

• *Amendments to IUCN Red List*

There is a belated request for proposals to amend the Red List of Threatened Animals. This needs urgent action since proposals need to be vetted by the Felidae Red List Authority, Dr Mel Sunquist (mesu@gyn.ifas.ufl.edu), and forwarded to the Species Survival Commission's Red List Programme Officer in Cambridge, U.K., by June 30, 2000. The 2000 Red List will be published in October of this year. Any questions should be addressed to Mel Sunquist or Peter Jackson.

Source: Peter Jackson, Cat Specialist Group, World Conservation Union, Geneva. E-mail: pjackson@iprolink.ch.

• *UN initiative for Sunderbans tiger conservation: Bangladesh and India*

As reported elsewhere, a meeting was held on May 17 in Calcutta to discuss this initiative. The initiative was created as a result of Ted Turner's 1997 \$1 billion pledge in support of UN efforts on global environmental issues.

Source: Peter Jackson, Cat Specialist Group, World Conservation Union, Geneva.

• *Shahtoosh Haul in London*

The Metropolitan Police made history recently with their successful prosecution for selling UK£ 350,000 of Shahtoosh shawls. 138 shawls were the property of the Renaissance Corporation, a subsidiary of the Indian company—Cottage Industry Exposition.

Source: Metropolitan Police Service, Publicity Branch, New Scotland Yard, London, April 12, 2000.

• *South African tiger introduction offer turned down*

An offer by a private party in South Africa to introduce Royal Bengal tigers in South Africa's parks has been turned down by the Mapumalanga Parks Board.

Source: The Ranthambhore Foundation, 17 March 2000.

• *World Bank vs. India's Tigers*

Three areas in India, the states of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra will be home to more than 400 new open cast coal mines thanks to a new collaboration between Coal India and the WB, with tacit approval of the Ministry of Environment & Forests. The mines impact on endangered species such as the tiger and Asiatic elephant, their diminishing habitats, and traditional communities, all of which warrant the highest level of environmental protection. The mines will cause further 'forest islands', stranding tiger populations so that they inbreed and eventually die out. The WB admitted that

the fragile corridors that will be effected, 'merited serious consideration' and promised local groups that it would send experts to assess the situation, but never followed through. The perverse effects of continued industrial expansion when environmental and wildlife concerns are also being voiced is of particular relevance after Bill Clinton's recent visit and call upon business leaders to help preserve the tiger population as part of India's heritage. Coal expansion also pre-empts development of affordable, clean, renewable forms of energy which are desperately needed and would be of sustainable economic benefit to the region.

Source: Bittu Sahgal, *Sanctuary Magazine*, and Daphne Wysham, Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies. April 19, 2000.

• *'The Fraying Web of Life'*

The Fraying Web of Life, published to coincide with the recent CITES meeting in Nairobi, says that 30 per cent of the world's original forests have now been converted to agriculture. Some 9 per cent of the world's tree species are facing extinction; tropical deforestation may exceed 130,000 sq. km per day.

Source: UNDP, Nairobi, April 18, 2000. Adlai Amor, Media Director, WRI. E-mail: aamor@wri.org.

• *WCPA South Asia Workshop*

WCPA South Asia Workshop is scheduled for November 17–20 at Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal.

Source: WCPA South Asia and Krishna Prasad Oli. E-mail: kpo@iucn.wlink.com.np.

• *Travel Company donation*

A travel company has donated \$800 to tiger conservation. Not to be sniffed at, and well done, US-based 'Rare Earth Explorations'!

What about all the other international and Indian travel companies getting together to impose a code of ethics on their behaviour in India, and collectively making some meaningful donations to tiger conservation. An Award from the industry for the brave 'foot soldiers' wouldn't go amiss. —Ed.

Source: (of donation info.), Joanna Van Gruisen.

• *Bangladesh Sunderbans visited by W.B. Chief Wildlife Warden*

Arin Ghosh recently toured the Sunderbans in Khulna district and was impressed not just with the protection and conservation programme of Bangladesh's Project Tiger and the infrastructure they have built up, but also the facilities for tourism. Regular air ser-

vices, air-conditioned steamers and forest rest houses all gained his approval and the inspection regimen in even remote areas was observed. Ghosh was in Bangladesh in connection with the proposed joint Indo-Bangladesh tiger conservation protocol.

Source: Peter Jackson, Cat Specialist Group, World Conservation Union, Geneva.

• **Global Tiger Forum meets again**

A three-day conference of tiger range countries met in Dhaka in January to discuss the problems all are facing at a time of increasing threats from poaching and habitat depletion. Forty wildlife experts, conservation specialists and wildlife officials from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Russia, Malaysia, Nepal, North Korea and Thailand attended and endeavoured, amongst other issues, to reach a consensus for cross-boundary/border cooperation in conservation issues. 'We need huge funds for wildlife conservation, including tigers and their habitat. A considerable resource support from tiger-loving developed countries, is essential,' so said Secretary General of the GTP, S.C. Dey from India. The Dhaka Declaration on Tiger Conservation identified four key issues affecting the future of tigers:

- The loss and degradation of habitat;
- The reduction of the prey base;
- Poaching and illegal trade; and
- Reconciling human development needs and tiger conservation.

The meeting agreed a ten-point action plan as follows (readers will find a familiarity in these points that were all raised at the first meeting of the GTF in 1994!):

- Submissions of baseline data to come from each tiger range country by December 2001.
- Submissions of updated or new Tiger Action Plans with costings, from each tiger range country.
- GTF will prioritise promotion of protocols to protect tigers in the following transboundary areas: Royal Chitwan/Valmiki/Parsa and Bardia/Sohelwa; the Sunderbans; The May-U range and Chin hills; Royal Manas and Phipsoo.
- All countries asked to eradicate the trade in tiger products in accordance with CITES and dispose of stockpiles by January 2001.
- GTF to produce newsletter and website by January 2001.
- GTF to facilitate training for wildlife managers and researchers, plus secondments and exchanges of ideas between range states.

- GTF to raise awareness of issues about the tiger in the international community and all appropriate agencies.
- GTF to approach donors for range state funding and secretariat expenses.
- GTF to strengthen technical and scientific capability of secretariat.
- Members to assist secretariat in encouraging all tiger range states.

Our fingers are crossed at Tigerlink that something happens finally in GTF—which has remained dormant for so long. —Ed.

Source: John E. Lewis, E-mail: jelphd@nctzero.net.

• **U.K. joins Global Tiger Forum**

The U.K. became the first non-tiger habitat country to join the GTF and their membership was confirmed on January 19, 2000 to coincide with the first General Assembly of the GTP, in Dhaka this month (established at India's behest, in 1994). Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott indicated the U.K.'s intention to join the Forum at the Indian government's Millennium Tiger Conference in New Delhi in 1999.

Source: British High Commission, New Delhi.

• **Tibetan antelope poaching ring busted in China**

In west China's Qunghai Province in January 2000 officials uncovered a large number of shahtoosh pelts and arrested poachers. A police official said that poachers are changing their transporting routes. Now they are moving through Tibet and into India.

Source: Wen Bo, School of Public Policy and Global Management, Seoul, Korea, E-mail: wenbo2@yahoo.com.

• **Korean scientists elated at cloning tiger**

Seoul University in December 1999, claimed to have cloned a tiger embryo into the cells of a cow! Saving the tiger from extinction is the prime goal of Professor Hwang Woo-sok. If a viable tiger is born, Hwang plans to send it to the demilitarized zone between the two Koreas—an ideal wildlife habitat!

What is the world coming to? —Ed.

Source: Wen Bo as above.

• **Chinese government announces new regulations to end abuses in wildlife parks**

This legislation is to end the feeding of live animals by visitors at 'zoos', including live cows being fed to tigers.

Source: Peter Jackson, Chair, Cat Specialist Group, World Conservation Union, Geneva. November 17, 1999.

- **South Chinese tiger the rarest of the five living subspecies**

There have been no sightings of the species in 25 years, though reports indicate evidence in 1993 in remote mountains of Guangdong, Hunan and Fujian provinces. There may be as few as twenty tigers left in the wild, poaching for medicine having put paid to the thousands that existed forty years ago.

Source: Ron Tilson, Kathy Holzer and Qiu Ming Jiang, *Oryx Magazine*, Vol. 31, No. 4, October 1997.

- **Misleading reports**

Misleading reports have appeared about tiger conservation success. In a letter to Britain's *Sunday Times* newspaper, Valmik Thapar of the Ranthambhore Foundation informed the newspaper that their story 'Tigers surge back from the brink', is misleading and untrue. 'India is the home to 50 per cent of the world's wild tiger population, and there has never been a more severe crisis than we face now,' said Thapar in his letter. This story was the result of a press conference in New York held by various donors wanting to fly their own flags.

