Kumar Damodar, President, FoEF, 'Breeze', via Cherooty Nagar, Calicut 673006

Madhya Pradesh

• **Folk songs for wildlife**

The *Crusade for Revival of Environment and Wildlife* (CREW) are using an innovative method for spreading **conservation awareness** among the rural populations living around PAs and forest areas. They are **using folk songs**. CREW has encouraged one forest guard, Shri Pannalal Ahirwar and his team to sing folk songs in local dialect and they are producing a cassette of songs to be sold through retailers in the target areas. CREW is also hoping to sponsor the team to give live performances in selected areas of the state.

Source: CREW, P.O. Box No. 592, Bhopal 462016
Tel: (0755) 271041 Fax: 552888

• **Tiger dance**

Itarsi is a small town in Hoshangabad district on the periphery of the Bori-Satpura forest range. During the 10-day Dusshera festival in October, groups of 'tigers' gather here from the neighbouring areas to **dance** through the streets to the beat of the drums. However these are not the four-legged furry

kind of tiger, but humans dressed with whiskers and paws whose bodies are painted with stripes. These tiger dancers are keeping alive an old folk art form which has its roots in religion and is performed on the occasion of Dusshera for seeking the blessings of the goddess Durga. It is a colourful and vibrant dance which has evolved as part of the rural folk tradition as the villagers found tigers an integral part of their surroundings. Young and old dance in acknowledgment of *"the importance of tigers and their symbolic relationship with nature and eco-balance."*

CREW has filmed the entire event and plan to make available a video of it.

Source: Lalit Shastri, *The Hindu* 20 October 1999; CREW, P.O. Box No. 592, Bhopal 462016 Tel: (0755) 271041 Fax: 552888

• **Tiger kills cubs**

In July 1999, two male **tiger cubs** approximately 35 days old are reported to have been **killed by a male tiger in Kanha Tiger Reserve**. Dr Rajesh Gopal, Field director of Kanha visited the site and has preserved the bodies of the dead cubs for *"future research purpose"* (unspecified).

Source: C.F. (W/L), Nagpur Home page: www.wildlife-vidarbha.org

• **Disappearing tiger vehicles**

In March 1998, the U.K.-based organisation, *Global Tiger Patrol*, (GTP) donated **five Maruti Gypsy vehicles** to 3 sanctuaries in Raipur District—**Sitanadi, Udanti and Barnavapara**—for the protection of **tigers and other wildlife** in and around these sanctuaries. At the time of the donation the area had a total of 7 vehicles one with the DFO Wildlife, one each with each of the Sanctuary Superintendents

and 3 more given to the sanctuaries by the M.P. Forestry Project. Thus with GTP's donation, a **total of 12 vehicles** should have been available for protection of the area.

However, **one year later**, on inquiry, it was found that **only six vehicles were in use**—five GTP Gypsies and one from the M.P. Forestry Project. The others had all been withdrawn to other areas. Thus the **GTP vehicles donated exclusively for patrolling** are being used by the Sanctuary Superintendents and ACFs mainly for their official work and **administrative duties**. *"In the process, patrolling has become a casualty."* It is reported that when a forest fire broke out in Udanti, only two Gypsies could be used for fire control and that too very late, whereas had the others not been withdrawn, seven could have been deployed.

The problem of forest department vehicles meant for tiger patrol is further aggravated by the fact that in practice they often get requisitioned by the district collector for other purposes and they *"get deployed for tendu leaf collection work and other non-forestry activities."*

Source: *Crusade for Revival of Environment and Wildlife* (CREW), P.O. Box No. 592, Bhopal 462016 Tel: (0755) 271041 Fax: 552888

• **New society formed**

Realising the importance of conservation, a **group of businessmen and agriculturalists** based in and around Katni, **have formed a society called Vunraksha**. Most of the individuals have been associated with forests and wildlife in the course of their business (bidi manufacturing, mining and agriculture) but recently came to an understanding of the grim

situation facing India's wildlife and of *"their own shortcomings"*. They are reported to have real enthusiasm but they recognise their shortage of scientific background and are **keen to interact with other NGOs** and individuals who can help them realise the potential of *Vunraksha*.

Their main area of work is the *"districts of Katni, Shadol, Satna, the adjoining parts of Jabalpur and Bandhavgarh National Park and its buffer zone."*

Further information from: Aqeel Farooqi, Honorary Secretary, *Vunraksha*, PO Box 65, Mission Chowk, Katni 483501 Fax: (07622) 54772 E-mail: vunraksha@hotmail.com; aqeelfarooqi@hotmail.com

• **NGO activities in Satpura**

A U.K. charitable trust *"Life-Force"* whose *"primary focus is on tiger conservation in India"* has begun activities in the area of **Satpura National Park** and the Bori and Pachmarhi Sanctuaries. They have organised *"presentations"* to the forest guards and other staff of these protected areas, aimed at *"putting the Guards' work into a larger context, to give them a new perspective on the importance of their work with respect to their nation and the world at large."* The presentations have also been published and translated into Hindi. They have rebuilt a set of classrooms for a local school and have organised a number of medical camps for villages and forest guards within the National Park. The activities in India are organised by founder-members of the trust, Geoff, Cherie and Nigel Whittle, who moved to Pachmarhi.

