

**PROJECT TITLE:** Karnataka Tiger Conservation Project - II

**PROJECT #:** 98-093-067

**GRANT PERIOD:** July 1, 1998 - June 30, 1999

**REPORT PERIOD:** Final Report

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Dr. Ullas Karanth

**Background:** The Karnataka Tiger Conservation Project (KTCP) is a three-year project to develop and implement a recovery plan for tiger and prey communities within four study areas in Karnataka State, India: 1) Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary, 2) Nagarahole National Park, 3) Bandipur, and 4) Kudremukh. After two successful years, the KTCP is currently entering its third and final year. This report details the activities of year two of the project, activities planned for year three, and an accounting of expenditures associated with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Funds for the period ending June 30<sup>th</sup> 1999.

**Project Goals:**

- 1) Continue the intensive field surveys and scientific research to identify critical ecological and conservation needs for maintaining viable tiger and prey populations in project areas;
- 2) Continue the rigorous monitoring program begun in year 1 for both tiger and prey populations with the involvement of local conservationists to evaluate the effectiveness of the project;
- 3) Strengthen the material capabilities of the Karnataka State Forest Department and its staff to protect tigers and their prey in the field;
- 4) Upgrade the professional capabilities of protected area ground staff through training and by improving their morale, status and managerial abilities with innovative incentives and welfare measures; and
- 5) Establish conservation education activities that will improve local support for park protection and initiate activities to reduce park-people conflicts through pro-active interventions by local NGO's.

**Institutions involved:**

The Karnataka State Forest Department is implementing the project with the support of WCS, New York. All park protection measures, law enforcement measures, and the administration of protected areas are under the direction of the Chief Wildlife Warden of Karnataka State, through the respective Wildlife Wardens and Deputy Wildlife Wardens managing the project parks.

A consortium of local NGO's and non-government individuals (NGI's) has been formed to help implement the project. Wildlife First! acts as the central coordinating agency for the project, and Solus Communications Resources is a consultant on the project for administration and media liaison efforts. The Nature Lovers Guild (Chikmagalur), Greenwatchers (Tumkur), Arohana (Mangalore), and the Center for Wildlife Studies

(Bangalore) are also partners in the project.

### **Funding Agencies**

This project has been possible due to funding from WCS, New York, with assistance from the NFWF-Exxon "Save the Tiger" Fund, Gary C. Fink, MCG Healthcare Inc., and other WCS donors.

### **Year Two results:**

#### **Biological Surveys, Research, and Monitoring (Goals 1 and 2):**

Geographic surveys were completed for three of the four project sites (Nagarahole, Bhadra, and Bandipur). These investigations included habitat mapping and data collection using a Geographic Positioning System (GPS). The data that were collected are being digitized and entered into a Geographic Information System (GIS). Similar surveys will be initiated at Kudremukh next year.

Tiger surveys using camera traps continued in Nagarahole and Bhadra. In Nagarahole, this was the ninth successive year of consecutive monitoring of large carnivores. Eleven new tigers were identified, and the number of tigers identified since the beginning of camera trapping has reached 63. Surveys using scat-encounter-rate indices are also being employed by the project to estimate predator densities. Dung counts for herbivore species were carried out on 293 plots using 20 volunteer trainees. Protocols for using scat to estimate densities have been developed at Nagarahole during this project and will be detailed in the report on the entire project in December 2000. Starting in October 1999, camera trap surveys will begin in Bandipur and Kudremukh.

The density of prey species was also estimated in Nagarahole and Bhadra using line transect surveys. Ungulate densities were estimated for the first time in Bandipur this year. In year three, line transect surveys will also be employed in Bandipur and Kudremukh. By the end of the project, these surveys will have allowed our researchers to estimate benchmark predator and prey densities in all four study areas.

#### **Strengthen the material capabilities of the Karnataka State Forest Department (Goal 3):**

The material capabilities of the Karnataka State Forest Department have been further strengthened this year by the donation of five new jeeps and two patrol boats. Four of the jeeps were for Bandipur and the remaining one was donated for use in Nagarahole. The patrol boats were designated for use in the backwaters that adjoin Bhadra and Bandipur. The nine jeeps that were obtained in year one of the project proved their value by allowing the prosecution of more than eighteen timber smuggling cases. The boats and additional jeeps will greatly improve the effectiveness of the enforcement agents of the Karnataka State Forest Department.