- **Thai rangers killed by poachers in Khao Yai National Park, Thailand**

An unconfirmed number of rangers were killed in an encounter with ruthless smugglers who have increasingly been entering the park for 'aloe' and other forest produce. Tiger numbers have also gone down recently as have the numbers of other species and a major effort is underway in a collaboration between WCS, the Global Survival Network and the Thai wildlife authorities. A major training exercise is under way for field officers with WCS assistance.

In the description of recent encounters, WCS mention how impressed they were that the Director General of the Forest Department, Dr Plodprasop Suraswadi, flew by helicopter to the site in order to help find the bodies of the rangers and to motivate his field team in their brave efforts. *Such support from senior officials is critically important when conditions for men in the field are so poor. WE SHOULD TAKE NOTE!*—Ed.

Source: Tony Lynham. E-mail: tlynam@wcs.org. November 15, 1999.

- **66 Sumatran tigers slaughtered in last two years**

Trade monitoring efforts carried out by WWF-Indonesia with local Sumatran NGOs, conclude that the poaching of tigers has increased by 600 per cent from

the early '90s. The number of 66 could be as high as 20 per cent of the total number of Sumatran tigers remaining in the wild. Tiger part trade in Indonesia is apparently much more open now than before and tiger skins are offered in newspapers. Tiger teeth and claws are on open sale in souvenir shops and tiger cubs are even offered for sale in pet shops. Experts believe that the species could be extinct in 10 to 15 years at this rate. Another report, which appeared in *Oryx*, summarises the illegal market in tiger parts in northern Sumatra.

Source: WWF-Indonesia, Nazir Foad. Tel: +62 21 5761070. *Oryx Magazine*, Vol. 31, No. 1, January 2000.

- **Whistling tigers of Sumatra?**

Observations and recordings of tiger vocalisation by field biologists in Sumatra indicate a whistling sound followed by normal vocalisation. The writer wonders if Indian tigers make similar noises and questions whether there are variations in vocalising by different sub-species.

Valmik Thapar responds by saying he is familiar with a whistling/shrill bird-like vocalising from a tigress to her cubs. Any other theories or observations?—Ed.

Source: Debbie Martyr, Sumatra. E-mail: Pop@padang.wasantara.net.id.

- **Malaysia may support the largest population of Indo-chinese tiger (Panthera tigris corbetti)**

The two-year-old collaborative research project between the Malaysia Department of Wildlife and National Parks, WWF-Malaysia, WCS and the University of Florida, is defining the distribution and population status of tigers in the country. Camera trapping is a part of the project, which expects to be completed by 2001.

Source: Dr Ullas Karanth, WCS. E-mail: ukarant@vsnl.com.

- **Nepal tiger conservation action plan**

The Nepalese government has come up with a plan that recognises the reality that existing protected areas are not large enough to maintain viable tiger populations. There remain some areas outside protected areas that are in need of restoration and protection; the involvement of the community with locals as stakeholders; improved buffer zones around protected areas; public awareness campaigns; anti-poaching measures; and, improved census methods; these are the main foci of the plan. Some conser-

vationists feel that the GoN has not gone far enough in considering the carrying capacities in Nepal.

Source: John Lewis. E-mail: jelphd@netzero.net.

• *Russian Far East report*

The Siberian Tiger Support Coalition (STSC) sends an update on their work with the Amur tiger and leopard and summarises seizures of skins, the anti-poaching team activities, fire-fighting initiatives, compensation plans for tiger and leopard predation of livestock and the forthcoming leopard census.

Source: wildaid1@bkk2.loxinfo.co.th.

• *Russian seizure of tiger and leopard skins*

News has just come in about a major sting operation in the Russian Far East—a collaborative exercise between the local police and 'Inspection Tiger', 'Operation Amba', Wild-aid and Phoenix (NGOs working in the region). The only details we have are that a large number of tiger and leopard skins were seized after a long and painstaking operation.

Source: Gail McGuffie, Global Tiger Patrol, London.

E-mail: gailmcguffie@hotmail.com.

• *U.S. universities have tiger mascots and could help conservation efforts*

A 'Mascot' conservation programme has been launched in the U.S. in an endeavour to link up universities with tiger conservation bodies around the world. To date there has been little effort or involvement by colleges, and conservation could benefit if the two sides were put in touch. A website has been created (<http://www.missouri.edu/tigers>) that provides information about tigers and their conservation.

Source: Michael Baltz, Programme Coordinator, Mizzou Tigers for Tigers. E-mail: baltzme@missouri.edu.

• *British NGO offers assistance*

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, U.K., have offered the help of their 'Legal Eagles' investigation unit to India. In a letter from the RSPB to the British High Commission in New Delhi, they stated that they would be delighted to help in the furtherance of tiger conservation.

Source: RSPB, U.K.

• *CITES Meeting in Nairobi*

Britain's Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, made an urgent plea to agencies throughout the world to help in the conservation and protection of tigers in India. This followed a report by CITES that said, 'There is little evidence of a coordinated, modern and

professional approach to law-enforcement, either in anti-poaching operations or in the investigation of wildlife crimes and illicit trading.' It went on to say that when poachers are caught they often escape prosecution because of bribes or excessive bureaucracy.

Source: *The Express*, London, 4 April 2000.

• *Project Tiger and others admit shock at CITES report in Nairobi*

P.K. Sen, Director of Project Tiger, and Peter Jackson, Chair, World Conservation Union, Cat Specialist Group, both agree that the report on India's tiger conservation programme overstepped the mark. Very few of the CITES recommendations for India's tiger conservation are new. The CITES political mission recommended sanctions against India for not doing enough for tiger conservation, and whilst many would admit that more needs to be done, it should perhaps have sanctioned the very countries that continue to 'permit' tiger-derived substances to be traded. However, in amendments to the final CITES document from Nairobi, this recommendation was changed, all parties and organisations being encouraged to provide funds for India's tiger conservation programmes, at the same time as encouragement to the GoI to demonstrate that measures are, or will be in place to allow the efficient disbursement of funds for tiger conservation.

In another amendment, the mission reaffirmed recommendations of the Technical Team that India should establish a specialised unit to combat wildlife crime and illicit trade, and put in place a system between the centre and the states, the purpose of which would be to investigate serious incidents of wildlife crime and coordinate action between police and wildlife departments to increase action against wildlife crimes, with monitoring. In an article published in *Sanctuary Magazine*, Valmik Thapar talks of the 'conference of death' that appears to spend more time deliberating on culling targets and hunting lobbies, than on real wildlife conservation.

See pp. 25–9 for details of the report.—Ed.

• *CITES team in India and Japan—one saves, while the other has been eating them!*

Three members of CITES visited India in January and toured Panna Tiger Reserve as part of their orientation to the realities of tiger conservation in India. Agreeing that tigers are highly endangered species, team leader Robert Hepworth said, 'This tragedy can

be averted if tiger range states do more to protect the habitat and combat poachers, consumer states stamp out the market for tiger parts and derivatives, and rich countries help to fund tiger conservation efforts.' After India, the team moved on to Japan for high-level meetings to discuss the elimination of demand for tiger parts. Prior to their visit, the Japanese government tightened legislation, strengthening restrictions on domestic trade in tiger parts. Prior to the amendment, products such as tiger bone wine and

'vitality' potions containing tiger-derived ingredients were considered health products and not classified in the same way as pharmaceuticals, which are rigorously controlled. Around the same time, Hepworth of CITES, called for close cooperation between India and China to curb poaching and smuggling of tiger parts for use in traditional Chinese medicine.

Sources: TRAFFIC, Japan;
John Lewis, E-mail: jelph@netzero.net.

CITES Tiger High-Level Political Mission

In the early part of 2000, the Secretary General, Chairman of the Standing Committee and Technical Team Leader conducted a high level, political mission to India, Japan and China as decided by the 42nd meeting of the Standing Committee.

Director of Project Tiger, officials of the Ministry of Environment & Forests in M.P., staff from Bandhavgarh, Kanha and Panna Tiger Reserves, Ken Gharial Crocodile Sanctuary and tiger conservationists and researchers.

India (22–29 January, 2000)

On arrival, the team learned of two recent enforcement actions in Ghaziabad and Khaga which led to the seizure of 120 leopard skins, 7 tiger skins, 185 kg of tiger bones, over a hundred tiger claws and 18,000 leopard claws. Officials at all levels had been surprised at the scale of the seizures, which clearly indicated an organised wildlife crime network. It also demonstrated a re-emergence of the large cat skin trade that had previously been thought to have been eliminated during the early and mid-1990s. Evidence and intelligence suggests the items were destined to be smuggled across India's north-eastern borders.

The manner in which arrested poachers and/or persons charged with simple possession of protected species are regularly supported by experienced and well-staffed legal defence teams, out of all proportion with what such individuals might be expected to afford, provided further grounds to suggest the presence of organised criminal networks. It seems that such illicit organisations must be acquiring sufficient profits to enable them to deploy substantial legal assistance to junior members of the networks. The mission heard, as had the Technical Team, that persons charged with serious wildlife crimes and repeat offenders are regularly granted bail. This clearly hampers efforts by enforcement and conservation organisations to promote the importance of protecting tiger populations.