Source: *"LifeLines from Life Force"*, fundraising newsletter of LifeForce, Thornton House, Thornton Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 4NG, England Tel: 44 181 9446688 Fax: 181 9440739 E-mail: lifeforce@dial.pipex.com

Maharashtra

• *Pench TR inaugurated*

A 257.26 km² area, bordering Madhya Pradesh, was declared as the 25th Project Tiger reserve.

Pench Tiger Reserve (Maharashtra) was inaugurated on 29 June 1999 by Shri Uddhav Thackeray at a ceremony presided over by Mr Suresh Prabhu, former Minister of Environment and Forest, GOI.

The ceremony was followed by a **zonal conference** between M.P. and Maharashtra, where all eight Field Directors of Project Tiger areas, participated to work out joint strategies for the conservation and protection of the tiger reserves.

Source: www.wildlife-vidarbha.org;
Valmik Thapar

• *Tiger Reserve problems*

Valmik Thapar, member of the Steering Committee of Project Tiger, visited Maharashtra's three **tiger reserves** over a six day period in June 1999. This rapid survey was undertaken at the request of the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) and a report highlighting some of the more serious problems of the reserves was submitted to Sri Suresh Prabhu, Minister, Environment and Forests on 26 June 1999.

The report features the **Chikhaldara Pump Storage scheme** (see previous issues of *TL News*, vol.2 no.1 and vol.4 no.2) proposed to be situated only 4 km from the boundary of the **Melghat Tiger Reserve** (MTR). Thapar strongly recommends in his report that this project "*must be finally rejected*" (see below).

Thapar's report also recommends rejection of any proposal of the **Upper Tapi Stage II irriga-**

tion project as it would involve the inundation of scores of hectares of the MTR (see *TL News* vol.5 no.2). He recommends that "*at least 1,100 km² of adjacent territorial forest division be handed over to MTR, thereby increasing its total area to 2,750 km². All commercial forestry must stop and these areas should be an integral part of the tiger reserve thereby making it the most vital and viable tiger turf in the Indian sub-continent.*" Other **recommendations** for MTR include immediately stopping the illegal mining, restricting speed and movements on the roads, banning traffic at night, stringent restrictions on free-ranging livestock, creating a dynamic fire protection plan and filling up the over 100 staff vacancies. Anti-poaching work also needs to be enhanced and the infrastructural needs of the Range Officers need to be strengthened. The report also notes that situating the Field Director's office 160 km drive away, in Amravati is antithetical to the good management of the Reserve.

In his report Thapar notes that the situation in the **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve** (TATR) had **improved** since his visit 18 months previously thanks to the Field Director and his staff being able to minimise human disturbance. Sightings of **groups of 7, 6 and 4 tigers** have been **reported**, unique events that require regular monitoring and observation. The most serious problem is the **poaching of prey species** and Thapar makes several **recommendations** in this regard including activation of a mobile strike force, the drawing up of detailed anti-poaching plans, no public buses to be permitted after 5 p.m. and that hunting dogs should be eliminated.

The Reserve is also under pressure from a number of mining and irrigation projects and he recommends that these should be reviewed and, where permitted, 1% of the project's gross turnover should be donated back to the Park. He also recommends that the tiger reserve boundary should be increased and commercial forestry and MFP collection be banned within a 15 km radius, that a new fire protection plan should be implemented and that a special monsoon anti-poaching operation should be mounted. Thapar believes that Tadoba can be "*the jewel in Project Tiger's crown*", "*the true Taj Mahal of Maharashtra*" if some of these problems are resolved.

Pench Tiger Reserve was declared as the twenty fifth tiger reserve of India only in late 1998. This "*tiny area*" could be made more effective and viable with the inclusion of the proposed **Mansingh Deo Sanctuary**. The report recommends that this area should be brought under immediate administrative control of **Pench Tiger Reserve**. (Indeed it is reported that this area was intended to be included but in the hurry to declare the area at the 25th anniversary meet of Project Tiger, state officials omitted large parts of the area.) Noting that anti-poaching patrols on foot, boat and jeep are "*vital in this area*", Thapar urges that **joint patrolling operations** should be undertaken with the neighbouring **Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh**, wireless communication should encompass both reserves and an inter-state research centre be created "*to harness the strength of both the states*". Thapar also notes that a careful review and analysis needs to be done of the

Totladeh Dam complex and that the hotels, resorts etc. situated within the reserve need to be relocated outside its boundaries. He also commends the "excellent job" of the Pench staff in protecting the habitat and preventing fire in the dry season.

