

INDIA

SCAN

Help for the Sundarbans

The Kolkata High Court has issued notices to the government in response to a petition filed by the Wildlife Protection Society of India on the issue of damage to the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve due to illegal prawn fishing and encroachment. The illegal harvesting of tiger prawn seed is wreaking havoc on the area's delicate ecosystem, with thousands of fishermen entering the reserve every day. The 2,500 sq. km. reserve is home to the world's largest population of tigers. The petition also mentions encroachment by commercial shipping and plans to develop waterways in the reserve.

Sibes leave Bharatpur

The only pair of Siberian Cranes that still visits the Keoladeo Ghana National Park left for its breeding grounds in the first week of March after having been at the park since November 9, 2001. Hopefully, the bird will return next year with a chick!

Wildlife trade cell

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has ordered the establishment of a Wildlife Trade Control Cell to be manned by two officers. This fulfils a long-standing recommendation made in August 1994 by the Subramanian Committee.

Move lines, not elephants

A Supreme Court committee has recommended the shifting of a 800 MW transmission line from the Tehri dam so as to avoid passing through 36 km. of the Rajaji National Park, one of India's richest elephant habitats. The corridor where the line



WFS/GEORGE SCHALLER

was proposed is already highly disturbed, due to the presence of highways, railway lines, existing power lines and industries. However, since the lines have already been built up to the entry points on the south and north side of the park, the situation is a *fait accompli* said the committee, which consisted of H.S. Panwar, S.S. Bist, Director, Project Elephant, and Conservator of Forests, Azam Zaidi.

Shahtoosh seized

An investigation by the Wildlife Trust of India has resulted in the seizure of illegal shahtoosh shawls from a boutique in Rome, confirming that the illegal trade in shawls made from the wool of Tibetan antelopes still thrives in western fashion capitals. India is the only weaving centre for shahtoosh shawls and conservationists fear that if the trade is not checked, the chiru could be extinct within four years. Chiru populations have fallen to less than 60,000 today from several million 100 years ago. An estimated 20,000 are poached every year. A single shahtoosh shawl can fetch \$16,000 in

European markets. Local poachers earn no more than \$50 per pelt.

Chance for Athirapally?

The public hearing panel for the controversial Athirapally dam has recommended a fresh Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed project due to inadequacies in the earlier EIA. The EIA conducted by the Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute was done within a short time in the monsoons, which is insufficient to gauge the true biodiversity of an area that is used by elephants and is home to the rare Cochin forest cane turtle.

Saving the storks

A massive awareness project for the conservation of Greater Adjutant Storks has been launched in Assam by the NGO Aaranyak. The programme was kicked off with the felicitation of Mr. Chandra Deka of Manaha-Kacharigaon, who has protected a stork nesting ground on his property for the last 15 years. A similar function at Dadara also felicitated individuals responsible for conserving another colony of 32 nests in 13 trees.

Rhino relocation

A team of experts is assessing the possibilities for translocation of rhinos from Kaziranga to other areas such as Orang, Pobitora and Laokhowa. The team, consisting of representatives of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the International Rhino Foundation and WWF-Nepal, was accompanied by research officer Rajashree Sharma from the state wildlife department. Kaziranga's rhino population has risen to over 1,500 due to the excellent work put in by the forest department and NGOs. ➔



THAKUR DALIP SINGH

Call of the wild Sanctuary

February 2002

A S I A



On the cover

The Collared Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena*, at its nest hole – yet another creature that benefits from tiger protection.

Photographer: Otto Pfister

Editor

Bittu Sahgal

Principal Advisor

Ranjit Barthakur

Managing Editor

Miel Sahgal

Assistant Editor

Ashish Fernandes

Editorial

Lakshmy Raman

Priya Raja

Shyla Boga

Madhu Sikri

Design

Umesh Bobade

Ashish Fernandes

Advertising

Shashi Kumar

Deepa Ramachandran

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Sanctuary Asia

602, Maker Chambers V,
Nariman Point,
Mumbai 400 021

Tel.: (91-22)2830061/81

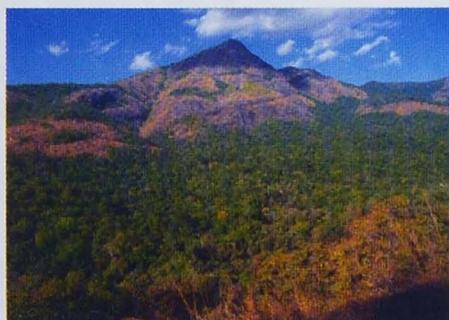
Fax: (91-22)2874380

www.sanctuaryasia.com

E-mail: <sanctuary@vsnl.com>

42 Cover Story Saving the Tiger

As part of its 20th anniversary activities, *Sanctuary* invited experts, forest officers and activists to Mumbai in December 2001 to consider the tiger's future. The concerns and solutions that emerged form the basis for this preliminary 'Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats' (SWOT) analysis of the movement to save the tiger.



22 The Untamed Anamalai

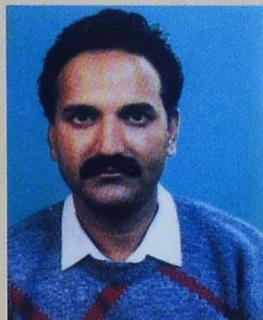
T.N. Khan, S.K. Mukhopadhyay, K.K. Banerjee and H. Banerjee write of the Anamalai mountains in south India, home of the tiger, Nilgiri langur and liontailed macaque. The authors have spent many years in this section of the Western Ghats and write with passion about this unique ecosystem and the need to protect it from the dangers of unregulated tourism, hydroelectric projects and poachers.



32 Kumbhalgarh – Wolf Country!

K. Rajpal Singh is one of Rajasthan's foremost photographers. The forests of Kumbhalgarh have long been a favourite haunt of his. In this piece, he shares some of his more memorable experiences. Named after the fort built by Maharaja Kumbha in 1458, this former tiger stronghold now provides plenty of opportunity to observe the rare grey wolf, occasional leopard, Grey Jungle Fowl and a host of other wildlife.

Contributors



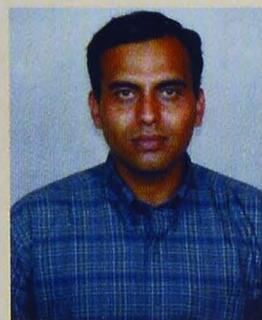
K. Rajpal Singh

An avid conservationist and photographer, he is closely associated with the wildlife heritage of Rajasthan. **32**



Arun P. Singh

An entomologist at the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun, he is working for the preservation of the Himalayan ecosystem. **38**



M.K.S. Pasha

A conservation biologist, he is the Programme Officer for the Wildlife Trust of India's Rapid Action Project. **60**



Valmik Thapar

Writer and tiger expert, he has been battling to save the tiger and its forest home for over two decades. **72**