The mission team flew to Khajuraho in M.P. where meetings were held over two days with the head of India's CITES Management Authority, the

Tiger conservation and protection initiatives in India

A number of initiatives have been put in place to address tiger conservation and protection in India. Some are designed to be coordinated at a central government level, whilst others are administered at state level.

The mission was already aware that there is meant to be a central government coordinating cell, meeting annually, that brings together the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Central Bureau of Investigation, Customs, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and others of Deputy Inspector General and Commissioner level and status. This approach is meant to be replicated at state and regional level, where a 'Tiger Cell' of relevant personnel is tasked with overseeing forest and police work in combating poaching and illicit trade. The Regional Committees are divided into Monitoring and District Committees.

The mission found, upon questioning union and state staff, that such committees have not, in fact, been meeting as they are designed to. Similarly, the Madhya Pradesh Tiger Foundation Society, formed to secure support from the public and organisations outside government, has not raised any funds for conservation purposes. The mission questions whether the proliferation of committees is not, in itself, simply adding to the bureaucracy which already seems to have impeded tiger conservation efforts.

Indeed, officials were clearly embarrassed when questioned closely regarding the practical

implementation of the various schemes that are, outwardly, in place to further conservation and tiger protection. M.P. prides itself as being India's 'Tiger State' but the mission found the responsible officials to be, in the main, evasive when questioned about what work was actually taking place at field level. In a Powerpoint presentation to the mission, an official deliberately sped past figures that showed a decrease in poaching detection and seizure cases. Officials had to be pressed before admitting that the allocations of funds from central and state governments are routinely under-spent. Even Project Tiger's budget which has recently doubled, annually faces an under-spend and funds do not reach field level where they are needed. At state level, Project Tiger's under-spend can reach as much as 30 per cent of allocated funds. Officials explained that this was primarily due to bureaucracy that creates blockages in the disbursement of money.

The mission heard of forest guards in some parts of India who have not received salaries for 21 months.

Central government officials intend to address this by allocating budgets direct to field managers. It was apparent to the mission, however, that considerable tension exists between central and state officials. State officials are reluctant to speak of enforcement issues, presumably on the basis that it may reflect poorly on their activities.

It appears that in a significant number of India's states, statistics relating to tiger and leopard mortality and enforcement actions are either not available or are not made available. Many NGOs and tiger conservationists believe that official figures regarding tiger populations are inflated. State administrations appear to deliberately conceal the loss of tigers to poachers.

A graphic illustration of this culture of cover-up was a recent incident that began when a leading member of the Project Tiger committee learned from his own sources that a tiger had been poached in a well-known northern tiger reserve. He sought confirmation of the report from a series of state conservation officials at different levels, all of whom denied the report. Unconvinced, he travelled several hundred miles to the reserve, and after making enquiries among local villagers, confronted the local forest officers with incontrovertible evidence that not only had a tiger been shot by poachers on the reserve but its remains had been buried 100 metres from the forest office after poachers had been disturbed in the

act by forest guards. Although the authorities finally admitted the incident had taken place, they claimed that the tiger had been killed by a wild boar, despite the fact that two bullets were recovered from the carcass. Several similar incidents of deliberate concealment of tiger losses are reported to have occurred elsewhere in the same state over the previous twelve months.

The mission believes that an essential first step in solving any problem is to face up to its existence. The union government must make it clear that reserve and forest administrations have to submit honest and full returns of all poaching incidents and that those who submit false or incomplete reports will be penalised.

The mission was concerned that WWF India, as the largest national wildlife NGO, with the most access to external funds, has apparently been so absorbed in recent years with its internal problems that it has failed to motivate stronger action from public authorities in India or provide a lead harnessing the widespread concern among the general public and smaller NGOs that India might lose such a national asset as the tiger. The mission was also disappointed that TRAFFIC India does not appear to have played as large a role in calling attention to the shortcomings in tiger conservation as might have been reasonably expected. The mission learned that a change of senior management in WWF India was imminent. It hopes that the new Executive Director will put tiger conservation at the heart of a revitalised WWF programme in India.

Field operations

Tiger reserves that attract considerable numbers of visitors, particularly foreign tourists, appear to be something of 'showcases' and their promotional material contains photographs of well-armed, well-equipped forest guards, using new off-road vehicles. By comparison, the mission visited Panna Tiger Reserve, which does not attract many visitors. Indeed the mission could not obtain a map or guide for the reserve in its hotel in the nearby town of Khajuraho.

Panna's forest guards do not have ready access to vehicles or weapons. Many staff appeared elderly and were seen patrolling alone, without radio communication, deep into the reserve. The mission was firmly of the opinion that such personnel could not properly protect themselves, let alone protect the tigers in the Reserve.

The fact that basic essentials, such as personal radio equipment, modern weaponry and suitable vehicles, are still not present in any of the areas is regrettable. Particularly so, given that Project Tiger was launched 27 years ago by the then Prime Minister, since when some US\$ 8–10 million has been channelled into India by overseas governments and NGO bodies for tiger conservation and approximately US\$ 130–150 million has been spent by the union and state governments.

The mission heard, as had the Technical Team, of vehicles that had been presented by foreign NGOs for anti-poaching work being diverted to other uses.

Kanha Tiger Reserve covers almost 1,000 sq. km and had route guides, visitor centres, rest houses and elephant rides for visitors. Villages within the core areas have been relocated and a 1,000 km buffer zone has been created. The reserve is estimated to contain 86 leopards and 114 tigers.

Panna Tiger Reserve covers almost 550 sq. km. There are villages within the reserve and no buffer zone. It has few visitor facilities. The reserve is estimated to contain 31 leopards and 22 tigers. A radio-tracking research project that is monitoring the tiger population shows that more breeding pairs are required if the population is to remain viable. Any relocation of villagers would have to be carefully managed, though, since livestock now accounts for over 30 per cent of the tigers' diet.

Enforcement operations in M.P. do not seem professionally focused. Field staff appear to regard action against encroachment, subsistence poaching, firewood collection, illegal logging and poaching of tiger and leopard almost with equality. Tiger poaching and trading in skin or bone have to take their place alongside minor cases in an already overburdened court system. The mission was taken to view a store of items seized from offenders. Expecting to see weapons and tiger or leopard skins/bones, it was shown a shed full of old bicycles. The mission was concerned that enforcement activities, if not properly targeted, are simply alienating local residents. There was no indication that local communities are encouraged to value wildlife or contribute to its protection.

The mission noted considerable livestock grazing within reserves and sanctuaries, to the detriment of the habitat and tiger and leopard prey species.

The majority of tigers live outside the protected areas of reserves and sanctuaries. Few resources are devoted to anti-poaching efforts outside designated

protected areas. Although the police are empowered to enforce the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, little attention is given to that aspect of law enforcement. The mission could find no evidence of real operational cooperation or intelligence exchange between the police and forest personnel. In fact, it seems that direct competition ensues when cases or incidents emerge that will result in publicity. The mission heard of several examples where lack of communication and cooperation had impeded efficient investigations, allowed evidence to be destroyed or removed prior to the execution of search warrants, and enabled suspects to evade arrest.

The mission heard from officials at all levels of corruption and collusion among enforcement staff. The mission did not feel there is sufficient deterrent to poaching and illicit trade presented by enforcement staff or the judicial system.

It was astonished to learn that M.P. has a Lion Project that is researching the potential of reintroducing lions to parts of the state. Given that the state apparently cannot provide adequate levels of protection to existing large cat populations, this seems a waste of funds and resources. It does, however, reflect the image projected by some central and state officials that everything is under control.

Eco-tourism and the involvement of local communities

The mission noted considerable scope for wildlife tourism development. It believes that the mere presence of increased visitor numbers would motivate staff, bring increased revenue for conservation work and would, in itself, act as a deterrent to poachers.

India has yet to establish any form of eco-tourism that contains an element to benefit local communities. At present, hotel and tour operators do not have to pass any of their revenue to conservation and neither central nor state government control franchise operations for commercial operators. There seems little incentive for local communities to value their wildlife and its terrain. Far more could be done to ensure, in the minority of tiger reserves that do attract significant tourist numbers, that revenue is recycled locally and that local staff, goods and produce are used wherever possible.

Another area of serious concern is the failure to engage local people in the fight against tiger poaching. This requires not only education and law

enforcement but also measures to provide more economic as well as social incentives for very poor people living in and around tiger habitats. At present, such people are easy prey for the organised gangs who may pay them to poach tigers and supply them with illegal trade from which the gangs make large profits. The illegal trade also acts as a means for villagers who may kill tigers as a result of conflict situations to dispose of the carcass and acquire extra income at the same time.