Thapar observes that in all three reserves the soil strata is such that "it appears nearly impossible" to census tigers following the **pug mark methodology** as prescribed by Project Tiger. He suggests therefore that this method be abandoned and "alternative and credible methods undertaken to estimate the health of the tiger population".

Source: 'Maharashtra—A tiger's tale', field visit report by Valmik Thapar, 26 June 1999

• **Melghat saved from project**
The **Chikhaldara Pump Storage Project** has finally been rejected by the River Valley Expert Committee of the Ministry of Environment and Forests at their meeting on 27 August 1999. This follows many months of evidence submission and arguing by the Amravati Nature Conservation Society, the Bombay Natural History Society, the Bombay Environmental Action Group and members of the Project Tiger Steering Committee amongst others.

Source: Kishor Rithe, NCS, Amravati <nrsa@bom3.vsnl.net.in>

• **Re-notification recommended**
"It is understood that in a meeting of the **State Wildlife Advisory Board of Maharashtra** on 22 June 1999, the board has immediately recommended the re-notification of all denotified parts of **Melghat Tiger Reserve**."

Valmik Thapar in 'Maharashtra—A tiger's tale'

• **Melghat's fires**

It is reported that the newly unified control of **Melghat Tiger Reserve** (see *TL News* vol.5 no.2) has generated a tussle of responsibility between the territorial wing and reserve staff. The result is reported to be that this year **amla trees** have been **massacred**, the **collection of bamboo seeds** has occurred on a massive scale by traders rather than Forest Department and **forest fires** have **destroyed** much of the ground-level **biodiversity**.

A local NGO, *Khoj*, report that the department has lost the confidence of the people who would otherwise help in times of such mishaps. They feel that for every wrong the people are blamed. Otherwise responsibility is shifted to the guards employed on daily wages who are mostly tribals. Why, the NGO asks, are their bosses, the Deputy Rangers, RFOs and DFOs not held accountable? It seems that the department was short of funds to adequately fight the fires. As *Khoj* say, "it is a sad fact that the region that yields crores of rupees as income from teak wood cannot be protected by spending some negligible amount of money for employing more staff for protection." "Are we not paving the way for destruction of one of the few remaining habitats for tigers?", they ask.

Khoj request that there should be an **enquiry into** the scale and cause of **Melghat's fires**. They also feel that there should be an **enquiry into the termination of services of several forest guards** on daily wages for failing to prevent the fire and into the **accountability of other officers** in the matter.

Source: *Khoj*, "Shivkrupa", Nr. Govind Lodge, Gujarji Bazar, Paratwada, Dist. Amravati 444805

• **Attacks on forest staff**

The forest **corridor** which maintains the contiguity between the Bori-Pachmarhi-Satpura cluster and Melghat Tiger reserve is **under serious threat** from encroachments for agricultural purposes, mining for constructing road networks, poaching, MFP collection and timber smuggling. Timber from central India is famous for its quality and the illegal timber trade flourishes here and creates severe problems for Forest Department staff.

A number of incidents of **assault on forest employees** have been occurring in **Amravati Circle** due to this timber trafficking. On 13 July 1999 a combined team of officials of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh Forest Departments were attacked by 50 to 60 villagers when they had gone to seize illicit teak timber. The mob threw stones and tried to grab the forest department's guns and could not be restrained even after warning fire by the forest staff, who then had to escape to an adjoining village for safety.

Another such incident occurred on 23 September 1999 when Maharashtra forest staff went to a village to apprehend those involved in removing teak trees in the forest who had escaped from the forest staff earlier in the day. The offenders had gathered the other villagers and when the forest staff arrived they attacked them with sticks and pelted stones, forcing them to retreat. Some of the staff members were severely injured.

The forest department has carried out a 10-day programme with selected forest staff to train them in dealing with such situations. The selected staff were given primary knowledge of handling

lathis and metal shields. This programme has led to a number of recommendations including the setting up of a strike force.

Source: *Mel-vyaghra*, quarterly newsletter of Melghat Tiger Project October 1999; Kishor Rithe, HWW Amravati District, 'Pratishtha', Bharat Nagar, Akoli Road, Near Sai Nagar, Amravati Tel: (0721) 672359 Fax: 670308 E-mail: ncsa@bom3.vsnl.net.in

• **BNHS action alert**

The Conservation Subcommittee of the *Bombay Natural History Society* (BNHS) has taken a new step in issuing an "action alert" leaflet entitled, 'Melghat: tiger in trouble. Forest threatened by road and dam builders, poachers and encroachments.' The small leaflet sites cases where construction of roads and irrigation projects and other development activities have damaged or are threatening to damage the ecology of **Melghat Tiger Reserve**. The Society has made an appeal to readers to write the Chief Minister and Minister of Environment and Wildlife of Maharashtra and to the editors of newspapers, voicing their concern on the issue.