The KTCP has also procured wireless equipment consisting of thirty-six walkie talkie sets, ten base stations and one repeater station. An exclusive repeater frequency has also been obtained for Kudremukh. This equipment is vital to improving communications between protected area staff. The installation of this equipment is occurring in a phased manner. It has been completed at Bhadra and will begin shortly at Kudremukh.

**Upgrade the professional capabilities of protected area ground staff (Goal 4):**

The KTCP continued to distribute field kits to protected area staff in Nagarahole, Bhadra and Bandipur. These kits contain a khaki uniform, a cap, belt and sweater, shoes, socks, flashlight, and an umbrella. These field kits have been instrumental in improving the morale and appearance of protected area staff and have enhanced their feeling of authority and thereby their ability to protect wildlife. In the past year, 130 kits were distributed in Nagarahole, 36 in Bhadra, and 185 in Bandipur. A further 65 are ready for distribution next year.

One of the project's great successes this year was the coverage of an additional 54 protected area staff with our innovative insurance plan. A total of more than 290 protected areas staff have now been covered since the start of this project. Park staff are now covered in the event of injury, disability or death while performing their duties. The KTCP pays the insurance premiums to secure the staff at risk from performing their duties.

Six forest protection staff were awarded the State level "*Huli Samrakshaka Award*" for their outstanding contributions to the cause of wildlife and forest protection. These awards were presented at the Forest Department headquarters in Bangalore and carried a citation, a plaque and Rs. 10,000 (\$238). Press clippings regarding the awards to park staff are attached to this report.

Three technical workshops for Forest Officers (on the legal aspects of enforcement) were conducted at Bhadra and Bandipur. Each workshop was for a full working day and was conducted in collaboration with LAWE (Legal Action for Wildlife and Enforcement), an NGO composed of practicing Supreme Court lawyers who specialise in wildlife and forestry laws. Forty-five officers participated in these workshops. A handbook on effective processing of cases and a compilation of Supreme Court orders on some important cases were distributed to attendees.

**Community Education and Conflict Resolution (Goal 5):**

The Nagarahole Wildlife Conservation Education Project (NAWICOED) continued its operations around Nagarahole and Bandipur parks. The third issue of "*Nisarga*," the KCTP-NAWICOED newsletter was recently published and is included as an attachment in this report. In the past year, twenty-eight slide shows with accompanying presentations were held in Karnataka which reached nearly 5000 people. In addition, 17 nature camps with attendance of approximately 1400 individuals.

A ten-minute conservation video film was produced with Dr. Ullas Karanth as the anchor for the English version and Mr. K. N. Chinnappa as the anchor for the Kannada version. This hard-hitting video presentation deals with the real conservation issues and field-based realities that need to be communicated to decision-makers, the public, and opinion builders such as journalists if effective and practical conservation policies are to be implemented. A video documentary produced by the group "*Visionaries*" that details KTCP's activities and achievements was also completed.

The KTCP is assisting with the voluntary resettlement of tribal peoples living inside national parks to suitable lands outside the protected areas. In the past year 51 families from within Nagarahole National Park volunteered to move to areas outside the park. This component of the program created some controversy and met with resistance from some local NGO's who accused the administration of human rights violations. These organizations also actively encroached upon the houses and land that had been set aside for the resettlement of the families.

The accusations of human rights violations were instantly countered at a high level meeting in Mysore with a World Bank inspection panel. At this meeting, representatives of the families argued that they were perfectly willing to accept fair and sensible resettlement schemes and that the hostile NGO's were themselves impinging upon the human rights of the tribal peoples due to their negative approach. The World Bank panel sanctioned the resettlement of the 51 families and the government evicted those who had encroached upon the resettlement land.

A similar program will begin next year in Bhadra where 16 villages have agreed to move from inside the sanctuary. Based upon their agreement, the Revenue authorities have issued the first notification for declaring the village lands as reserve forests. D. V. Girish of Wildlife First! is coordinating this component of the KTCP.

#### **Evaluation/Conclusion**

The Karnataka Tiger Conservation Program is proceeding as planned. Evaluation of the project is an on-going process with the many NGO's and NCI's involved with tiger conservation in Karnataka State. Because this is a three year project the final evaluation will occur at the end of the third year after the completion of the project and when the data have been collected and fully analyzed.

#### **List of Attachments:**

- 2 NAWICOED publications
- 7 Press clippings in English from Indian newspapers
- 5 Press clippings not in English from Indian newspapers
- 1 Field reporting data collection sheet
- 4 Color print photographs
- 5 Color transparencies
- 1 Copy of this report on disk.