The mission accepts that addressing such issues will not be easy. Tying investment in genuinely eco-friendly tourism and other compatible income-generating projects directly to the forest eco-systems is essential and will have to be sustained over several years before significant conservation benefits are realised. Given that most of the cash invested in this field is from the World Bank (via the eco-development project), the mission believes that it has a major responsibility to help India create the right framework in which both people and wildlife can flourish.

High-level meetings

The mission moved to New Delhi where it met a number of senior central government officials and leading members of well-established NGOs involved in tiger conservation. The recent significant seizures of tiger and leopard parts had clearly shaken even those individuals who are pessimistic about the future of endangered species in India. The Technical Team Leader also met with the British High Commission's Drug Liaison Officer, to be briefed on relationships with India's law enforcement agencies.

It had a lengthy meeting with the Secretary of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, where discussions took place regarding intelligence and informant networks and the possibility of introducing appropriately trained sniffer dogs at India's border crossing points. The mission advised him of the report published by TRAFFIC East Asia on that subject. The Secretary also raised the concept of using global positioning systems in an effort to track illicit shipments but did not seem to have a clear concept of how this would operate in practice. The Secretary confirmed that the Ministry was considering a number of initiatives to better facilitate the disbursement of funds, improve coordination of enforcement and investigation and amend wildlife protection legislation. The Secretary called for

consumer states to do more to assist in combating illicit trade and the mission recounted what is already being done abroad.

The mission emphasised its own and the Standing Committee's agreement that the CITES Tiger Mission's Technical Team's recommendation for the creation of specialised wildlife crime units seemed both appropriate and badly needed. The Secretary did not respond either positively or negatively to the suggestion.

Despite an indication that an appointment had been finally made for the mission to meet with the Cabinet Minister for Environment & Forests, such a meeting did not finally take place. The mission did, however, meet with the Cabinet Minister for Law, Justice and Company Affairs: Mr Ram Jethmalani. He indicated that several of his cabinet colleagues were supportive of the concept of a central Wildlife Crime Cell, perhaps similar to the Narcotics Bureau that India has established and which has authority to act independently at state level. The mission found the Minister very supportive and was encouraged to make bold and clear recommendations in its report.

Media coverage

The visit of the CITES mission received widespread press notice and the mission held a well-attended press conference at the UN Conference Centre in New Delhi. Mission members subsequently conducted separate press, radio and television interviews with journalists and reporters. There is clearly substantial media interest in tiger conservation.

Conclusions

The mission was highly impressed by the dedication and determination shown by some officials, particularly the head of the CITES Management Authority and the Director of Project Tiger. Elsewhere, however, varying levels of apathy, complacency and bureaucracy seem to stifle or frustrate good work and good intentions.

There is very little evidence of a coordinated, modern and professional approach to law enforcement, either in anti-poaching or in the investigation of wildlife crime and illicit trading. Indeed, the follow-up to seizures appears to be hampered by a lack of cooperation between the various agencies that are empowered to act in this field. Whilst intelligence-driven targeting of resources within some tiger reserves was noted, there

appeared to be room for improvement. Similarly, the specialised enforcement training that has been undertaken at state level appears to have been too little and concentrated on the staff of high profile reserves.

The mission was depressed to learn that as long ago as 1994 one of the primary recommendations of a committee (chaired by a senior police officer) that reported to India's central government was the establishment of a Wildlife Crime Bureau to coordinate and undertake enforcement action.

The mission was encouraged by the fact that recent efforts to raise awareness of wildlife crime among the judiciary and at the Police Academy of India met with success and great interest among those who attended such workshops. It recommends this approach be expanded and actively pursued.

The mission was not convinced that tigers outside designated protected areas, or indeed those inside other than showcase reserves, are being properly protected or valued.

The mission questions the advisability of potential donors directing fresh funds toward tiger conservation in India until central and state governments demonstrate that such monies will be spent, in total, effectively and where they are needed.

Sufficient cause for concern has been seen to prompt the high-level mission to believe that India's whole approach to tiger conservation and the combating of illicit trade is worthy of detailed, in depth and independent review. India and Project Tiger have seen success and failure since a crisis in tiger populations first prompted action in 1973. The mission believes that radical action is once again merited if populations in this country are to be safeguarded in the new millennium.

Strategic recommendations of the Political Mission (selected points)

All parties, non-parties, international organisations and non-government organisations are recommended to refrain from providing financial support for tiger conservation in India until its government has adequately demonstrated that measures have been put in place to allow the efficient disbursement of such funds and that its own union and state budgets are being utilised fully and efficiently.

The mission particularly re-affirms the recommendation of the Technical Team that India should establish a specialised unit to combat wildlife crime and illicit trade. It is essential that the more serious incidents of wildlife crime are investigated under the supervision of the proposed unit, and that the unit has authority to coordinate action at union and state levels. It is further recommended that the Indian Home Ministry issues specific instructions to local police to increase action against wildlife crime and that responses be monitored.

The Secretariat should report to the 45th meeting of the Standing Committee upon India's progress in the establishment of the specialised crime units and increased enforcement and financial control measures. The 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties should direct the Standing Committee to recommend that Parties do not authorise export/re-export to, or import from, India of any CITES-listed specimens if India has not made satisfactory progress prior to the date of that meeting and that such cessation of trade will remain in effect until the Secretariat confirms that the creation of a specialised unit, at least at union level, has taken place.

Editor's Note: The CITES Political Mission Report and its critique on India was debated at the CITES meeting in Nairobi in April and much of the above is now changed and redrafted. India was helped in this process by America and Israel.

Peter Jackson Critiques Above Report

'Your report, exaggerated by the media and, judging from the reports I have seen, in its presentation at the Conference of the Parties in Nairobi, could obviously lead to private donors worrying that their funds have been misused and could make it difficult for NGOs to raise money. This is totally unjustified and clearly damaging to tiger conservation.

That India should be so attacked, when it has done more than any other country to save its tigers, and where the tiger population has actually increased since 1970, is shocking, despite the legitimacy of many of the criticisms.

I hope that you and your colleagues in CITES will take steps to remedy the situation.'

Anti-poaching, Wildlife Trade & Seizures

• *Worst six months in India's history, for seizures of tiger and other large cats*

It started at the end of the 20th century on December 18, when sales tax inspectors at Ghaziabad in U.P. inadvertently uncovered and seized from a truck, 50 leopard skins and 5 otter pelts. The consignment was bound for Siliguri in W.B. Less than a month later, when India woke up in the 21st century, a seizure in the town of Khaga, U.P. resulted in a haul of 70 leopard skins, 221 black buck skins, 150 kg of leopard and tiger bone, 132 tiger claws, 2 leopard teeth and a dried leopard penis. They all came from illegal 'factories' that had been tanning skins. 18,000 leopard claws (representing 1,000 dead leopards) were also recovered. And it didn't stop there. In yet another raid in early May, 50 leopard skins and 12 otter pelts were discovered in Haldwani, a town in U.P. These were en route by truck to the North East. The following week, 32 more leopard skins were seized. These are some of the largest hauls in the world of cat derivatives. Within four weeks of

the Khaga episode, and for the first time in the history of illegal wildlife trade, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was entrusted with the case. The **Environment Investigation Agency (EIA)** from the U.K., produced a report on the **Khaga seizures**, stating:

- The seizure confirms the **need in India for a permanent, highly organised and well-resourced federal investigation and enforcement body** with international counterparts to fight wildlife crime, in view of the following factors;
- The investigations following the seizure indicate that **the wildlife trade is occurring across both state and national borders;**
- The expertly processed and high quality **skins were almost certainly destined for a lucrative, but as yet undetermined, international market;**
- The skins were seized from premises situated only 200 metres from a police station. The subsequent **investigation was hampered by local politics and acute rivalries** be-

tween the local enforcement agencies which led to a marked lack of cooperation;

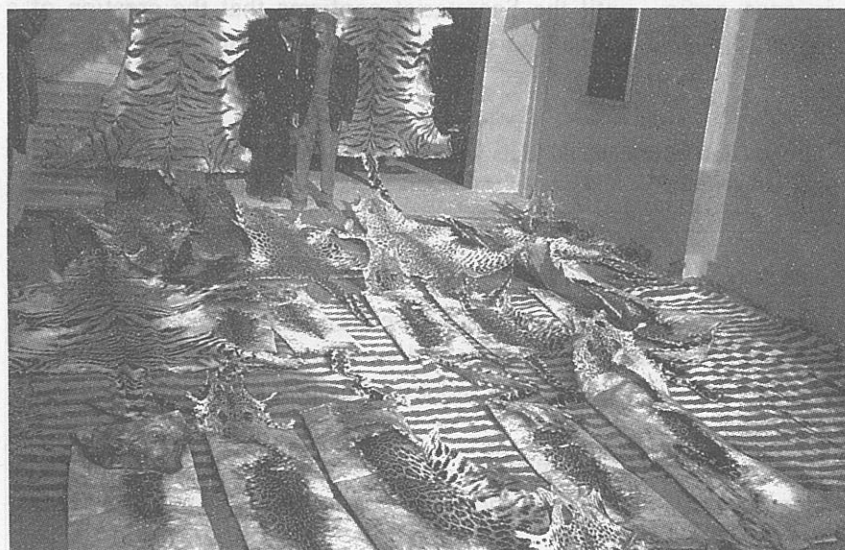
- The efficacy of the investigations was **further impeded by a lack of investigative resources and procedures** (e.g. forensic tests).