For further information contact: BNHS Conservation Subcommittee, Hornbill House, Salim Ali Chowk, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400023; Fax: (022) 2837615; Email: <bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in>

• **Increased protection for TRs**

To improve protection measures, operation 'Black Leopard' and 'Black Tiger' were launched in **Tadoba-Andhari** and **Pench Tiger Reserves** respectively. The "operations", ran to 31 October 1999 and included foot beat checking, mobile strike forces, checking by senior park managers and daily reporting systems to the Field Directors. Special attention paid to illicit timber mafias, poachers and illegal intruders into

the reserves. Special training and orientation classes were organised for the staff to enhance their capabilities.

Source: www.wildlife-vidarbha.org

• **Survey of non-PA areas**

Kishor Rithe of the *Nature Conservation Society* (NCS), Amravati is undertaking a project to assess tiger distribution in areas outside the PA network of Maharashtra. The project, funded by the *Bombay Natural History Society* under their Salim Ali Nature Conservation Fund (SANCF), aims to identify prime habitats which still have prey base and wildlife potential.

Source: Kishor Rithe, Honorary Wildlife Warden, (Amravati District), "Pratishtha", Bharat Nagar, Akoli Road, Near Sai Nagar, Amravati Email: ncsa@bom3.vsnl.net.in

• **Dam threat lifted**

Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary was threatened by a proposed Dhamini Irrigation Project which aimed to dam the Dhamini river and submerge part of the sanctuary area. However, "after careful consideration of the pros and cons of the project, the State Government has been advised to withdraw the proposal."

Source: MoEF

• **Reserve mobility**

In August 1999 **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve** received two new jeeps from Project Tiger.

Source: CCF Wildlife, Nagpur

• **Kolhapur conservation**

An NGO called *Green Guards*, working in the field of wildlife study, conservation and protection, was begun in 1991 in the Kolhapur district where the Radhanagari and Chandoli Wildlife Sanctuaries are situated. The 310 km² **Chandoli Sanctuary**, catchment area of Warna dam, includes semi-

evergreen and moist deciduous type of forests. Most of the 32 villages that were situated inside the sanctuary, have been moved and the remaining ones are due to be re-located outside within the next year or two.

Green Guards report tracks and signs of tiger in the sanctuary. However there are no chital, although they were abundant previously. The NGO suggests that they should be introduced as this will form "a strong prey base for tigers to multiply". Also with the villages moved outside, the abandoned fields and community land provide good areas in which such herbivores can flourish and the wildlife-people conflict is less. *Green Guards* are also of the view that this is an appropriate area to be brought under Project Tiger.

Source: Faruk Mhetar, Secretary, *Green Guards*, 2541 B, Mangalwar Peth, Khasbag, Kolhapur 416012 Tel: 629894 E-mail: greenguards@hotmail.com

• **Tiger deaths**

On 9 July 1999 a male tiger was found dead by a forest guard in the Nagbhir tehsil of **Chandrapur district**. It is reported that forest officials believe that this was the only tiger remaining in that area and that it died of natural causes.

On 12 October, another tiger was found dead near Bhadravati village outside the **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve**. The tiger was believed to have killed many cattle and one carcass was poisoned in retaliation.

Source: Atul Dhamankar, *Green Pigeon Nature Society*, Shivaji Chowk, Chandrapur 442402

On 9 September 1999 a tiger carcass was found in Chandrapur Forest Division on the south-east fringe of the **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve**. It was examined by forest officials and a veterinary doctor on the following day and

was estimated to have died 3–4 days earlier. The remains of a cow carcass was found about 200 m from the tiger and **poisoning** is considered a possible cause of death. Some claws and teeth had been removed. Three people have been arrested and some of the claws have been recovered. Interrogation is going on.

Source: Maharashtra Forest Department, Nagpur

Orissa

• *Cyclone—forest protection*

TigerLink News goes to press as the full devastation of the cyclone in Orissa is revealed. This ‘super cyclone’ has been one of the worst natural disasters to hit the coast of India this century. There has been enormous loss of human lives. Millions of trees, bamboo and other natural vegetation have been ripped out of the earth in and outside of the forests. The Nandankanan Biological Park in Bhubaneswar is reported to have lost over 90% of its trees, damaging several of the enclosures in their fall. Rumour had it that the tiger enclosure was breached and the tigers had escaped into surrounding areas, but this was repudiated by the zoo authorities. The high velocity winds also took their toll on reserve forests and the extensive damage has also resulted in a severe problem for the wildlife denizens of the area. “Hungry and tense herds of wild elephants” are reported to be roaming outside Bhubaneswar as their home, the Chandka reserve forest, had been devastated. The Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), Shri S.K. Patnaik, warns that “the cyclone has changed a lot of things and we may witness a greater man-

wildlife conflict in the days to come.”

In the next months, it will be vital to survey the impacts of the cyclone on the forests of Orissa and initiate activities to alleviate the damage. Already there are predictions that temperatures in the capital city will go over 50°C next summer due to the lack of tree cover. We must also learn the vital necessity of mangrove forests in the coastal areas for protection against the fatal impact of the tidal waves that are born by cyclones. The area around Dangmal in Bhitarkanika Sanctuary was one of the few to survive due to the protection of the extensive mangrove forests, as adjoining forest-less areas have been completely destroyed.

The politicians and decision-makers need to realise that an understanding of such issues is imperative for the future.

Source: *Observer* 10 November 1999; *The Indian Express* 13 November 1999; *Wildlife Society of Orissa*

• *Sunabeda survey*

Members of the Bhubaneswar NGO, *Wild Orissa*, visited the **Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary** for three days in April 1999. While not finding any direct tiger evidence themselves, they ascertained from local villagers that tigers were present and had twice killed village cattle in early 1998. While reporting that “prey species wise” the area was “well-stocked”, they also note that **poaching** was continuing and venison easily available. Frequent forest fires are reported to be “destroying the area to a great extent”. There was no information on the presence of wild buffalo nor swamp deer.

Wild Orissa report that some NGOs in the area are instigating local villagers against the

sanctuary and resettlement plans. However they met several families belonging to the Sunabeda Panchayat who had agreed to move and they recommend that quick and effective action should be taken in this regard. They feel that the area has **potential as a tiger reserve** considering its area (600 km²), topographical features, good prey base and contiguity with forests of Madhya Pradesh. It is an area that has excellent **tourism possibilities**. However, present **staff levels** are **inadequate**—only two forest guards and a few temporary workers are stationed in the actual sanctuary area. The DFO’s office is in Nawapara, 45 km and a 3-hour drive away. The nearest Range Office is at Komna, 23 km from the sanctuary. There is only one old jeep and no direct wireless link with Nawapara.

Source: *Wild Orissa*, 5R-1, O.U.A.T. Colony, Gopabandhu Chowk, Bhubaneswar 751001

• *Tiger decline*

The Project Tiger 1998 census figures for Orissa indicate a **decline of over 14%** in the state tiger population since 1993—from 226 to 194. The decline is attributed to poaching and “an absence of concerted and sincere effort to protect them”.

There is one Tiger Reserve in the state, Simlipal, although the state government has requested that the central government bring Satkosia and Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuaries also under the purview of Project Tiger.

Source: *The Asian Age* 24 May 1999

• *Canning the environment*

For the state government, it appears that “industry is the answer to Orissa’s ills” but the people’s experience is something else and

the cost to the environment can be enormous. "*Utkal Alumina International Ltd. (UAIL), a joint foreign venture, is planning to set up a one million tonnes per annum (tpa), 100% export-oriented alumina plant near Dorhaguda in Kashipur taluk. It will mine 3 million tpa of bauxite from the Baphlimali mines.*"

"Baphlimali hills fall in the *catchment area of the Indravati and there are fears that mining will increase siltation in the river, on which a major dam is under construction. Bauxite mining can cause deforestation, water, noise pollution and land degradation, according to the Orissa State Pollution Control Board. Disposal of red mud or the bauxite residue is the biggest environmental problem alumina plants face. A tonne of alumina generates an equivalent quantity of red mud, says a 1996 report of the Board.*"

The UAIL Rs 4,000 crores (over \$ 950 million) project obtained clearance from the MoEF in September 1995 and requires 1,158 hectares of land. It will displace three villages but "*about 147 families from 24 villages are affected*". The project has been stalled by the strong opposition of the villagers. *Prakartik Sampada Suraksha Parishad*, Kucheipadar village, and *Anchalika Suraksha Parishad*, based in Bhanteji, have been campaigning against the mining since 1995. They are also opposing a proposed alumina project by Larsen and Toubro, another 100% export venture, which would mine the hills of Kutrumali and Sijimali with its factory based in Kusumshila village.

This entire area is some of the region's finest tiger habitat and the presence of tigers, including cubs,

was recorded in the census of 1997/1998.

The U.S.A. is the leader in aluminium consumption and, according to the Washington-based *Worldwatch Institute*, a large percentage of the metal is used to make beverage cans.

Source: '*Undermining their existence*' by Meena Menon, *The Hindu* October 1999

Rajasthan

• *Anti-poaching rewards*

The *WWF-Tiger Conservation Programme* is funding a **reward scheme** "*designed to elicit people's participation in anti-poaching activities in and around the **Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve.***" "*Under the scheme, any person whose information leads to the arrest of a poacher or trader or the seizure of illegal animal articles with sufficient evidence for prosecution (not conviction), will be promptly rewarded Rs 10,000 for a case involving tiger, Rs 7,000 for a case involving leopard and Rs 3000 in the case of other large mammals.*"

The scheme aims to make it more lucrative for local people to assist enforcement authorities rather than the poachers and traders.