Finally, 4 weeks after the seizure when many leads have gone cold, the GoI decided to hand the investigation of the case to the CBI.

The EIA wrote to the Minister of Environment & Forests asking the government to support the **establishment of a federal wildlife crime unit and state-level specialised enforcement units within the Forest Department**. A radical approach is required to combat the organised forces behind wildlife crime.

Tip of the iceberg?

The hauls of tiger and leopard skins, bones and other parts in recent months, again begs the question about the real number of deaths from poaching—those that remain undetected. Looking at narcotics crimes, where some international investigators estimate that only 1 in 10 smugglers is caught red-handed, the implications for India's wildlife are horrifying. The situation appears to be getting worse rather than better. Poaching appears to be increasing. In this climate, one issue that requires serious thought is whether or not the publicity given by the media and NGOs to tiger and other endangered wildlife crimes and seizures, might actually fuel more poaching because these reports tend to quantify the values of seizures. —Ed.



The Ghaziabad seizure. Photo: Valmik Thapar

- **Old news; still no conviction**

In advance of the Project Tiger Steering Committee meeting in mid May, WPSI released details of the horror that hit Ranthambhore and North India in 1993 and remind us that despite 'action' by the Ministry of Environment & Forests, not one conviction has resulted. The case was booked in Ranthambhore and elsewhere and is still proceeding at a slow pace. The following articles were seized in 1993:

Tiger skins	8
Tiger bones	over 300 kg
Leopard skins	43
Other wild animals	160
Leopard paws	20

The release went on to point out that very little has been done since this case came to light in terms of a national effort to stamp out poaching and bring cases rapidly to court and trial.

Source: WPSI, 8 May 2000.

- **Madhya Pradesh anti-poaching initiatives**

Out of a total of 1,048 cases of wildlife offences, and 1,325 offenders apprehended for the period 1995-99, **only 47 cases have been disposed of by the courts, resulting in just 16 convictions.** These data have been extrapolated from the M.P. government's own document (no date, no author). The presentation is excellent but it nowhere states the concern of the GoMP about the seriousness of the situation. It appears from the data that the skin and bones of around 63 tiger have been seized during this period.

Source: Project Tiger.

- **Tiger skin seized near Bandhavgarh**

Over 10 kg of tiger bones and a skin were captured near Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve by police from Manpur, on December 16. Three men were arrested, whilst another escaped capture. Under interrogation, the accused said that they had trapped the tiger some months ago inside the reserve.

Source: Wildlife Protection Society of India. E-mail: wpsi@vsnl.com.

- **Shock reports of the death of two tigresses at Melghat**

Two tigresses were found killed in Melghat in November which indicates a clear case of poaching since claws and teeth were all missing. Many believe that the problem cannot be halted unless at least road traffic is banned at night. There are not even barriers to check on vehicles. Bittu Sahgal wrote to Shri Gogate, Chief Wildlife Warden of Maharashtra expressing his concern about the situation.

Source: Bittu Sahgal, *Sanctuary Magazine*.

- **Tiger skin seizure**

Four people were arrested for possession of a tiger skin in the Rudrapur area of Parganas district at the end of December 1999. The skin, about 8.5 feet long and concealed in a house for smuggling, was seized by police after poachers brought it to the spot from the Sunderbans.

Source: *Free Press Journal*, 30 December 1999.

- **Tiger and leopard deaths**

In March a leopard was found dead in Raipur range of Melghat Tiger Reserve and recorded officially as a 'death in a territorial fight'. Apparently, local wildlife officials burned the carcass

without conducting a post mortem. In another incident, in Morshi range of Amravti forest division, a tiger was found dead and local people alleged that poachers had killed it. However, the local Honorary Wildlife Warden could not investigate as the matter was deliberately hidden from him. On April 12, a leopard skin was seized by the RFO Mobile Squad from a village in the Dhulgat area of Melghat.

Source: Kishore Rithe, E-mail: ncsa@bom3.vsnl.net.in; Bittu Sahgal, *Sanctuary Magazine*.

- **Ivory seizure**

The Athgarh Forest Division seized 20.5 kg of tusks at Limbo and Nandakishorepur villages at Narsinghpur range on April 8, 2000. The DFO himself posed as a 'buyer' and two men have been arrested as a result.

Source: Professor D.K. Lahiri Choudhury, E-mail: dkic@cal.vsnl.net.in.

- **Tiger skin seized in Calcutta**

The police recovered a 7-foot long skin on April 3.

Source: Mrinal Chatterjee, Institute of Climbers and Nature Lovers. E-mail: Sunderbantiger@hotmail.com.

- **Poachers held by forest officials**

40 poachers from Lakshmankhari were captured along with their firearms whilst posing as tourists. A vigilant forest guard saw the men acting like shikaris and he alerted other armed guards who turned up and made the arrest.

Source: *The Telegraph*, January 13, 2000.

In yet another case, a tiger skin was seized from a poacher, Sukumar Mondal, in a Gosaba hotel. Another skin was found at Vivekananda Mondal's house on

Lahiripur island in the Sunderbans.

Source: *The Statesman*, 24 February, 2000. Arunayan Sharma, N.S. Road, Malda 732 101, West Bengal. Institute of Climbers and Nature Lovers, Calcutta.

• **Local NGO apprehends tea estate manager at attempted poaching**

Dr Hamen Bharali and Mukul Talukdar, from Early Birds Environmental group in Guwahati, participated in the tiger census at Namdapha Tiger Reserve, on the Indo-Burmese border from December 17–24, 1999. During the census, they discovered three machans for shikar, apparently constructed by poachers that have joined hands with tiger trapping Lisu tribespeople. They also boldly apprehended a tea garden manager from Deasam Tea Estate, who was accompanied by his security men and a policeman, who were shooting at a herd of barking deer. The matter has been reported to the Chief Secretary, senior wildlife officials and the Deasam Tea Company.

Source: Moloy Baruah, President, Early Birds, Guwahati. Fax No.: 0361 550158.

• **Nagaland's Art & Culture Secretary and friends go on killing spree at Kaziranga in Assam**

With so much concern about poaching, the horror of this story becomes even more criminal. A senior bureaucrat, B. Lai Sekhach and party allegedly slaughtered five monkeys, and a veritable collection of avifauna, from mynas and herons, to stork-billed kingfishers. They were bravely arrested along with an arsenal of firearms, by the DFO, Eastern Assam Wildlife Division and Golaghat police and brought to court where bail was rejected.

Source: Bibhab Talukdar, Aaranyak Nature Club, Guwahati. 13 February, 2000.

• **Haryana criminals posing as salesmen, caught red-handed at poaching business**

At Bar-Nawapara Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, an alert SDO, R.K. Ukui, Range Assistant, K.L. Shrivastava, Forest Guard, Mohan Lal Sahu and villagers, captured the poachers with all their traps and murderous weapons. The traps

were designed for tiger and leopard.

Source: Joanna Van Gruisen and Raghu Chundawat, Tiger Research Project, Panna Tiger Reserve, M.P.

• **Tiger skin seized in Delhi and bail granted**

Delhi Wildlife Department officers arrested a 26-year-old woman in Lajpat Nagar on February 21, with an uncured tiger skin. In a surprise move, the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate granted bail of Rs 25,000 (\$595) to Somen Loma.

Source: WPSI.

• **Leopard skins on sale in Chandrapur**

On January 22, 2000, Forest Ranger Biswas seized two skins from poachers who were trying to sell them at Pettguddam range (Division Allipalli, District Gadchiroli). Both skins were over 2 meters in length and there was evidence that they had been trapped and then killed with spears.

Source: Atul Dhamankar, Nr. Patel High School, Shivaji Sq., Chandrapur, (M.S). 442 402. Tel 57988.

• **Fake tiger skin racket in Rajasthan**

The accidental recovery of a spurious tiger skin from a drain in Jaipur, again points to the presence of a racket in Rajasthan and brings yet another aspect of skin trafficking to the fore. The skin had black stripes painted on it. Wildlife experts examined the skin and pronounced it a fake, possibly a painted jackal skin, complete with false head, claws and teeth.

Source: *The Hindu*, May 27, 2000.

Chinese Students Object to Bear Paws, Tiger Pelts

Five Chinese schoolchildren have won a contest on environmental awareness, exposing dictionary references that are none too politically correct, the *News Digest* reported yesterday.