Source: *Tiger Update* July 1999

• *Tiger Reserve extensions*

In view of the relatively small-sized tiger reserves and the potential effect on in-breeding that can ensue, Rajasthan is looking to increase its protected tiger areas. After a survey to identify connecting forests, they have identified areas that could be attached to the existing tiger reserves. Under the proposal, **Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve** would be increased from **1,334.6 km² to 2,438.05 km²** by including the **307 km² Ramgarh**

Vishdhari Sanctuary and Reserve Forest of Bundi and Tonk Divisions to the south west as well as connecting areas of the Dholpur and Karauli Divisions in the north east. At present these areas are being attached to the Reserve by way of transfer of forest blocks or by issuing orders so that in matters of wildlife the Deputy Conservator of Forests would be reporting directly to the Conservator in charge of the Park. In a similar manner the area of **Sariska Tiger Reserve** is being extended from **866.13 km² to 1,298.94 km²**. In this case **Jamwa Ramgah Sanctuary** of Jaipur West Division and areas from Alwar division are included.

TigerLink understands that the Ministry is agreeable to the extensions as long as all the mining violations in these areas are stopped.

Rajasthan have also tried to identify wooded areas that could connect the two Tiger Reserves but unfortunately "*the open tract between them is too wide*". However they are "*still trying*".

Source: Secretary (Forests), Jaipur

• *Shocking violations of a sanctuary*

The battle against mining in protected areas continues. After Sariska Tiger Reserve, it is now the turn of the **Jamua Ramgarh Sanctuary**, a stretch of forest contiguous to the tiger reserve. The area is Reserve Forest and was notified as a Sanctuary in May 1982. This should have given it full protection under the Wildlife (Protection) Act but in total violation of such laws the MoEF had renewed leases for **marble mining within the Sanctuary**. After a site visit in September, Valmik Thapar, member of the Committee

examining the rationalisation of PA Boundaries, reports that *"large areas of Jamua Ramgarh are completely devastated by mining. At least 12 km² is wiped out and another 10 km² seriously affected. At least Rs 500 crores of minerals are plundered and sold each year and in the Andhi mining area, 675 hectares are being mined, and further up around the Rayanwala water body mining has pillaged the beauty of this area and even mined inside the water body... soapstone leases have blocked vital migratory routes of wildlife..."*

He reports that the Sanctuary includes some thick stretches of dhok forest of a quality perhaps even surpassing that of Ranthambhore and Sariska. The official census records only one tiger and 14 leopards but Thapar believes there *"must be a minimum of 2-5 tigers in the area"*. Guards see pugmarks every few days and there are also frequent livestock killings in the area. From Digauta a corridor stretches for the tigers of both Sariska and Jamua Ramgarh. It is below this vital area that illegal mining is flourishing. Huge dumps of mineral wastes have been created and *"at least 250 trucks and thousands of labour move each day in the Sanctuary."*

The Jamua Ramgarh Sanctuary is reflective of the state of the unknown and unvisited sanctuaries of India—neglected and violated. What is most shocking is the degree to which the Ministry and State Governments ignore, by-pass or contravene the forest and wildlife laws and Supreme Court rulings that protect these areas. Rajasthan has probably 3% of forest cover left—dense forest covering only 3,500 km² and about 9,000 km² of open forest. *"The*

tragedy is that even this tiny area is plundered."

In the Jamua Ramgarh Sanctuary the present mining lease expires on 18 December 1999. Now that the situation has been brought to light, further renewals are unlikely. Indeed the Addl. I.G.F. (Wildlife), Mr S. C. Sharma has already written to the Secretary (Forests), Rajasthan confirming that all mining must cease at the expiry of this working period and the mined-up area restored to its original position (as tiger corridor) as per the lease's conditions. The Secretary (Forests) had earlier mooted the idea that the Sanctuary should be included under the Sariska Tiger Reserve (see above). Perhaps now this can be made a reality.

Source: *Site visit report to Jamua Ramgarh* by Valmik Thapar 23 September 1999

• Insurance pays

On 2 March 1999, a guard of **Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve** was killed while on duty at the Bodal Guard Post. The guard, **Sukhvir Singh** tried to stop a truck that was believed to be carrying contraband items. The offenders tried to pull the guard into the cabin and he was dragged and then dropped further down the road. Sukhvir came under the wheel of the truck and died.

The insurance cover taken out by *Tiger Watch* hardly a month before, covered 196 staff members of the Tiger Reserve and provided the desired financial security to the family in this case. A cheque of **Rs 4 lakh** (approximately US\$ 9,500) was handed to the widow on 20 October 1999 at a small ceremony where Shri M. S. Gill, Chief Election Commissioner, kindly consented to hand over the cheque. At the ceremony Shri Gill addressed

the guards present and urged them to continue their good work in saving the tigers of Ranthambhore. The insurance cover was done through New India Assurance Ltd. and this is the first payment under the scheme.

"After the little ceremony was over, which was held under the great Banyan tree, the tiger came down the road to Jogi Mahal. It seemed he had come to thank all present for their contribution in saving the tiger."

Source: *Tiger Watch*, 16/17 Hansraj Damodar Bldg., 12/14 Goa Street, Ballard Estate, Mumbai 400001

Tamil Nadu

• Tigers sighted in Mukurti

"On 9 November 1999, Th. Narayanaswamy, DFO Tumkur in Karnataka, was visiting the western catchment area of the Mukurti National Park when he sighted four adult tigers together just at the edge of the national park. The group were all of the same size and is most likely to have been a mother and the three cubs she has managed to raise. They walked away slowly on seeing the party."

Source: Shri Udhayan, Wildlife Warden, Mudumalai via PCCF, Tamil Nadu

• Spreading awareness

The fifteen-year-old NGO, *Kotagiri Wildlife and Environment Association* of the Nilgiris organised a 'Year of the Tiger—1999' and 'World Environment Day' celebration on 6 June 1999. They held a lecture to create awareness on wildlife and environment conservation and many local interested people, students and other NGOs participated. Afterwards they held a rally and distributed handbills with information about tigers, their endangered

condition and the need for protection.

Source: A. Bhoopathy, President, KWEA, 4/65 Sackatha, Aravenu 643 201, The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu

• **Mudumalai animal census**

The Tamil Nadu Forest Department is playing an exemplary role in utilising available scientific knowledge and methods in its annual **animal population census**. In **Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary**, the Wildlife Warden, Shri Udhayan, has introduced a census of large mammals by line transect method. The population estimation exercise was conducted with the help of the *Nilgiri Wildlife and Environment Association* (NWLEA), and scientists from the *Bombay Natural History Society*. The Indian Institute of Science coordinated the technical study and also participated.

Twenty-nine transects with a total length of 157.1 km were covered in the 1999 census. The data collected from the transects were analysed using perpendicular distance and total transect length (PD/TL) to obtain a density estimate and secondly, by using the transect programme, Fourier series Estimator (FSE). The results obtained were:

Species	No. of sightings	No. individuals	Density/ km ² (PD/TL)	Density/ km ² (FSE)
Chital	63	569	35.56	30.45
Sambar	26	70	5.75	5.70
Gaur	15	119	2.54	6.81
Elephant	13	55	3.31	2.46
Common langur	42	215	25.24	14.44
Giant squirrel	29	36	4.41	5.56

Animal census by transect method was begun in 1997 and has been refined for reliability. The 1997 and 1999 estimations were

conducted in the month of May but in 1998, the census was conducted in December when visibility is less. The data is reported to indicate an increase in the chital and langur populations from previous years but some decrease in the population of sambar.

During the two-day census, there were **seven tiger sightings** of five different tigers. Chance encounters of this degree have not been reported previously. There is also reported to be an increase in tiger sightings by visitors and forest staff compared to the past. The Mudumalai Wildlife Warden reports, "*we definitely feel that the tiger population has increased in recent times. As per our estimate, about 20-25 tigers use the sanctuary area.*" In 1997 the population was estimated to be 13.

The "healthy trend" in chital and predator number "*could be attributed to the establishment of several anti-poaching camps and the effective forest fire control during the last three years.*"

Source: 'Census of large mammals by line transect method in Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary May 1999'—Technical report June 1999, Wildlife Warden, Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park, Tamil Nadu Forest Department; Shri Udhayan, Wildlife Warden, Mudumalai <udayan@md4.vsnl.net.in>; A. C. Soundarajan, NWEA, c/o District Forest Office (North Divn.) Mount Stewart Hill, Udahgamandalam 643001

• **Wildlife in the Anamalais**
The **Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park** ("the Anamalais") is one of the "*hot spots of biodiversity in the Western Ghats*". The Forest Department conducted the **1999 census** in March with the *Anamalai Environment Society* as the nodal agency. It was a four-day exercise drawing volunteers

from all over the state. "*Line transect method and block counting by sampling for density estimation*" was used for the major herbivore populations. "*Approximately 70 transects were laid in 6 ranges covering nearly 5% of the protected area.*" Pugmark method was followed for carnivore estimation, and for certain "*critical species*" like Nilgiri tahr and lion-tailed macaque, a total count in the preferred habitat was conducted. The results were as follows:

Species	Density (no/km)	Approximate no. as per preferred habitat
Elephant	0.95	915
Gaur	1.55	1528
Sambar	2.10	2012
Spotted deer	2.28	1638
Barking deer	1.55	719
Nilgiri tahr	1.89	182
Wild boar	1.77	1695
Lion-tailed macaque	2.84	544
Nilgiri Langur	6.25	2991
Sloth bear	0.05	56
Malabar squirrel	1.25	898
Grizzled squirrel	1.82	35
Wild dog	0.04	40
Tiger	-	18
Leopard	-	55