The elementary school students from the southern city of Shenzhen noted that a dictionary entry for bear reads: 'paws are rare delicacies; liver, gall bladder and meat for medicinal use'.

They also drew attention to the entry for whale, which explains: 'meat edible; fat an industrial material'.

The children won a national award for their essay which revealed that the tiger didn't fare much better.

'Bone, blood and internal organs are valued ingredients of medicine; fur makes high-priced luxurious rug', the dictionary said.

Source: Reuters News Service, China, 9 June 2000.

• *Legal workshop held on wildlife and environment problems*

LAW-E, which was set up to provide and take legal action on environment and wildlife issues, held a workshop, initiated by the Ranthambhore Foundation, in Delhi in January 2000. Key figures from government, the judiciary and environment attended, including NGOs, and a number of action points were agreed upon. The workshop was supported by the MoEF. Copies of the following (summarised) action points have been sent to all Forest Secretaries, CCFs and CWLWs of all the states and union territories so that these issues can be addressed at the state level immediately:

- The urgent need for a Forest and Wildlife Protection Force;
- Setting up of a Legal Working Group to monitor violations;
- The organisation of Field Level Workshops involving judges, lawyers, NGOs, field officers, and staff, police and local people;
- More transparent systems of examination and clearance of projects/cases in the MoEF under the various Acts;
- Surveys of all government forests notified under the Act and protected areas at the earliest to translate all notifications and reconcile forest and land revenue records etc;
- Provide legal and administrative safeguards to prevent abuse of section 29 and the Wildlife (Protection Act) and ensure that any exploitation of any habitat from a National Park, or Sanctuary, should be only cleared with prior approval of the Indian Board for Wildlife and the concerned State Board for Wildlife respectively;
- Ensure that the management of forests is independent of the administrative control of the revenue authorities;
- All states should prepare Forest Status Reports once every two years, itemising decreases and increases in forest cover, areas affected by fires, areas afforested or reforested, encroachments and steps taken, court cases launched, areas freed from encroachment, figures of conviction and status of pending cases;
- To increase the awareness and sensitise judges and judicial officers about the problems in the field and in enforcement of forest and wildlife laws;

- Setting up of State Wildlife Forensic Laboratories to help in investigation and prosecution of wildlife cases;
- Setting up of designated courts to try forest and wildlife offences to ensure reduction of backlog and speedy trial and disposal;
- Quantifying in measurable economic terms, the atmospheric, biological, ecological, resource base and social values and services and such value made known to the public and communities around protected areas;
- The revival of old traditions of spending more time in the field of senior forest officers to motivate subordinates in field practice;
- Set up a Legal Link Newsletter;
- Work towards publication of identification manuals of scheduled animals, birds and plants listed in the Wildlife (Protection) Act which would help the enforcement officers in prosecuting the offenders;
- Work towards setting up Legal Cells in states with 100 per cent central assistance manned by professionals to train officers/staff in preparing and prosecuting cases in the courts.

Source: Mahendra Vyas, LAW-E, New Delhi.

E-mail: lawe@bol.net.in.

• *Training Courses*

LAW-E have been conducting courses for forest staff. In Maharashtra a team of lawyers went to Tadoba, Pench and Nagzira in April, in order to discuss field enforcement and ways of improved implementation of forest and wildlife laws. The team stayed at Tadoba, where around 35 officers and men attended, then moved on to Nagzira where 75 people participated. There were intense discussions on enforcement problems and the staff involved in both places were well organised and highly motivated. Finally, the team moved on to Pench (Maharashtra) to look at the illegal fishing camp inside the National Park. The importance of these meetings in this region cannot be underplayed; there are 6 National Parks in easy reach of major trunk routes and the possibility for tiger poaching is immense and requires intense monitoring. It has been suggested that an Asst Director of Forests should be posted on special duties for the purpose of invigilation. LAW-E plan to hold another workshop in August involving all agencies, from police to railways. **Carrying of firearms by forest staff should have the same immunity as given to the police.** Given the critical poaching problem sweeping the country, the debate is on again

about the use of firearms, since poachers are heavily armed. LAW-E are in the process of discussions on this matter with all wildlife bodies, believing as many do at this time, that forest guards should be armed, trained in their use and prepared to use them to deter or ensure capture of poachers.

Source: LAW-E, New Delhi. E-mail: lawe@bol.net.in.

• **Ex Union Environment Minister and environmental impact!**

The ex Union Environment Minister, Kamal Nath, and the hotel that he built in Himachal Pradesh whilst still holding office, have met with a court notice which will be followed up within six weeks. The court has asked why he should not receive a 'pollution fine' for interfering with the flow of the Beas River and then polluting it with untreated effluent. Justice Ahmed said, 'A person found violating the provisions of the (Environment) Act has to be tried for the specific offence and if found guilty may be punished with imprisonment or fine.'

Source: *Hindustan Times*, May 13, 2000.

• **Ministry Affidavit to Court**

In the matter of Navin Raheja's case against the Union Ministry of E&F, Director Project Tiger recently submitted a supplementary affidavit to the Supreme Court, explaining that the two additional Tiger Reserves (Pakhui-Nameri, in Arunachal Pradesh/Assam, and Bori-Satpura-Pachmari in M.P.) are still awaiting final clearance by notification of

relevant state governments. In his affidavit, Mr P.K. Sen confirms that action had been taken to convene the meeting of the Project Tiger Committee. The Supreme Court instructed this earlier. He also responded with regard to the proposal to deploy a tiger strike force with 100 per cent central assistance 'in view of the deteriorating law and order situation and growing insurgent activities in certain reserves'. Director of Project Tiger, Mr P.K. Sen, goes on to say that, 'Unless wildlife conservation is treated as a priority sector and exempted from the routine financial cuts, the chances of achieving (wildlife conservation and protection) goals, are minimal.' This was in relation to the considerable time and effort that Mr Sen had given in explaining that budget cuts, embargoes, staff non-replacements and removals were impacting with severity on current efforts, most especially those of poaching and criminality and insurgency.

Interesting note: The Supreme Court in the Record of Proceedings of April 4, 2000, mentioned '**drinking water**'. We quote: 'What perhaps facilitates, to an extent, poaching of tigers is the straying away of tigers to drinking water ponds during the summer months, because in the Reserves, proper facilities for drinking water are not available.' An instruction was issued by the court that action should be taken to build drinking water facilities!

Stop Press:

Tiger Protection Cell for Western India

A meeting was called to take stock of the status of the tiger and the possible steps that need to be taken to protect the species in the Western Region comprising Maharashtra and its adjoining states, principally in the Western Ghats and the Satpura ranges (between Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh).

Outcome: Attended by officials of WWF-India, BNHS, *Sanctuary Magazine*, BEAG and Kalpavriksh, plus individuals interested in saving the tiger, the meeting saw participants agree that a special Tiger (Protection) Cell be set up with immediate effect, at Hornbill House, within the BNHS and with help from WWF-India and its Tiger Conservation Project.

Source: Bittu Sahgal; E-mail: bittusahgal@vsnl.com.

• *Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve study*

A recently completed study at RTR indicates the need for a well-designed, scientific, data-driven population monitoring programme as an urgent step to aid the management in successfully mitigating biotic pressures and to effectively manage the wildlife population. The study showed that rigorous transect field surveys followed by data analyses using stochastic models could be effective tools in this process.

Source: Samba Kumar, Centre for Wildlife Studies, Bangalore. June 3, 2000.

• *Dhole Study at Kanha*

A husband and wife team of field biologists have been working at Kanha on the dhole, in conjunction with Dr Johnsingh from the WWI since 1998. They are in the process of an international questionnaire survey. They write, 'You may have heard that recently we lost 16 members of our study pack due to poisoning. This tragedy, which occurred just outside the National Park in the buffer zone, appears all too typical of the dhole's fate throughout its range. Strychnine was the analyzed poison and it is possible that this was meant for tigers and leopards, a poacher's tactic. According to our early survey results, wherever habitat loss, prey depletion, or sheer superstition and prejudice bring the animal into conflict with humans, persecution is rife. Dholes are rapidly disappearing from their former range—and we are trying to find out why, while raising awareness and the profile of the animal. We hope to eventually gather enough information to produce a conservation action plan for the species and target direct action where it's most urgent. In the short term we need to get back to Kanha to continue monitoring packs there and to work with the Forest Department and villagers on local conservation and protection measures, especially during denning season. Our project is at a critical stage at the moment—we need to raise funds to enable us to continue, and words of support from conservationists, writers and organisers in India could help. Some positive coverage in your newsletter would be very much appreciated. The study team has just produced their own newsletter, *Dhole Network News*, which can be found on the web at <http://www.dcpbase.demon.co.uk/dcp/news>.

Source: Alison Durbin, Dhole Conservation Project, Grene Trest, Hoyle Hill, Beare Green, Dorking, Surrey RH5 4PS, U.K. Tel: 00441 306 711578. Or c/o the Field Director, Kanha Tiger Reserve, Mandla 481 661 M.P., India. E-mail: alison@dcpbase.demon.co.uk.

• *Kosi River Corridor Status Report*

The route from Ramnagar to Dhangarhi gate in Corbett Tiger Reserve has recently been surveyed since this corridor along the Kosi river is of great strategic importance for both forests and wildlife. It connects Corbett TR and contiguous western forests on the west of the river Kosi to the Powalgarh (Sitabani) forests of the Ramnagar Forest Division on the east of the river and is of particular importance for elephants. Contiguity is broken by several settled villages along the river, mainly on the park side, and tourist hotels and lodges continue to proliferate at an alarming rate, adding to those already constructed. The effect of this construction activity has been to segregate the elephant populations on the two sides of the river Kosi with a result that the smaller eastern population of some 30 elephants is being isolated due to increasing difficulty of passage across the river. If the corridor is not restored, this population will die out as it is neither viable as a large gene pool nor does it have mobility. The river forms a natural barrier between the catchments on either side which can contain the spreading of disease and pestilence to opposite catchments.

On inspection of the Dhangarhi to Garjia sector of the river, the following observations and recommendations were recorded:

- The river basin which stretches to a width of a kilometer is completely barren of trees and thus exposed.
- None of the many sheesham islands (Bhojis) on the river, that sustained a mobile population of tigers until the 1970s are remaining and the villages are expanding their cultivated land. Much of the reserved forest on the river banks has become degraded and should be restored by intensive sheesham and khair forest plantations.
- Downstream of the temple at Kaligadh in the Gargia Ramnagar sector, many resorts have been developed on the western river bank which have a disturbing effect on elephant passage along the river.
- The combined problems of human settlement, cultivation and construction on the western side have left very few contiguous forest tracts, transverse to the river. The Kaligadh nallah on the eastern side, one of the main tracts and along the river access points, must be preserved.
- Elephants can only use transverse traverses (TTs) that fall along nallahs; and along either side of the river, passage is very restricted with long

stretches where TT is not possible. On the eastern bank there is little habitation but steep hillsides allow for elephant passage only at points where seasonal nallahs enter the Kosi.

- The conservation of all TTs is therefore important together with along-river conservation of forest cover as a TT from one side will not match one from the other. Elephants must typically cross along a traverse (TT) from one side of the river and then go along the river before finding a traverse on the other side. In order to solve all of these problems, land contiguous to the river must be immediately fenced and planted and all transverse traverses and nallahs must be fenced and forested. The entire along-river area should be made free of construction and settlement, and

forested. The entire corridor including the village land and settlements (i.e. all privately owned land) can be deemed forest corridor land on which construction is prohibited under the Supreme Court judgement. Tourist lodges and resorts already constructed should be relocated after compensation as they are obstructing along-river wild elephant passage.

In conclusion, the survey recommends that a comprehensive survey be carried out and a budget for protection and reforestation provided. All further construction should be banned and relocations implemented. Only when such measures are implemented, will this essential corridor be saved.

Source: Vikram Soni, May 2000.

Report—Review of the Wildlife Institute of India

It was decided to constitute a committee in order to evaluate the functioning of the WII and to advise how it could be moulded to discharge its mandate more effectively. The Minister, MoEF, set up a committee, and highlights of the recommendations follow:

1. WII's primary concern should be to build capacity and to create human resources necessary for such a specialised institution, in order to deal with the numerous wildlife conservation problems faced by the country; concentration should be on protected area management and it should refrain from engaging in too many activities.
2. WII should strive to conform to the criteria specified for Scientific and Technical Institutions while, at the same time, attempting to blend modern biological and social sciences with field-based empirical experience of wildlife administration available in the country. It should avoid duplication of activities of other institutions. The major objective should be to attain excellence in its research, teaching and training programmes.
3. All faculty members should be expected to participate in and share in teaching and

academic administration so that such burden is shared equally.

4. The Governance, Administration and Faculty structure need to be completely revamped along lines suggested in this report.
5. The present WII selection and promotion committee needs splitting into two separate units according to specialities (such as science, and field experience).
6. The Director of WII should have a high standing as an academic/scientist so that he commands the respect of the faculty. Intellectual stature, administrative experience and wildlife conservation experience are also important and the salary and rank should reflect this.
7. EIA activities of the WII should be restricted in scope to protected areas and endangered species and the existing EIA cell should be disbanded.
8. The consultancy system should be overhauled, including its priorities.
9. The governance of the Institute should be based on two main principles, those of autonomy and internal democracy.

Source: The Report, January 2000.

- *Tiger Wallahs; Saving the Greatest of the Great Cats* by Geoffrey C. Ward and Diane Raines Ward. Pub. OUP, 2000. xiv + 200 pages with colour and b&w plates and extensive bibliography. A reformatted reprint of the authors' earlier 1993 book. Rs 425.
- *Silent Valley; Whispers of Reason* ed. T.M. Manoharan et al. Pub. Kerala Forest Dept in association with KFRI, 1999. 424 pp with 133 colour plates, maps, illustrations and extensive index and bibliography. The collection of 38 essays is perhaps the most comprehensive study of any of India's protected areas. It celebrates the efforts of many to protect this unique ecosystem. Rs 1,200.
- *Tara: The Cocktail Tigress* by Dr Ram Lakhan Singh. Pub. Print World, Allahabad, 2000. An extraordinary and often contradictory account of the young, zoo born tigress reared and reintroduced by Billy Arjan Singh into the Dudhwa National Park. Rs 300.
- *Primates of Northeast India* by Arun Srivastava. Pub. Megadiversity Press, 34 Rajmata Ka, Nohra, Bikaner, 1999. Numerous drawings, distribution maps and bibliography. A useful account that includes extensive material (including botanical drawings) on food plants. Rs 250.
- *To the Elephant Graveyard* by Tarquin Hall. Pub. John Murray, London, 2000. xii + 260 pp. 12 b&w plates. An account by the AP correspondent in Delhi of a recent rogue elephant in Assam and attempts to track it down by Dinesh Choudhary, one of Assam's few licensed elephant catchers. UK£ 16.95 (special Indian price UK£ 9.95).
- *The Great Indian Elephant Book* ed. by Dhriti K. Lahiri-Choudhary. Pub. OUP, 2000. xxxvi + 460 pp. A fascinating anthology of writings about elephants edited by one of the genuine authorities on the subject. Rs 595.
- *Tigers in the Snow* by Peter Matthissen. Pub. Harvill Press, London, 2000. xviii + 186 pp. Colour plates and introduction by Maurice Hornocker. A beautiful account of tigers in both the Russian Far East and India by perhaps the greatest American nature writer. UK£ 22.50 (special Indian price UK£ 14.95).
- *Wildesel* by Gertrud and Helmut Denzau. Pub. Thorbecke Verlag, Stuttgart, 1999. 221 pp. This is the first monograph which includes all the wild asses of the world. It covers their geographic distribution and how these endangered animals have been the prey animals of tigers, lions, leopards and wolves (though Caspi-tigers and lions, which hunted them, are now extinct). DM 79.

Community Protection of Wildlife

Since August 1999 Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS) has concentrated on freeing the Sariska forest area of hunting and merciless killing of wildlife.

The eastern part of Sariska was severely affected by several groups of hunters and invaders. Some individuals of the invader groups were identified, were approached and won over to help restrict these activities. Suleman Khan, Jagadish Gujar, Nanak Ram Gujram, Hanuman Meena, Jaiprakash, and Mahadev Kajori are a few who have played a very important role in protecting innocent wild animals. Now cases of hunting and gang invasion are rare. TBS launched a number of awareness campaigns and people were mobilised from all walks of life. Now people are sensitised towards the importance of forests, its fauna and flora, and the maintenance of ecological balance.

Some of the other activities conducted by TBS are: 1. awareness camps for school students at the periphery of Sariska to sensitise them about conservation of wildlife; 2. a street show entitled *Jan ka Jangal*, which is based on the food chain, was performed at over 30 schools and other places; 3. meetings of village folk in the hunting-affected zones; and 4. workshops in which volunteers of TBS, Forest Department staff and villagers participated. Under the leadership of Shri Rajpal Singh, a training camp related to wildlife conservation was held for new volunteers of Tarun Bharat Sangh and teachers. In all these activities, the contributions of time and expertise of Mr Sahay, Mr Tejveer Singh Choudhary, Mr B.M. Sharma and Mr Daulat Singh were significant.

For providing drinking water facilities for wildlife, water conservation structures are presently under construction in areas like Siliberi, Bhairon Ghati, Fainta ki paal, Kriaska, Krant etc.

Source: Rajendra Singh, Tarun Bhagat Sangh.