Source: Sanjay K. Srivastava, Wildlife Warden, IGWLS in *Tusker* vol.2 no.3 July 1999

Uttar Pradesh

• **Kalagarh land to be returned to Corbett TR**

On 4 August 1999, as a result of a writ petition brought by the *Wildlife Protection Society of India*, the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court issued an **order** giving until 15 December 1999 for the Principal Secretary of the Irrigation Department of U.P. and his counterpart in the Forest Department to keep the undertaking to survey and **transfer back to the Forest Department land illegally controlled by the Irriga-**

tion Department since completion of the Ramganga dam in **Corbett Tiger Reserve** in 1970.

In 1961, 8,390 hectares of forest land were temporarily entrusted to the Irrigation Department of the State for raising the dam. Certain terms and conditions were laid down which included that the land would remain Reserve Forest and that after completion it would be handed back to the National Park authorities. The dam was completed in 1970 and submerged 7,588 ha, but for nearly 30 years the Irrigation Department has not parted with the balance of 802 hectares of land and instead has leased it out or allowed unauthorised persons to occupy it.

Let us hope that at least some of the land will finally get back to the tiger reserve.

Source: WPSI, Thapar House, 124 Janpath, New Delhi 110 001; court order

• *Gas for villagers*

In an effort to reduce pressure on the forests and encourage positive interaction between the forest authorities and local villagers surrounding **Corbett Tiger Reserve**, the *Wildlife Protection Society of India* (WPSI), the Forest Department and the Gas Board presented 200 gas cookers and cylinders to villagers living near Kalagarh.

WPSI, Thapar House, 124 Janpath, New Delhi 110 001 Tel: 6213864

West Bengal

• *Buxa timber scam*

News of the enormous timber scam resulting in decimation of forests in the **Buxa Tiger Reserve** continues to shock conservationists (see *TL News* vol. 5, no.2). "*Massive hundred-year-old sal trees have been indiscriminately cut leaving huge stumps,*" reports former IBWL member, Anne

• *U.P. Forest Guards killed*

Three more forest guards have been killed allegedly by local "*forest mafia*" in the Dehra Dun Forest Division. Forest Guards **Aftab Hussain** (aged 32) and **Asghar Ali** (45) and Game Watcher **Udai Singh Parmar** (30) went missing after setting out on patrol in the Asa Rodi range. After several days their bodies were found in the forest. It is believed that they were **fatally attacked** on 8 November 1999 by members of a gang engaged in illegal tree-felling and animal-poaching in Rajaji National Park. No arrests have yet been made.

It is reported that "*for several years now, the powerful mafia is plundering the forest wealth with impunity.*" Thousands of forest employees are demanding protection as the "*forest mafia had let lose a reign of 'terror' in the forest areas.*" Special magisterial powers and arms are urgently required to adequately equip the otherwise "*helpless*" staff in their battle against the "*well-armed and established mafia*".

At least 19 of the 53 U.P. Forest Department staff killed this decade are believed to have been killed by the 'forest mafia' or in connection with illegal timber-felling. In two separate incidents in 1995, two other forest guards and a forest watcher were brutally killed in the Rajaji National Park. In Haridwar area alone, at least 15 cases of vicious attacks on forest staff have been reported over the last three years.

Source: *Times of India* 15 November 1999; U.P. Forest Department.

Wright after a visit in May 1999. She was told that gangs of men were felling huge trees daily to supply plywood factories in Bhutan, and during her visit, she indeed met gangs of men pulling huge pieces of very old sal on handcarts in the direction of the border. It is also reported that the wood is made into truck bodies and thereby smuggled through several state boundaries to Delhi where it is then dismantled for sale.

Locally it is said that "*the mafia gangs are so powerful that the Forest Department, even when armed, are unable to stop them.*" The Police are ineffectual and the gangs operate under the protection of their political connections.

Journalist Achintyarup Ray, writing in the *Sunday Statesman* reports that in the past one year "*at*

least eight to ten forest guards and officials have been attacked by illegal fellers" and yet no "*extraordinary*" steps are being taken to protect them. In September 1998 the **body** of a beat officer of Poro Range, **Manindra Sarkar**, was **found in a well** near his house. The circumstances leading to his death are not fully known but "*local people and some forest officials claim that he was killed by illegal fellers.*" In the same year, the **Range Officer** of Nimati was **harassed** and a case filed against him. Forest officials claim he was framed by the timber mafia for trying to stop illegal felling in his range. In April 1999, a **beat officer** of Raimadan range was **attacked** by four armed persons. A few days earlier he had caught an illegal feller. Fortunately forest