A thank you to all our regular contributors and letter writers; also to new contributors; and, for their information, we do not have a membership but your names are on the mailing list for future issues of Tigerlink. The best contribution you can make is to send in succinct (and legible!) reports on what is happening in your area, good and bad! We rely on those reports, comments and views to pass on through these pages. In this period, we have received numerous letters from readers who have thanked us for the *Esso/Ranthambhore* book we sent out. Thank you for your comments.

There are readers amongst you who diligently and keenly write month after month, often very long, hand-written letters which, well, we sometimes have difficulty disseminating! For this issue alone, we received over 1500 articles, clippings, reports, e-mails and letters, all of which had to be catalogued, cross-checked, sourced and then 'edited' into the issue. We would suggest that, if you have a subject or report, you send us just a paragraph with your e-mail or fax contact. We can publish a very brief summary of the subject and provide the e-mail details to other readers. If we have missed some letters this issue it is because the subject matter has been covered elsewhere in the issue and, since we experienced a delay in publishing this issue of Tigerlink, have 'edited' them out. Apologies.—Ed.

Pandas and tigers

I did some ecological studies from 1993–6 of the red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) in the Singhalila National Park, Darjeeling, for my PhD. I would like to continue working in wildlife conservation and would be happy to volunteer to do any work within my capacity to support the conservation of the tiger. I am presently working at Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, Darjeeling.

Sunita Pradhan, Batasia, Post Office Ghoom, Darjeeling 734102, W.B. E-mail: Compuset@vsnl.com. 29 January 2000.

Golden Langur

I have been working in the buffer zone at Manas Tiger Reserve on the golden langur (for my PhD) for the last four years and have been investigating the prey-predator relationship with the lesser cat species, including the leopard. If there is any assignment

I can undertake on behalf of *Tigerlink* or associated organisations, please inform me.

Jihosuo Biswas, VII Chungapota, PO New Bongaigaon, Dist. Bongaigaon, Assam 783381. 28 December 1999.

News editors' duty to the nation

It is the duty of newspapers to generate general awareness to conserve all species and habitats.

Gautam Ghosh, Nr Prakash Cinema, PO & Dt Bongaigaon 783380, Assam. 3 January, 2000.

Plastic eradication

We are making a serious effort to eradicate plastic in and around Bandipur National Park with the help of the forest department and have several other programmes in hand. We need support and financial help if anyone can provide them.

R. Mallesha, DIII 525, Behind Old AEO Office, Gundlupet 571111, Chamarajanagar District, A.P.

Census & Monitoring Method

We have been working in Zimbabwe on black rhino since 1992, and have developed a non-invasive monitoring system based on footprint recognition, which appears to work well. We have also tested this technique on a population of white rhino in Namibia, and again it was most effective in enabling us to census a population of 30 animals in less than 5 weeks, with each animal identified by its footprint. The obvious benefits of our system are that it is cost-effective, non-invasive and sustainable. The technology itself is not difficult to establish or maintain.

We have received interest from researchers on tigers, bears and even wombats, who wonder whether this technique might be adapted for their use. Until the present we have had little time to think about this, but are now trying to ascertain whether there might be sufficient demand for us to devote more time to this. The software we use for rhinos could, in theory, be adapted to work on any species.

If you think this technique might be useful for censusing or monitoring tigers, please feel free to e-mail us at the address below.

Source: Sky Alibhai, Zoe Jewell. Rhinowatch, Sinamatella Camp, P. Bag WK5941, Hwange, Zimbabwe. Tel: + 263 81 4023/4.

E-mail: rhinowatch@icon.co.zw.

Lawyer wants to help

Do let me know how I can play a meaningful role to *Tigerlink* and wildlife.

Amitabh Agarwal, Advocate, MD-1 Chetan Vihar, Aliganj, Lucknow 226 024, Tel: 0522 321763, Fax: 0522 371056. 27 January, 2000.

Help for leopards from USA

I am concerned about the recent losses of leopards reported in various seizures in India and would like more information and to make a donation for such work.

Viswanath Ramakrishna
E-mail: Vish@utdallas.edu.

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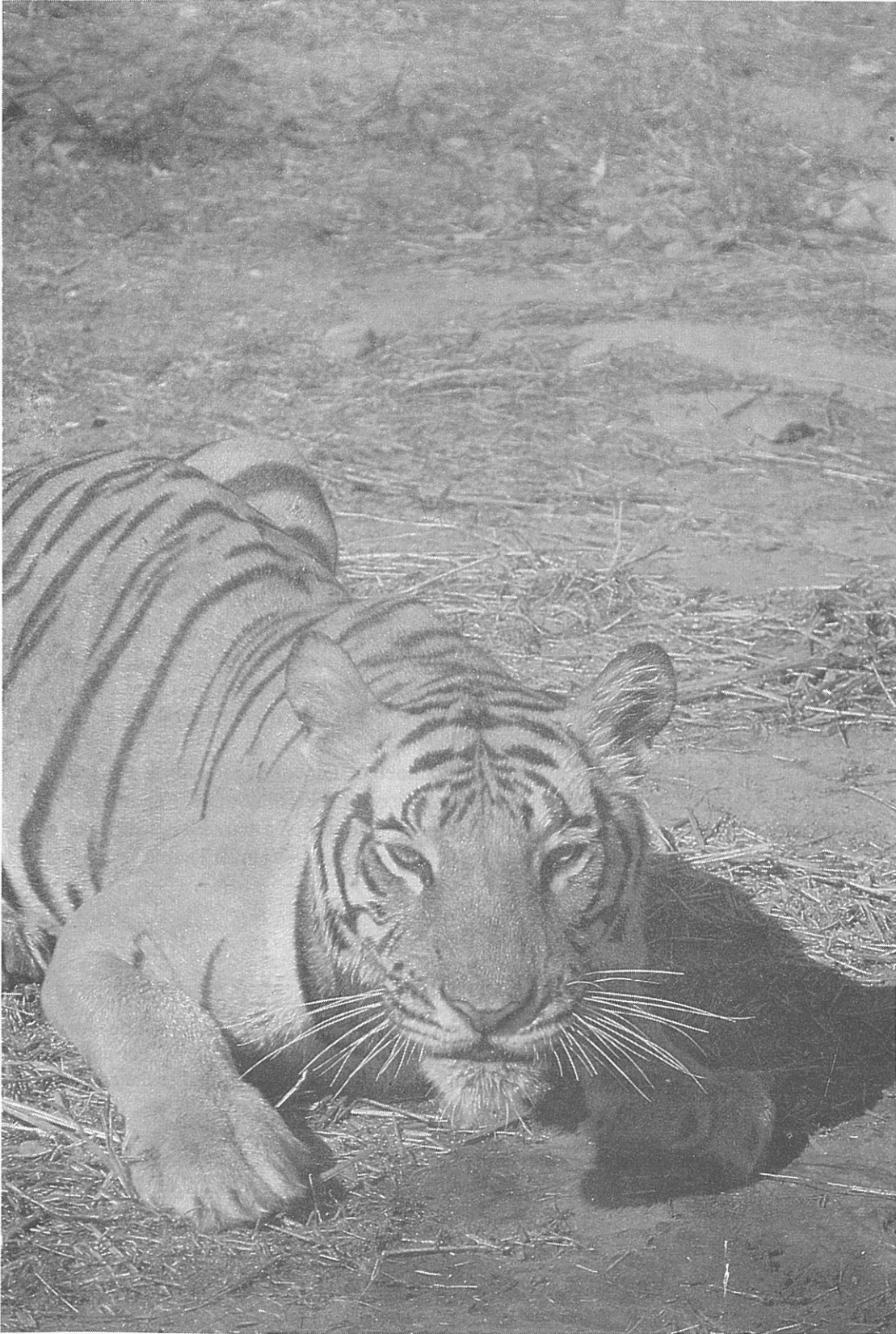


Photo: Valmik Thapar

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Farewell, Joanna

Tigerlink bids farewell to Joanna Van Gruisen. For 5 years, Joanna has been editing *Tigerlink*. She now joins her husband in Panna Tiger Reserve where he is conducting a tiger ecology project. We wish Joanna the very best and thank her for the tremendous role she has played from the first issue of *Tigerlink*.

We welcome Peter Lawton, the Founder of Global Tiger Patrol, for the present time, as guest editor. We apologise for the delay of two months in the production of this issue of *Tigerlink*, since it was a transitional process between Joanna's departure and Peter taking over. — Valmik Thapar

TigerLink News is for private circulation, only to *TigerLink* participants. It records worldwide tiger news and information, some of which has come from participants and therefore represents their views. For any further details please write to the participants directly. We regret if any errors have been committed in the compilation of this document.

We thank *Save the Tiger Fund*, a special project of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in partnership with Exxon Corporation, for providing financial support for this publication. We also thank the *David Shepherd Conservation Foundation*, *Global Tiger Patrol* and the *Wildlife Conservation Society* for their ongoing support to the cause of tiger conservation and their help in facilitating the networking of *TigerLink*.

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